Doing and Speaking in the Person of Christ: Eucharistic Form in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari*

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I. Introduction

WHEN THE Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity declared in 2001 that faithful of the Chaldean rite may, in certain pastoral situations, receive communion at liturgies of the Assyrian Church of the East, one aspect of the decision caused a considerable stir: the assertion of the validity of an anaphora—the ancient Assyrian anaphora of the Holy Apostles Addai and Mari—that contains no institutional narrative. How could an "institutionless" rite be valid, when for centuries Catholic theologians, often basing their arguments on those of St. Thomas Aquinas, had been convinced that the form[1] of the Eucharist is none other than the very

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[1] In this article I shall sometimes speak of the "form" of a sacrament and sometimes of its "formula." The latter is perhaps a more idiomatic rendering, since for Aquinas *forma* refers in this context to the precise wording of the sacramental rite. On Thomas's sensitive approach to questions of sacramental wording and ritual action as delivered by ecclesial tradition, see Liam G. Walsh, OP, "Sacraments," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawyrkow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 326–64, esp. 332–42; on linguistic issues in particular, see Irène Rosier, "Signes et sacrements. Thomas d'Aquin et la grammaire spéculative," *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 74 (1990): 392–436, and the same author's more detailed study *La Parole efficace: Signe, rituel, sacré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004). Some of the confusion that exists

words spoken by Christ at the Last Supper? Had not the *ecclesia docens*, moreover, appropriated Aquinas's teaching as her own on several solemn occasions, notably the councils of Florence and of Trent? An indication of the intense thoughts and feelings aroused by this decision is a recent special number of the journal *Divinitas*, devoted entirely to the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, with six articles more or less supporting the decision of July 2001, and four opposing it.[2] It would take nothing less than a book-length study to evaluate the multitude of theories, of objections, and attempted solutions found in these and other recent discussions of the anaphora. As might be expected, the literature on this anaphora is vast; many authorities have debated its origins, the manuscript tradition, the possibility of earlier versions, the content and construction, and, of course, the theology it embodies.[3]

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concerning our topic may be due to the double meaning of the word "form" as used by Thomas in connection with sacraments. Sometimes "form" means "everything that in any way determines the matter"; at other times it means "that which is *essential to* that which determines the matter." So, if one were to say: "The form of the Eucharist is *Hoc est enim corpus meum, quod pro vobis tradetur*," another could respond: "Yes, in the broad sense, that is the form, but in the narrow sense, the form is: *Hoc est corpus meum,* since neither *enim* nor the phrase *quod pro vobis tradetur* is essential for signifying transubstantiation, and thus neither is required for validity." A double meaning attaches also to *materia*: sometimes "matter" means "everything that in any way is put to use in the sacramental action"; at other times it means "that which is *essential* among the things put to use." As we shall see, St. Thomas is well aware of these different levels of generality or essentiality and allows them an important place in his account, though in many passages he does not spell out which meaning he has in mind, leaving it to be determined from context by the careful reader.

[2] *Sull'Anafora dei Santi Apostoli Addai et Mari,* ed. B. Gherardini, *Divinitas* 47 (2004). The issue is tripartite: part I (5–25) consisting of an editorial, an Italian translation of part of the liturgy, and the two documents of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; parts II and III (29–137 and 141–285) containing historical and doctrinal studies. The documents themselves—"Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist Between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East" (July 20, 2001) and "Admission to the Eucharist in Situations of Pastoral Necessity" (October 26, 2001), the latter functioning "to clarify the context, the content, and the practical application of this provision"—are available on the Vatican website, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20011025_chiesa-caldea-assira_en.html.

[3] A bibliography of studies prior to 1968 is found in *Prex Eucharistica*, eds. A. Hanggi and I. Pahl (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1968), 375; and of works up to 1972 in *The Study of Liturgy*, eds. C. Jones, G. Wainwright, and E. Yarnold, SJ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 176–77. A key contribution was made by Anthony Gelston's oft-cited monograph *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992). More recent research includes: Peter Hofrichter,

In this article, my method will be largely speculative, insofar as my interest lies in the question: "Could one explain and defend, on Thomistic grounds, an anaphora without words of institution?" Thus I shall be more concerned with St. Thomas's account of the form and minister of this sacrament than with issues in the history of liturgy or the textual redaction of the anaphora in question. I am not arguing as a liturgical historian but as a Thomist who sees in the writings of the Angelic Doctor insights and distinctions favorable to the Vatican's decision. I shall sketch an account that explains, with Thomistic principles, how the peculiar Assyrian anaphora may be considered to contain a valid consecration. After summarizing Aquinas's position on the form of the Eucharist, I will turn to his account of how the priest accomplishes the consecration. Here I will propose that certain modifications in this account would yield a plausible univocal explanation of the form as it appears diversely in the Roman rite, the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, and other non-Latin rites such as the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.[4] I shall identify where modifications are necessary

"L'anaphore d'Addai et Mari dans l'Église de l'Orient: Une eucharistie sans récit d'institution?" *Istina* 40 (1995): 95–105; Sarhad Jammo, "Le *Quddasha* des Apôtres Addai et Mari. Un lien avec l'époque apostolique," *Istina* 40 (1995): 106–20; M. Smyth, "Une avancée oecuménique et liturgique. La note romaine concernant l'Anaphore d'Addaï et Mari," *La Maison-Dieu* 233 (2003): 137–54; Stephen B. Wilson, "The Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari," in *Essays on Early Eastern Eucharistic Prayers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 19–37; Stylianos Muksuris, "A Brief Overview of the Structure and Theology of the Liturgy of the Apostles Addai and Mari," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43 (1998): 59–83; Thomas Mannooramparampil, "The Anaphora of Addai and Mari: Its Origin, Development, and Theology," *Christian Orient* 20 (1999): 97–108 (cf. also the same author's "Epiclesis in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari," *Christian Orient* 9 [1988]: 134–47); Sarhad Jammo, "The Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari: A Study of Structure and Historical Background," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 68 (2002): 7–35; Robert Taft, SJ, "Mass Without the Consecration? The Historic Agreement on the Eucharist Between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001," *Worship* 77 (2003): 482–509; Guy Vanhoomissen, SJ, "Une Messe sans paroles de consécration? À propos de la validité de l'Anaphore d'Addaï et Mari," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 127 (2005): 36–46. To this list should be added the articles published in the special number of *Divinitas* mentioned in the preceding note, as well as the two articles by Lugmayr cited in note 5 below.

[4] In this article, "Roman rite" may be taken as shorthand for any Western rite that follows the basic plan and fixed portion of the liturgy of the Church of Rome, at least in regard to the Canon. Moreover, when I use the term "anaphora" in explicit or implicit connection with the Assyrian rite in question, I intend to refer not only to the particular (and brief) part of the liturgy that scholars sometimes identify as "the anaphora" technically speaking, but also to the *entire* Eucharistic liturgy, or, as it is called by the Assyrian Church, the "Order of Hallowing." I

in Aquinas's account of the relevant issues and why there is no need to interpret the Holy See's decision as contradicting traditional Catholic teaching.[5] The cumulative effect will be to support the Holy See's decision on this matter of gravest importance for Chaldean Catholics and, by extension, for all Catholics who venerate the mystery of the Eucharist.

A preliminary question arises: Why pay attention to Aquinas in this connection? He had little exposure to Eastern liturgies, far less to something as exotic, for the medieval west, as the Syrian tradition. His theology of the Eucharist and of the liturgy, admittedly rich and nuanced, emerges from and speaks in reference to the Roman rite and its medieval offshoots. Is it not possible that here we need to recognize his limits and leave the *Summa* to one side when we think about the Anaphora of Addai and Mari? But it is neither easy nor desirable to do so. For on the one hand, the Church's own self-understanding of the Mass and of her sovereign sacrament is deeply indebted to St. Thomas's theological analysis, which has no rival in the history of the Western Church; and on the other hand, this analysis contains profound insights that invite application to new problems, precisely to clarify those problems in the modern context. If the Vatican's decision implies a development of doctrine, one urgent task would be to carry out a dispassionate theological analysis that makes use of the best resources available. It may turn out that St. Thomas has already enunciated principles that support a new development, even if his works *secundum litteram* exclude the same view.[6]

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incline to the view that one could defend the validity of the rite even from that particular portion, too, but it is easier and safer if one takes the liturgy as a whole, the way it is celebrated and experienced (and therefore understood) by the community of the faithful who use it; and indeed this is also a more authentic way of arguing, since we are not dealing with a rationalistic view of liturgy as composed of separable and interchangeable discrete units (for example, Penitential Rite A, B, or C; Eucharistic Prayer I, II, III, or IV; etc.), but a more ancient, and superior, view of liturgy as a theological whole, a dwelling in God's presence from start to finish, with the Eucharistic sacrifice and communion as the summit of this mystical ascent.

[5] Martin Lugmayr, FSSP, has published two defenses of the decision from the viewpoint of traditional dogmatic theology. I do not differ with him, but offer my thoughts as complementary to his: see his "Die Anaphora von Addai und Mari und die Dogmatik," *Una Voce Korrespondenz* 33 (2003): 30–47, www.stjosef.at/artikel/anaphora_addai_mari_dogmatik.htm; idem, "Eine Anaphora mit Wandlungsworten —aber in anderer Form: Historische, liturgische und dogmatische Anmerkungen zur Anaphora von Addai und Mari," www.stjosef.at/artikel/anaphora_addai_kirchliche_umschau.htm.

[6] In this article I will draw almost exclusively upon the third part of the *Summa theologiae*, which contains St. Thomas's most mature account of the sacraments in

II. The Traditional View

Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, whose classic commentaries on the treatises of the *Summa theologiae* furnish great help to students of the Angelic Doctor, can be taken as a model of the traditional approach to the topic at hand. In his commentary on the treatise on the Eucharist, we find the following summary:

> To begin with, we have before our eyes the definitions of the Church. The Church has declared that the form of this sacrament is the words of Christ, not the epiclesis. . . . The Council of Florence says: "The form of this sacrament is the Savior's words, with which he confected this sacrament; the priest then speaking *in persona Christi,* confects this sacrament. For by the power of those words the substance of bread is converted into the body of Christ and the substance of wine into his blood." . . . The Council of Trent says: "By the force of the words [of consecration], the body of Christ is under the appearance of bread and the blood under the appearance of wine." Innocent IV, in the year 1254, concerning the Greek rite, declares: "The Greeks should be permitted to celebrate Masses at the hour which is according to their own custom, provided that they observe, in the confection or consecration, the very words expressed and handed down by the Lord."[7]
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> From the fourteenth century on, schismatic Greeks say that the Eucharist is confected by the prayers which are spoken *after* the words "This is my body, this is my blood" have been pronounced, according to the prayer of their liturgy: "We beseech you, Father, to send your spirit over us and over these gifts set before us and make this bread the precious body of your Son and that which is in the chalice the precious

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general and of the Eucharist in particular. To enter into questions of Thomas's own doctrinal development is, however, far beyond the scope of the present article. For a solid introduction that points out the main lines of development, see John P. Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, eds. T. Weinandy, D. Keating, and J. Yocum (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 159–81; cf. also Pierre-Marie Gy, OP, "Avancées du traité de l'Eucharistie de S. Thomas dans la *Somme* par rapport aux *Sentences*," *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 77 (1993): 219–28. Translations from the *Summa theologiae* are either my own or those of Jeremy Holmes, but at times I have drawn upon the English Dominican translation (New York: Benziger, 1912–1936, 1947–1948). Unless otherwise expanded, citations are from the responses.

7 R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, *De Eucharistia et Paenitentia* (Turin: Marietti, 1948), 172, commenting on *ST* III, q. 78, translation my own. The primary passages Garrigou-Lagrange has in mind are, of course, those of Florence and Trent. After these lines he mentions decisions of Pius X and other pontiffs in regard to the epiclesis. Msgr. Gherardini has conveniently gathered the key magisterial statements in a postscript to his article "Le parole della Consacrazione eucaristica," *Divinitas* 47 (2004): 167–68.

> blood of your Son." To say that this prayer is necessary for consecration is to affirm that the Masses celebrated in the Roman church are invalid and is, moreover, contrary to the declaration of the Council of Florence. The chief proponents of this error were Cabasilas, Mark of Ephesus, and Simeon of Thessalonica, who were refuted by Cardinal Bessarion in his work *De Eucharistia*, as well as by Allatius and Arcudius. . . .
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> The second explanation [of the postconsecration epiclesis], which is more common, was the following, proposed by Cardinal Bessarion. The epiclesis invokes the Holy Spirit exactly inasmuch as the consecration, being a work *ad extra*, is common to the three divine Persons, and accordingly the Holy Spirit is invoked, so that, with the Father and the Son already having been invoked, he himself [in unity with them] may bring about transubstantiation. Indeed, this transubstantiation is accomplished in an instant, by the words of consecration already pronounced; but because, by our human speech, all these things cannot be expressed in one and the same instant, "things which are completed in an instant are declared one after another." Bessarion, Bossuet, Ferraris, Cagin, Franzelin, Salaville all hold this view.[8]

Garrigou-Lagrange's remarks are meant as a preface to St. Thomas's question on the form of the Eucharist (*ST* III, q. 78), the first article of which asks: "Whether the following is the form of this sacrament: 'This is my body' and 'This is the cup of my blood'?" Here is Aquinas's response:

> It should be said that this sacrament differs from the other sacraments in two respects. First, as regards the fact that this sacrament is accomplished[9] in the consecration of the matter, while the other sacraments

[8] Garrigou-Lagrange, *De Eucharistia,* 173–74. He notes that a similar principle is at work in the narrative of the Last Supper, where Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and speaks the words: "Narration is successive and announces words after facts, when really the words spoken are simultaneous with the facts." The reason why this kind of temporal disjunction happens is not hard to see. We humans can only speak of an instantaneous coming-to-be in language of change and therefore of time duration; consider the troubles Thomas has to face when speaking of creation *ex nihilo* (cf. *ST* I, q. 46). Thus the liturgy speaks *at length* of the *instantaneous* conversion of the gifts: It calls down the Spirit, recalls or repeats the institution, offers up the gifts to the heavenly Father, and so on, in different sequences for different rites; but in reality all these things occur simultaneously. This is something we cannot express with our time-bound language. Cf. the appendix to this article: "The Formal Structure of the Eucharistic Rite with Respect to Transubstantiation."

[9] Thomas uses the verb "perfected," but in this context the meaning is to bring something to its proper completion, its intended terminus. A sacrament is not "perfected" in the sense that it was something imperfect in need of improvement, but in the sense that it consists of a variety of things "waiting" to be employed in a certain way, so that a certain term may be attained. Hence one might better speak

> are accomplished in the use of the consecrated matter. Second, because in the other sacraments, the consecration of the matter consists only in a certain benediction, by which the consecrated matter receives instrumentally a certain spiritual power, which through the minister, who is an animated instrument, can pass to an inanimate instrument. But in this sacrament the consecration of the matter consists in a certain miraculous conversion of the substance, which can only be accomplished by God. Hence in the accomplishing of this sacrament, the minister has no other act but the pronunciation of the words.
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> And since a form should be fitting to the thing, for this reason the form of this sacrament differs from the forms of the other sacraments in two things. First because the forms of the other sacraments bring in the use of the matter, such as baptizing or signing; but the form of this sacrament brings in only the consecration of the matter, which consists in transubstantiation, as when it is said: "This is my body" or "This is the cup of my blood." Second, because the forms of the other sacraments are pronounced in the person of the minister; either after the manner of one who carries out the act, as when it is said, "I baptize you" or "I confirm you" or after the manner of one who commands, as it is said in the sacrament of orders: "Receive the power," etc. or after the manner of one who intercedes, as when it is said in the sacrament of extreme unction: "Through this anointing and our intercession," etc. But the form of this sacrament is pronounced in the person of Christ himself who speaks *[profertur ex persona ipsius Christi loquentis]*, that one may be given to understand that the minister in the accomplishing of this sacrament does nothing except pronounce the words of Christ.

Thomas's reply introduces the all-important concept of the ministerial priest functioning in the Mass as a living icon of Jesus Christ, eternal High Priest.[10] In confecting the Eucharist, the priest does nothing except

of the "accomplishing" of a sacrament, which occurs in two ways: either, as with the six other sacraments, in the application of the sacrament *to* its recipient in order to sanctify *him*, or, as in the unique case of the Eucharist, in the very consecration of the matter itself in order to change *it*, after which the consecrated gifts may then be "used" by recipients (that is, applied to *their* bodies and souls) as a sanctifying food and drink.

[10] On this theme, see the brilliant article by John Saward, "The Priest as Icon of Christ," in *Priest* 50 (1994): 37–48; see also Josef Pieper, "What Makes a Priest?" in idem, *In Search of the Sacred,* trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 51–81; and Peter A. Kwasniewski, "Incarnate Realism and the Catholic Priesthood," *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* 100, no. 7 (April 2000): 21–29. In his article "Representation or Self-Effacement: The Axiom *In Persona Christi* in St. Thomas and the Magisterium" (*Theological Studies* 55 [1994]: 195–224), Denis Ferrara argues that there is disjunction, even contradiction, between how this phrase is employed by the saint and how it is exploited in contemporary Church documents. For a potent critique of Ferrara and an exposition of the authentic Thomistic doctrine,

speak the words with right intention.[11] This remark should not be construed as pure occasionalism. If the priest's person and actions were *merely* an occasion for the event of transubstantiation rather than a true—albeit partial and instrumental—cause, the spiritual power conferred by ordination would be unnecessary. St. Thomas holds, on the contrary, that this power is *chiefly* ordered to performing the Eucharistic conversion and only secondarily to conferring other sacraments or doing other works of Christian ministry. Yet St. Thomas goes out of his way to emphasize that the priest cannot *do* anything to effect the sacrifice, except lend his intention, his voice, and his hands; the sacrifice is effected by *God*, acting through the sacred humanity of Christ that acts, in turn, through the priest's recitation of the appointed words.[12] These words have efficacious power because they emanate from a man vested with the priestly character *of Christ*, the High Priest.[13] This character permits Christ to act *directly* through the minister, whose words and actions become instruments of the properly divine action of the incarnate Word.[14] What makes the priest able to consecrate is that through his *own* consecration, through

see Guy Mansini, OSB, "Representation and Agency in the Eucharist," *Thomist* 62 (1998): 499–517. Mansini's fine study treats at length some important points that I can only mention in passing, particularly the exact concept of instrumentality at work when the priest is called an "instrument" of Christ and is said to function "instrumentally" in the perfecting of sacraments.

11 On priestly intention, see the exhaustive treatment in Bernard Leeming, SJ, *Principles of Sacramental Theology,* 2nd ed. (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1960), 435–96.

12 St. Thomas's doctrine of instrumental causality, far from being an outmoded construct of scholasticism, is crucial to attaining insight into the manner in which the ministerial priesthood, or priesthood "by participation," neither augments nor diversifies the ontological priesthood of Christ. Bound up with this question are a thousand questions in biblical theology, dogmatic theology (particularly concerning truths disputed by Protestants), and pastoral practice. Cf. *ST* III, q. 64, a. 1: The interior sacramental effect, sanctification, can be the work of man, *insofar as* he works as a minister, that is, as an instrumental cause in the hands of the principal cause; q. 64, a. 5, ad 2: "It is thus that Christ works in the sacraments, both by wicked men as lifeless instruments and by good men as living instruments." Concerning the Eucharist as image or representation of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, see Matthew Levering, "Aquinas on the Liturgy of the Eucharist," in Weinandy et al., *Aquinas on Doctrine,* 183–97; idem, "John Paul II and Aquinas on the Eucharist," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 3 (2005): 637–60, esp. 646 ff.; Thierry-Dominique Humbrecht, OP, "L'Eucharistie, 'représentation' du sacrifice du Christ, selon saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 98 (1998): 355–86.

13 Cf. *ST* III, q. 74, a. 4.

14 See Gilles Emery, OP, "The Ecclesial Fruit of the Eucharist," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 2 (2004): 53.

the priestly character therein conferred, he has been enabled to function transparently as Christ's own voice and hands. He is a separate, "animate" instrument, intelligent and free, but the emphasis is on his instrumentality, not his personality. As Charles Journet writes:

> If, at the moment of consecration, the priest does not say: "This is the Body of Jesus; this is the Blood of Jesus," but, rather, "This is my Body; this is my Blood," it is in order to confess that, at that awesome instant, his own personal mediation is but a pure instrument and that it is entirely effaced before Christ. The supreme function of the priest, such as it is, is to disappear, as it were, before Christ, whom he offers to God and whom he gives to the world.[15]

For St. Thomas, to be an instrument of a spiritual cause for a spiritual effect is itself a special *power* one has to receive, and the greater the cause or the effect with which the instrument is bound up, the mightier a power it has to receive.[16] Thus, the paradox of priestly consecration is that, far from increasing a man's "presence" in the functions of ecclesial life, it actually strips away something of his opaque creatureliness, giving him a superhuman capacity to be a passive, transparent instrument in the hands of the divine Savior, for the accomplishment of the high-priestly act of sacrifice.[17] What is most special about the priest is least his to boast

[15] *Theology of the Church,* trans. Victor Szczurek, O. Praem. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 113. "It is Jesus himself who, by his ministers, baptizes and consecrates. Jesus is a priest in a way no other will ever be. Those whom we call priests today are but the vehicles, as it were, of his irreplaceable priesthood, the dispensers of his redemption. . . . The power of order is a permanent quality that is in no way active by itself; rather, it is likened to an instrument, which always needs to receive from Christ the power to produce its effect" (ibid., 114). "The ministers of the sacraments are pure transmitters of motions that come from Christ himself, motions that, in prepared souls, bud forth into graces" (ibid., 142). For further reflections along these lines, see Jordan Aumann, OP, "Ministerial Priesthood," *Angelicum* 49 (1972): 30–53.

[16] Cf. *ST* III, q. 71, a. 4.

[17] So much is the priest at the altar simply his master's *representative* that, argues Aquinas, if the minister happens to die or suffer debility right after consecrating the host, another priest must take his place and proceed to the chalice—the Mass nevertheless remaining a *single* Mass because its principal offerer is Jesus Christ (q. 83, a. 6, ad 1). Elsewhere, Thomas uses similar reasoning to uphold the custom of concelebration on certain occasions: "If any priest worked in his own power, the other celebrants would be superfluous, one priest celebrating sufficiently. But since a priest only consecrates in the person of Christ, and the many are one in Christ, for this reason it makes no difference whether this sacrament is consecrated through one or through many; except that [in any case] it is necessary to observe the ritual of the Church." *ST* III, q. 82, a. 2, ad 2.

about. What is deepest in his sacramental character is not a work, but a gift of being-worked-through, a silence inhabited by another's words. St. Thomas's thoughts on the priesthood are rich indeed, if their implications are pondered.[18]

III. The Act of Consecration: Doing, Speaking, or Both?

However, the argument of the *Summa theologiae* III, question 78, article 1, is not entirely satisfying, and we will see that St. Thomas is aware of the need to say more. Anyone—even someone who is not a priest—can speak *ex persona Christi* in the sense of "impersonating" Christ, simply by speaking the words of Christ in an appropriate situation, with the intention of speaking them as Christ did. A layman about to be martyred can say: "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing"; a missionary sister can repeat the Beatitudes in a catechism class; a professor of liturgical theology can recite the words of institution in a lecture comparing different anaphoras. In all of these cases there is a speaking of the Lord's words, with *his* meaning in mind, with belief in their truth, and with an intention of passing on that truth to others. If, therefore, speaking *ex persona Christi* is the central feature of the words of consecration, it is no small matter to find out exactly why only an ordained priest, and not just any baptized person, can say these words *efficaciously*.

When St. Thomas deals with this question in the *Summa theologiae* III, question 82, article 1, he begins his response with a premise already established: "So great is the dignity of this sacrament that it is not confected except in the person of Christ." But he continues: "Now, it is necessary that whoever acts in the person of another do so by a power conceded from the other."[19] Here St. Thomas introduces a new idiom, *agere in persona alicuius*.[20] The phrase clearly means to act as the representative or

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[18] An impressive synopsis of the priestly office is given by St. Thomas in *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 74. It is not enough for the minister of the Eucharist simply to be like Christ according to human nature (this is why an angel cannot be a priest, but only a man); the minister must also be made to "share his Godhead" in order to have part in a strictly divine operation. One of the finest presentations of the Catholic (and Thomistic) doctrine of the priesthood is to be found in Pius XII's encyclical letter *Mediator Dei*: see esp. nos. 40–43, 68–69, 82–84, and 92–93.

[19] "Hoc sacramentum tantae est dignitatis quod non conficitur nisi in persona Christi. Quicumque autem aliquid agit in persona alterius, oportet hoc fieri per potestatem ab illo concessam."

[20] He has already used this idiom at *ST* III, q. 64, a. 8, ad 2: "The minister of the sacrament acts in the person of the whole Church, whose minister he is; whereas in the words he pronounces, he expresses the intention of the Church, which suffices for a sacrament's perfecting, unless the contrary be outwardly expressed on the part of

vicegerent of someone, to act with the power or authority of someone else. So while anyone can *speak* the words of consecration (the physical speech-act), only a priest can say the words that also *do* what they signify (the "moral" speech-act).[21] St. Thomas's argument that only a priest can confect the sacrament thus depends more fundamentally on the fact that the priest *does* something *in persona Christi* than on the fact that he says something *in persona Christi*. The argument of question 82, article 1 shows that in St. Thomas's mind, doing the sacrament *in persona Christi* and speaking the words *in persona Christi* are not separate; what the priest is doing is nothing other than speaking Christ's words with a spiritual power to say them authoritatively, a power he received through priestly consecration.[22] Nevertheless, it may well be that we should separate, at least in concept, doing as Christ does and speaking just as Christ spoke

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the sacrament's minister and recipient" (Minister sacramenti *agit in persona* totius ecclesiae, cuius est minister; in verbis autem quae proferuntur, exprimitur intentio ecclesiae; quae sufficit ad perfectionem sacramenti, nisi contrarium exterius exprimatur ex parte ministri et recipientis sacramentum). On the notion of "acting in the person of the Church," see the illuminating remarks of Jacques Maritain, *On the Church of Christ: The Person of the Church and Her Personnel,* trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 144–46; cf. Bernard-Dominique Marliangéas, OP, *Clés pour une théologie du ministère: In persona Christi, In persona Ecclesiae* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1978, 1997).

[21] Compare: only a police officer can say "You're under arrest!" in such a way that they *make* the criminal to be (legally) in a state of captivity. If an ordinary civilian said that to another civilian, the words would be the same, but they would not have the same effect. This is obviously a feeble example, but it shows a real *difference* in the power of words, derived from a difference in office.

[22] In the same article, ad 1: "The consecrative power exists not only in the words themselves, but also in the power of the priest given to him at his consecration or ordination, when it is said to him by the bishop: 'Receive the power to offer sacrifice in the Church both for the living and for the dead.' " In ad 2, Thomas contrasts this special power with the power of the universal priesthood of all the faithful: "a just layman is united to Christ [as priest] by a spiritual union through faith and charity, but not through a sacramental power [to do as he does]. And so he has a *spiritual* priesthood, for offering *spiritual* victims," namely for offering up himself in union with Christ on the cross. This is no small matter, since for Thomas the essence of the Christian life consists not primarily in *doing* something, but in *receiving* God's healing and elevating grace poured out in the Passion. Hence, the sacrament that is and will always be of greatest moment for every Christian is his baptism, which grafts him as a branch into Christ, the life-giving vine. Without the baptismal character, that is, the power to receive divine gifts, no other sacrament would avail. On these points, see the incomparable synthesis of Pius XII, *Mediator Dei,* nos. 40–43 and 78–104, esp. nos. 83–88, 93, and 98–100; on the phrase *"in persona Christi,"* cf. John Paul II, encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, nos. 28–29, and the works cited above in note 20.

and hold that the priest receives the power of *doing* this sacrament in Christ's name with words suited to the action, whereas *speaking* in the Mass just what Christ spoke at the cenacle is, in a way, accidental to the form. That is, it might be the case that the speech-act by which a priest indicates his intention to act *in persona Christi* toward the bread and wine need not be a mimetic speech with Christ's very words as its content; it may suffice if the verbal content unambiguously points to the reality of the sacrificial banquet that was established at the cenacle in anticipation of the Cross. Such a priestly prayer could remain a case of "acting in the person of Christ by a power conceded from him."

If the priest's prerogative of confecting the sacrament has to do not only with speaking in the person of Christ, but also, and principally, with *acting* in the person of Christ, one might be tempted to entertain the opposite extreme—that the account given by Thomas and adopted by the Roman church is simply mistaken: Confecting the Eucharist has *only* to do with acting in the person of Christ. A text that is very helpful for exposing this *as* an extreme is found in Thomas's commentary on the *Sentences*. The objector argues that the consecration as it is phrased in the Mass cannot work. If the priest tells the story of the Last Supper, the pronoun "this" refers to the bread that was on the table back at the time of the supper, and not to the bread actually on the table now. On the other hand, if the priest were to speak in his *own* person when he said "This is my body," then sure enough, "this" would refer to the bread actually on the table now, but "my" would not refer to Christ! In short, the sentence is at odds with itself, a temporal disjunct. St. Thomas responds to the objection as follows:

> This sacrament directly represents the Passion of the Lord, by which Christ, as Priest and Victim, offered himself to God on the altar of the cross. Now, the victim that the priest offers is really one with that victim Christ offered, because it really contains Christ; but the minister offering is not really the same; hence it is necessary that he be the same by way of a representation. And therefore the priest, doing the consecration as if taking the role of Christ, pronounces the words of consecration recitatively in the person of Christ, lest the victim seem to be other *[sacerdos consecrans prout gerit personam Christi, profert verba consecrationis recitative ex persona Christi, ne hostia alia videatur]*. And since through what he does with respect to exterior matter he represents the person of Christ, therefore those words are held to be simultaneously a recitation and a signification with respect to the matter present, which is a figure of the matter that Christ had present before him; and on account of this it is more fittingly said "This is my Body" than "This is the Body of Christ."[23]

[23] *In IV Sent*. d. 8, q. 2, a. 1, qa. 4, ad 4.

Moving from the *Sentences* to the *Summa* should not be done carelessly, since in the time between them much occured in Thomas's thinking, but the point made in this reply seems timeless. Thomas is arguing that the *context* of the priest's words is not only the surrounding words in the institution narrative, but also the priest's physical gestures. He describes Christ picking up bread, and he himself picks up bread; he describes Christ taking up the cup, and he himself takes up a cup; and so forth. The priest is not only the narrator of a story, but also the lead actor in a drama. As narrator, he says "Christ said . . . ," clearly distinguishing himself from the one speaking; as lead actor, he assumes the role of Christ, the one who says, "This is my body." Because the priest clearly takes on the dramatic role of Christ, the other "props" on the "stage" become part of the story: The bread takes on the role of the original bread at the Last Supper, and the chalice takes on the role of whatever cup Christ used. As a result, the words "This is my body," even though quoted as words spoken thousands of years ago, are understood as applying to the bread on the table here and now.

This argument helps us to maintain a middle position so that we do not misunderstand *ex persona Christi* as having to do *only* with acting in a certain way or *only* with speaking in the name of Christ. While the priest is not claiming to *be* Christ (the surrounding narrative makes it clear that the minister knows himself to be announcing the words of another), yet he does take the role of Christ in the liturgy, and so it is *as if* he himself were Christ.[24] He is both speaking and doing *ex persona Christi*, at once *distancing* himself—"*he* said to his disciples . . ."—and daring to quote and to act in the first person: "Take this, all of you, and eat it: This is *my* Body. . . ."[25] Certainly the effect, transubstantiation, occurs only because Christ is acting through the ministerial priest, once more showing how great an assimilation to the High

[24] At one point during Thomas's commentary on the Mass, he treats of the priest's gestures during the celebration, most of which are described as Christomimetic: "That the priest stretches out his arms after the consecration signifies the stretching out of Christ's arms on the cross. . . . And that he sometimes joins his hands and bows is proper to one who suppliantly and humbly prays and indicates the humility and obedience of Christ out of which he suffered." *ST* III, q. 83, a. 5, ad 5.

[25] Aquinas draws a fine distinction between the priest acting qua representative of the *Church*, which offers up prayers to God and begs for his gifts, and the priest acting qua representative of *Christ*, the Mediator who bestows gifts upon the Church (and thus upon the priest, too, as an individual Christian in need of salvation, a *member* of the Church). As with so many other seemingly subtle distinctions, this one is pastorally crucial, for it helps explain why a schismatic priest can consecrate the gifts (he acts then in virtue of the priestly character, that is, Christ acts through him) but cannot pray effectively for himself or others, because he is not able to represent the Church, whose unity he spurns. *ST* III, q. 82, a. 7, ad 3.

Priest occurs in the celebration of the Eucharist, without destroying the separateness of the minister, who remains himself and remains a minister. Since Christ in a certain sense acts *through* or *by* the minister in order to make his own substance present under the appearances of bread and wine, it is really as if the priest *were* Christ, for he imitates, in his intention, words, and deeds, the deeds, words, and intention of Christ. The ministerial priest and the High Priest are, as it were, overlapping at the climax of the Mass, the former standing symbolically in the latter's place, while the latter acts through the former.[26] It is obvious, moreover, in light of the greatness of the reality brought about by consecration—nothing less than the Lord's personal presence—that a man must be given explicit permission by Christ, or better, a spiritual *power* or *authority*, to act in this manner, so as to function *even instrumentally* in accomplishing this sacrament.[27] It would be an act of supreme presumption for a man or woman to say over a piece of bread, seriously intending to effect the Eucharistic conversion: "This is my body," without having the power to make it so from him whose body it is. Of course, nothing would happen, yet a sin would be committed—a kind of mockery. On the other hand, if one were acting in a stage drama, a medieval miracle play, and one of the scenes was the Last Supper, there would be no mockery in a dramatic re-enactment of the Eucharist. For here, it is obvious that no intention of really *doing* the thing is involved, but only an intention of *depicting* something that *once* happened.[28]

[26] Consider how vigorously Thomas himself makes this point in one of many texts that might be cited: "Nor is it an obstacle [to the efficacy of the words of consecration] that the priest pronounces them in the manner of a narration, as said by Christ [at the Last Supper]. For owing to Christ's infinite power, as from the contact of his flesh a regenerative force came not only to the waters Christ touched [in the Jordan river] but to all waters everywhere on earth for all future ages, so too by Christ's own pronunciation of these words they obtained a consecratory power by whatever priest they may be said, as if Christ were to pronounce them while present himself." *ST* III, q. 78, a. 5.

[27] See *ST* III, q. 82, a. 5: "a priest consecrates this sacrament not in his own power, but as a minister of Christ, in whose person he consecrates this sacrament"; q. 82, a. 7, s.c.: "it is by the force of ordination [ex vi ordinationis] that a priest is able to consecrate the Eucharist"; ibid., obj. 2: "no one can consecrate the Eucharist unless he have the dignity of the priesthood"; q. 83, a. 4, ad 6: "Some things pertain only to the priest, such as the offering and the consecration [of the gifts]." The larger context is the discussion of sacramental character, which, in general, is "a certain participation in the priesthood of Christ, derived from Christ himself." Cf. *ST* III, q. 63.

[28] For a perceptive discussion of the role and words of the priest at Mass, see Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 13–21, 27–33, 82–100. Also pertinent is the same author's "Praying the Canon of the Mass," *Homiletic & Pastoral*

Even if we say that the priest's power is more fundamentally a power of *doing* in the person of Christ than of *speaking* in the person of Christ, it seems that St. Thomas's account of the Eucharist is the account necessary for the Western rites. In the west, the priest clearly intends to confect the sacrament when he says "This is my body," and Thomas's account in the *Sentences* does seem to be the only explanation of how these words can signify a change in the bread actually on the altar here and now. The Latin priest's *power to act* in the person of Christ takes its concrete form in the *power to speak certain words* in the person of Christ. Yet it must be asked: Are the words of institution the *only* way to "agere in persona Christi"? If *doing* the consecration in the person of Christ and *speaking* the words spoken at the Last Supper are, in principle, distinct (though they are never found to be separated in the dominant liturgical rites), it should be possible, again in principle, for a liturgical rite to exist in which the priest *does* in the person of Christ all that is necessary for the Eucharistic sacrifice to take place, and yet not by *speaking* the familiar words. Provided the local church that makes use of this rite retains apostolic succession and thus a valid priesthood, would it not suffice for the priest to speak *some* words that unambiguously manifested the conversion of the gifts as well as his intention to effect it?

A qualification is necessary. It is true but perhaps misleading to say that the priest receives power to *act* in the person of Christ "rather than" the power to *speak* in the person of Christ. The speaking of the "words of institution" is a feature of all Eucharistic rites except for the Anaphora of Addai and Mari. Hence, if this rite is valid, the words of institution, materially considered, cannot be of the essence of the priestly act of consecration. Nevertheless, the priest's *acting* in the person of Christ will always involve his *speaking* with the authority of Christ, even when he does not recite the words used at the Last Supper. In this extended sense, the priest must *speak* in the person of Christ in order to *act* liturgically on behalf of the High Priest.

IV. Magisterial Teaching on the Form of the Eucharist

The most commonly cited magisterial support for identifying the form of the Eucharist as the words of institution is a passage from the Decree for

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Review 95, no. 10 (July 1995): 8–15. Thomas's line of argument applies also to the sacrament of penance. Only a priest equipped "with a power conceded from another" to forgive sins *in the name of Christ* could pronounce without blasphemy the words: "I absolve you from your sins. . . ." For anyone else to do so, except in the manner of a dramatic depiction, would be sinful presumption. Cf. Mk 2:7; Lk 5:21; Jn 20:22–23; and 2 Cor 5:18–20, as well as Aquinas's opusculum *De forma absolutionis*.

the Armenians of the Council of Florence.[29] However, the same decree contains the statement that the matter of priestly ordination is found in the handing over of the instruments *(traditio instrumentorum)*, implying that the priesthood is conferred by the handing over of the chalice and the diaconate by the handing over of the book of the Gospels. Pope Pius XII explicitly decided that whatever was the case in the past these actions are, at least in the present, not necessary for the validity of the sacrament of Order.[30] On this account, some theologians affirm that the Decree for the Armenians is "not a document of faith."[31] If this is true, then the same could be true of other statements within it. The document was, however, issued under the authority of an ecumenical council and was approved by the regnant pope. What are we to make of these apparently conflicting facts? The most plausible solution is to recognize that even the matter and

[29] DS, no. 1321, cited above in the quotation from Garrigou-Lagrange. The Decree for the Armenians, also known as the *Bulla unionis Armenorum*, dated November 22, 1439, was the fruit of session VIII of the Council of Ferrara-Florence and sought (as the document says) "to hand down, within a sort of brief compendium, the truth of the orthodox faith professed by the Roman church." For a critical text in Latin and Armenian with English translation, see *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, ed. Norman P. Tanner, SJ (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 534–59; the pertinent section on the Eucharist may be found on pp. 545–47. Ludwig Ott identifies the proposition "The form of the Eucharist consists in Christ's words of institution, uttered at the consecration" as *sent. certa* (*Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma,* trans. Patrick Lynch, ed. James Bastible [Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1974], 392)—that is, *sententia ad fidem pertinens theologice certa,* which Ott defines as "a doctrine on which the teaching authority of the Church has not yet finally pronounced, but whose truth is guaranteed by its intrinsic connection with the doctrine of revelation (theological conclusions)" (ibid., 9–10). Ott further says: "The Catholic Church adheres firmly to the view that the priest consummates the transubstantiation solely by the uttering of the words of institution" (ibid., 392), citing for support the same lines of the *Decretum pro Armenis*. As we shall see, however, this decree is capable of being read either as non-definitive or as definitive but limited to certain liturgical-ritual traditions. (The decree does not specify this limitation, but neither does it specify the *lack* of a limitation, which is not an irrelevant point.) The same observation holds for certain statements of the Council of Trent.

[30] Apostolic constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis*, nos. 3–4. For the relevant texts of Florence and Pius XII side by side, see J. Neuner, SJ, and J. Dupuis, SJ, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church,* 6th ed. (New York: Alba House, 1996), nos. 1705 and 1737.

[31] Cf. Neuner-Dupuis, *The Christian Faith,* no. 1305i: "The document is neither an infallible definition nor a document of faith. It is a clear exposition of the sacramental theology commonly held at that time in the Latin church. The limits of its authority must be borne in mind, especially with regard to the question of the essential rite of the sacrament of Order." Cf. no. 1737i.

form of (at least *some*, if not all) the sacraments contain something essential and something accidental and, thus, that the handing over of the instruments was an accidental element of the matter.[32] Hence the Decree for the Armenians was right to identify the *traditio instrumentorum* as an element of the matter, even if it did not make explicit the distinction between essential and accidental parts. A supporting argument may be drawn from the fact that the same decree identifies the matter of the Eucharist as wheat bread and grape wine with a small amount of water mixed in before the consecration. Now, it is certain that this mixed-in water is not an essential part of the matter, for the wine could still be validly consecrated without it.[33] Therefore, the matter can contain something accidental. Such accidentals will be subject to the determination of the Church, whereas the essentials are subject to the power of Christ alone.

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* and the Roman Missal's *De defectibus* affirm that "Hoc est corpus meum" and "Hic est calix sanguinis mei . . ." are the forms for the consecration of the bread and the wine. In keeping with the discussion up to this point, one could argue that while this judgment is perfectly true, it does not express the pure essence of the form, but the form as it exists concretely within the Roman rite. It may be that the form consists essentially in words that signify transubstantiation. Now, words do not signify transubstantiation unless they attribute being-the-body-and-blood-of-Christ to that which appears to be bread and wine. For this reason, the pontifical council's document asserts that "the words of Eucharistic institution are indeed present in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, not in a coherent narrative way and *ad litteram*, but rather in a dispersed euchological way, that is, integrated in successive prayers of thanksgiving, praise, and intercession"[34]—that is, that *what* the words of institution signify and, in the Western rites, accomplish, is indeed really signified and accomplished by this Anaphora, but dispersedly, elliptically, not in a concise and direct way. This should be taken to mean that *what is signified* by the words "This is my body"—namely, that that which was bread ceases to be bread and becomes the substance of the body of Christ, the appearances of bread alone remaining—has to be at least *implicit* in the prayers actually said in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, so that the intention of the minister can be ascertained. In other words, the content of the prayers that compose the anaphora must unambiguously indicate the consecratory intention and finality of the entire Eucharistic prayer.

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[32] See note 55 below.

[33] *ST* III, q. 74, a. 7.

[34] Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, "Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist," no. 3.

To say this is not, of course, to settle all relevant questions. For instance, there cannot be a vague sweep of time during which the gifts of bread and wine are "being transformed," a kind of metaphysical twilight. There *must* be some moment of transubstantiation, before which it is true to say the bread on the altar is just bread, and after which it is true to say that it is the body of the Son of God, deserving adoration. We need to know *when* to begin adoring.[35] Substantial change is instantaneous,[36] and so there is a *nunc temporis* when bread ceases to be and, at once, the body of Christ begins to be present under the appearances of bread.[37] Surely it is not defensible to say that the Lord comes to be present on the altar at some unknown point, which falls after the start of the liturgy but before the reception of communion. It must be a *knowable* point after which the gifts are adored as the Lord himself, present in body, blood, soul, and divinity. The early Latin scholastics were cautious and sometimes ambiguous about the moment of consecration, since they had not yet found an argument that could settle the question decisively. In a statement typical of many, Simon of Tournai (†1201) wrote in his *Disputatio* LXXI that he does not know, only God knows, whether transubstantiation takes place at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the prayer of consecration; he only knows that when all is said and done, transubstantiation has taken place.[38] However, this kind of approach would not satisfy the scholastic mind, since it seemed odd that such a momentous question as "When is the bread no longer mere bread?" should prove insoluble. If it is mere bread, to adore it is idolatry; if it is truly the body of Jesus, *not* to adore him is impiety.[39] Edward McNamara underlines this point:

> The concept of a gradual transformation from bread to Eucharist is no more sustainable than the idea of a nonhuman embryo becoming an

[35] Cf. *ST* III, q. 75, a. 2; q. 78, a. 6. It was, at least in part, concern over rightful worship of the Eucharist that impelled theologians and eventually bishops of the early thirteenth century to insist on the elevation of the host not *prior to* the bread's consecration (as had been the custom in some places), nor *after* the consecration of the *wine* (according to the theory of some who held that consecration only took effect after the words had been spoken over *both* gifts), but immediately after *its own* consecration. See V. L. Kennedy, CSB, "The Moment of Consecration and the Elevation of the Host," *Mediaeval Studies* 6 (1944): 121–50.

[36] *ST* III, q. 75, a. 3.

[37] For further arguments in defense of the instantaneity of the change, cf. *ST* III, q. 75, a. 7; q. 78, a. 2 and a. 5.

[38] Kennedy, "Moment of Consecration," 126.

[39] On the growing desire of the faithful to worship the host at Mass, see Kennedy, "Moment of Consecration," 148–50.

> almost human, or a not quite human, fetus, gradually transforming itself into a human being. There can be no stages in the Eucharistic mystery: It is either bread or it is Christ, there is nothing in between.
>
> This truth is also indicated by the rubrics of the Mass which explicitly state that the priest genuflect in adoration after consecrating the bread and again after the consecration of the wine. This rubric would be senseless, not to say idolatrous, if Christ were not already fully present from that moment.[40]

It is probable that the moment of transubstantiation in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari comes during the epiclesis, which has power to signify transubstantiation in virtue of the dispersed words of the entire liturgy. Without this fuller context, or at least the better part of it, the epiclesis alone would be insufficient in sign-power.[41]

Even before the pontifical council's decision, there were already good reasons for supposing that, in principle, words other than the words of institution are capable of confecting the Eucharist. Although there is disagreement over the question among liturgical scholars, it does seem that the original authors of a number of rites intended that transubstantiation be signified and effected by the epiclesis, despite the fact that in them it comes *after* the words of institution. In the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the epiclesis goes out of its way to emphasize the real changing of the gifts at that moment. After the words of institution have been spoken, the priest implores God:

> We pray and beseech and implore thee to send down thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts . . . and ✠ make this bread ✠ the precious body of thy ✠ Christ. . . . And that which is ✠ in this chalice ✠ the precious blood of thy ✠ Christ. . . . ✠ *Changing* them ✠ by thy ✠ Holy Spirit.[42]

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[40] "Is the Consecration Gradual?" *Zenit*, November 25, 2003, www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=45171.

[41] The epiclesis and other texts from the anaphora will be quoted and discussed below, in section VI. For further precisions concerning the moment of transubstantiation, see the appendix to this article.

[42] The text is from *Eastern Catholic Worship*, ed. Donald Attwater (New York: Devin-Adair, 1945), 36. Earlier we saw Garrigou-Lagrange naming western theologians who interpret the epiclesis differently. The account of the learned Cardinal Bessarion is worthy of being taken seriously. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be *necessitated* by sacramental theology, and that is the point here. Arguments of fittingness, on the other hand, are a different matter; the western position has powerful Christological and pneumatological reasons in its favor. See Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole, OP, "La forme de l'eucharistie," *Revue Thomiste* 103 (2003): 93–103.

Similarly, in the Maronite rite, the priest kneels down after the words of institution and calls upon God to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, in much the same way as Elijah called down fire from heaven:

> Have mercy upon us, O my Lord, and send down on us thy Holy Spirit, the creator of life. *(Kneeling and touching the altar)* Hear me, O my Lord *(thrice)* and may thy living Holy Spirit come down and dwell in me and in this oblation. . . . *(Standing)* May he make this mystery ✠ the body ✠ of Christ ✠ our God, to be for our salvation. . . . May he also make this cup ✠ the blood ✠ of Christ ✠ our God, to be for our salvation.[43]

Priests celebrating the Maronite rite or the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom might have originally had an explicit intention to confect the Eucharist not *with*, but *after*, the words of institution. In recent centuries, such priests, if they wished to be faithful to Rome, have intended to confect the Eucharist by the words of institution. But the liturgical texts would seem to be a testimony from tradition indicating that the Roman theory may have its limits.[44] Western theologians have always been confronted by difficult questions concerning the Byzantine rite, such as how to explain the custom of pouring warm water into the chalice after the wine has already been consecrated. A number of such difficulties would evaporate if the Roman model were not superimposed on all rites. The question is rendered complex by the role of ecclesiastical authority, from which it is not permissible to prescind. If the sacraments have been entrusted to the Church—meaning, to her leaders in accordance with their place in the apostolic hierarchy—then it follows that the pope, as vicar of Christ, has the authority to specify *what* is to be taken as a Christ-given sacramental form or matter, as Pius XII did in the case of priestly ordination. Thus, the pope could lay it down that in the Greek rites—regardless of the tenor of the text or the original intention of the authors of the liturgy, which, in any case, is not always easy to ascertain—the words of institution are the Eucharistic form, in such a way that a priest must *intend* to consecrate

[43] Attwater, *Eastern Catholic Worship,* 152–53.

[44] Moreover, unlike various Eastern rites where the dispute centers around the relationship of the epiclesis to the words of institution, most scholars today hold that the Assyrian rite under discussion never contained the words of institution, even when the Assyrian church was in communion with the Roman church. If this is so, there could be no more reason to call their rite into question than any other rite of a church in communion with Rome. For opinions for and against this view of the original wording of the rite, see the bibliography in U. M. Lang, "Eucharist Without Institution Narrative? The *Anaphora of Addai and Mari* Revisited," *Divinitas* 47 (2004): 232–33, nos. 16 and 17.

when pronouncing those words. This the pope has power to do, but there would be cause for doing it only if some heretical misunderstanding threatened, as occurred when it was common for some among the Eastern Orthodox to dismiss the Latin rite as invalidated by its lack of an explicit epiclesis. There is no similar justification for making a final and universal determination about all possible liturgical rites, nor do I believe that such a determination has, in fact, been made.[45]

There is thus good reason to believe that earlier theologians in the west may have been too hasty in concluding that a specific set of words are the necessary, exclusive cause of transubstantiation. What can be affirmed without the slightest hesitation is that certain formulas, when spoken by the priest with the Church's intention (and other relevant conditions being satisfied), do have, of themselves, such power of causality. In other words, one may conclude: "Whenever the familiar formula (with due conditions met), then transubstantiation," but one is not entitled to conclude the converse, "Whenever transubstantiation, then the familiar formula." If one asserts that *X* accomplishes *Y*, this does not mean *Y* can be accomplished *only* by *X*. (Illustration: If baptism with water incorporates a person into the Mystical Body, this does not mean a person can be incorporated into the Mystical Body only by way of baptism with water, for he can be incorporated by desire for baptism with water or by enduring martyrdom.)[46] So, whenever the words of institution are spoken by a validly ordained minister with the correct intention within a Western rite, they accomplish what they signify; but this does not mean that what they signify, namely transubstantiation, cannot be accomplished except by means of such words. It *would* mean, however, that *within* the Roman or similar rite, transubstantiation occurs in no other way. Each rite has its own integrity, and hence what is true of one rite cannot, *ipso facto*, be held true of another rite, although it may turn out to be true in some cases. I will return to this key point later.

To summarize: St. Thomas's criterion that the priest speak *ex persona Christi* need not require that the priest, in order to consecrate validly, liturgically adopt certain words attributed *to* Christ. It necessitates that he act on behalf of Christ, with due authority from him, and for the purpose of doing what the High Priest intends. This recasting of the criterion does not imply disagreement with Thomas's explanation of why only a priest can consecrate.[47] Acting "from the person of Christ" must be understood as including the idea of acting "with the authority of Christ,"

[45] My reasons for asserting this will become clearer as the argument proceeds.
[46] Cf. *ST* III, q. 66, aa. 11–12.
[47] Cf. *ST* III, q. 82, a. 1.

which is given *only* to priests—whatever mode of speaking may happen to be used, as long as it has its origin in apostolic tradition (of which more anon). Furthermore, drawing a distinction between essential and accidental elements in the form and matter of the sacraments makes it possible to reconcile the past teachings of the magisterium with the argument of this article and with otherwise baffling evidence from approved non-Roman rites.

V. St. Thomas on the "Flexibility" of Sacramental Form

The reader may be thinking: All this is very interesting (or worrisome) speculation, but are there any grounds in the *ipsissima verba* of St. Thomas for holding the position put forward here? Does he have anything to say about a certain "flexibility" of sacramental form?

There can be no question about Aquinas's general approach to the issue at hand: There is one and only one form of the Eucharist, the formula confided by Christ to the apostles at the Last Supper, when he instituted the sacrament with full determination of due matter and form. But if we stop at this general level (as many do), we will miss some of the more interesting aspects of his treatment. First, it is clear that "due matter" is bread and wine, not leavened or unleavened bread, red or white wine, regardless of whether we know just which of these Christ used. So it is not a "photographic" imitation of Christ that is demanded, but an imitation of the essentials of his actions. Second, due form is undoubtedly, for St. Thomas, the words of institution; but *which* words, and why these? The exact liturgical words are not taken verbatim from any of the four New Testament accounts, but seem rather to derive from oral tradition delivered by the apostles to the churches they or their disciples founded.[48] Moreover, as St. Thomas knows, Mass is celebrated in languages

[48] The four institution accounts are Mt 26:26–29; Mk 14:22–25; Lk 22:17–20; and 1 Cor 11:23–26. Commentary on these passages is endless, but one may profitably consult Pierre Benoit, OP, "The Holy Eucharist," in idem, *Jesus and the Gospel,* trans. Benet Weatherhead, vol. 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), 95–97; Joseph Ratzinger, "The New Covenant," in idem, *Many Religions—One Covenant,* trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 58–67; and Robert J. Daly, SJ, "Eucharistic Origins: From the New Testament to the Liturgies of the Golden Age," *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 3–22. As Daly shows, the New Testament data and the knowledge at our disposal concerning early Church history demand a nuanced approach to the details of institution—an approach that need not, of course, deny that our Lord really did institute the sacrament of the Eucharist at the close of his earthly life. Even the positions of some of the more "critical" scholars agree with that of Aquinas when it comes to the substance of the words and actions of Jesus at the cenacle. Ibid., 6–9.

that have nothing to do with the language Jesus himself spoke at the Last Supper; once again, we see a focus on equivalent meaning, not exact quotation—or to put the point more technically, between *res significata* and *modus significandi*. It will prove illuminating, therefore, to examine more closely what Aquinas has to say about the divinely instituted forms of the sacraments, especially with regard to the Eucharist.

1. There Must Be a Definite "Form" or Verbal Formula

Words are necessary in the sacraments, St. Thomas explains, because sensible signs by themselves are insufficiently determinate. "In the sacraments, words and things, like form and matter, combine in the formation of one thing, in so far as the signification of things is completed by means of words."[49] Water (or better, the use of water) can signify both cleansing and refreshment, and although both of these effects are relevant to baptism, it is the former that is occurring spiritually; hence the words "I baptize [that is, wash] you" specify the meaning of the material and ritual. As Thomas puts it:

> When a thing is indifferent to many uses, it must be determined to one, if that one has to be effected. Now those things that are done in the sacraments can be done with various intent; for instance, washing with water, which is done in baptism, may be ordered to bodily cleanliness, to the health of the body, to amusement, and many other similar things. Consequently, it needs to be determined to one purpose, that is, the sacramental effect, by the intention of him who washes. And *this intention is expressed by the words* which are pronounced in the sacraments; for instance, the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father," etc.[50]

This passage establishes a minimum condition for the accomplishment of any sacrament: The intention behind the sacramental action must be discernible in words employed during its course.[51] Even if Jesus could have instituted an efficacious washing that was accompanied by no words, it would have been unworthy of his wisdom to do so, since this action would not be *indicative* of a definite effect. But the converse also

[49] *ST* III, q. 60, a. 6, ad 2.

[50] *ST* III, q. 64, a. 8, emphasis added. In the phrase that has been emphasized, note the three distinct concepts: (a) the right intention; (b) its expression or manifestation; and, (c) words as the suitable means for expressing intention. What is hidden in intention is made manifest in words.

[51] In saying this, I do not deny that our Lord could have conferred (and did confer) the effect of certain sacraments without conferring the *sacraments* as such: see, for example, *ST* III, q. 64, a. 3; q. 72, a. 2, ad 1; q. 84, a. 5, ad 3. My point is rather that sacramental word and deed are inseparable.

holds: *Any* words clearly indicative of the definite effect in question could have been suitably employed, although some would be more suitable than others. A general theological principle can be deduced: Precisely such words are necessary as suffice to complete the sacramental signification, that is, to specify the meaning of the material and ritual.[52]

St. Thomas holds, as does the entire Catholic tradition, that the sacraments of the New Law—physical signs (and causes) of the full perfection of human holiness[53]—were instituted directly by Jesus Christ. God, and no mere man, is the author of holiness, and Christ reserves to himself the authority to determine the channels of grace in his Church.[54] Nevertheless, it is one thing to believe that Christ instituted a given sacrament, and another to hold that he instituted also a precise verbal formula.[55] It is easy to conceive of several formulas that are capable of adequately determining or specifying the signification of material and ritual—an obvious example being the substitution of synonyms or paraphrase.[56]

[52] For sacramental *validity*, of course, more than a sufficiency of signification is required.

[53] Cf. *ST* III, q. 60, a. 2, ad 3; the exact phrasing is worth attention: "res denominantur a fine et complemento. Dispositio autem non est finis, sed perfectio. Et ideo ea quae significant dispositionem ad sanctitatem, non dicuntur sacramenta . . . sed solum ea quae significant perfectionem sanctitatis humanae."

[54] Cf. *ST* III, q. 60, a. 5; q. 64, aa. 2 and 4.

[55] On the complex question of Christ's personal institution of the sacraments, see Leeming, *Sacramental Theology*, 393 ff. After showing the impossibility of holding a merely mediate or general institution, Leeming then defends and explains the proposition: "An *immediate* institution by Christ of all the sacraments does not necessarily involve his *specific* determination of the matter and form of the rite of each sacrament" (417, emphasis added; cf. 417–31). The common theological opinion has tended to be that Christ left virtually no "room" for ecclesiastical determination in regard to the two greatest sacraments, baptism and Eucharist—these being the alpha and omega of the spiritual life, its initiation and consummation (*ST* III, q. 73, a. 3; cf. q. 65, a. 3)—but did leave some room in regard to the other five sacraments. As Journet summarizes: "Christ instituted all the sacraments immediately; some, namely baptism and the Eucharist, in all their details; others—such at least is the opinion of many theologians—by giving the Church power to determine what matter and form should be valid. It was thus, according to the Council of Florence (Denz., nos. 698 and 701), that, in the sacrament of Confirmation, the imposition of hands was replaced, in East and West, by the application of chrism; and that, in the sacrament of Order, the imposition of hands was replaced, in the West, by the tradition of the instruments. . . . This again may be explained by the fact that in the Middle Ages the indicative formula of the sacrament of Penance replaced the deprecatory." *The Church of the Word Incarnate,* trans. A. H. C. Downes (London: Sheed & Ward, 1954), 170.

[56] In q. 60, a. 7, ad 2, Thomas maintains that synonyms can be ranked as more or less common, and that the more common words should be used in administering the

Thus, it is clear that the meaning of a certain action or element can be announced more or less directly, more or less diffusely.

All the same, St. Thomas leaves no doubt about where he draws the line:

> The dispensation of the sacraments pertains to the Church's ministers, but their consecration is from God Himself. And so the Church's ministers do not have anything to decree with regard to the form of consecration, but [only] with regard to the use of the sacrament and the manner of celebrating it.[57]

While for Thomas "the consecration is accomplished *only* by the words of Christ," still "it is necessary to add other words for the preparation of the people partaking."[58] The differences in Eucharistic liturgies are differences in the manner of building up to, receiving worthily, and rendering thanks for the sublime mystery of the living, life-giving Word of God, made present upon the altar by two simple sentences.

2. Some Diversity of Formulation Is Possible

As we might expect, therefore, we do not find exact uniformity of wording or ritual in the administration of sacraments in the various rites of the Church. We find, rather, a *general* uniformity of verbal signification: All the rites *signify* the same mystery to be accomplished by the same material elements, but they go about signifying it in different ways. This is neither surprising not problematic. As an example of the institution of determinate words, Thomas points to the formula of baptism, which Jesus manifestly imposed: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (Mt 28:19).[59] It is the italicized portion that is common to East and West, for the Latin priest says "I baptize you in the name of . . . ," while the Greek priest says

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sacraments. In general, he is right about synonyms; the words "yawning" or "bread making" are much more familiar than their esoteric counterparts, "pandiculation" and "panification." On the other hand, in practice, it is not always easy to determine how things ought to be translated, as controversies over the translation of the *Missale Romanum* have shown. When the priest says "I baptize you. . . ," he is using a very familiar phrase; yet how many people know that "baptize" means "wash"? In a sense, "baptize" is the remotest possible word to use in this situation, yet most would not feel we should replace it with something else. How many of the faithful know that "Christ" means "anointed one" or that "Messiah" could be substituted for "Christ"? Familiarity does not, of itself, generate understanding.

[57] *ST* III, q. 83, a. 3, ad 8.

[58] *ST* III, q. 83, a. 4, ad 1.

[59] *ST* III, q. 60, a. 7, s.c.

"The servant of God, [N.], is baptized in the name of. . . ."[60] There is no *essential* difference between these formulas, though the Latin one accentuates the instrumental causality of the priest who speaks as agent, while the passive mood of the Greek emphasizes the objectivity, as it were, of the event taking place—the minister vanishes, while the servant, the new Christian, is "being baptized" by Christ. (Since baptism is considered to be a sacrament whose form and matter are rigidly determined from the start by divine institution,[61] we can complicate matters further by noting that Thomas was one among many who allowed the possibility that, through a special divine provision on their behalf, the apostles may have baptized in the name of Christ alone.)[62] Thomas maintains that a determinate form is even more required than determinate matter, since matter is for the sake of form and form gives being to matter, as we see in all natural things.[63] Still, the conclusion that follows is that there must be *determinateness of form*, not that there can be only one formula. In the same article, Thomas states that the crucial point is the "sense of the words":

> As Augustine says in *Tractates on John* (tract. 80, on Jn 15:3), the word works in sacraments "not because it is spoken," that is, not according to the exterior sound of the voice, "but because it is believed," that is, according to the sense of the words that is held by faith *[sensum verborum qui fide tenetur]*. And this *sense* indeed is the same among all men, although they are not the same utterances as regards sound. And therefore if such a sense is set forth in the words of anyone's language, the sacrament is perfected.[64]

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[60] *ST* III, q. 60, a. 8, s.c.: "Certain words are inserted by some in the sacramental forms, which are not inserted by others: thus the Latins baptize under this form . . . whereas the Greeks use the following form. . . . Yet both confer the sacrament validly. Therefore it is lawful to add something to, or to take something from, the sacramental forms." Cf. *ST* III, q. 67, a. 6; *In IV Sent.* d. 3, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 2, arg. 1.

[61] *ST* III, q. 60, a. 7, s.c.

[62] Because the Acts of the Apostles speaks of baptizing done "in the name of Christ" (apparently formulaic texts can be seen at Acts 2:38, 8:16, and 19:5), some have argued that the early Church really baptized in this name, without mention of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Modern scholars disagree over the issue, but it serves well to illustrate the principle under discussion. (For arguments against taking such texts to be formulaic and for bibliography, see Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, SJ, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 1998], 266–67). Aquinas discusses both this possible apostolic custom and the Church's Trinitarian formula at *ST* III, q. 66, a. 6; see especially the responses to the first and second objections. If one may judge from the tenor of the response, he does not seem particularly enthusiastic about the idea.

[63] *ST* III, q. 60, a. 7.

[64] *ST* III, q. 60, a. 7, ad 1.

Here he is thinking of translation into different languages, but his point would accommodate also the use of different phrases, provided they signify the selfsame mystery with no ambiguity.

A number of interesting points emerge from an article (q. 60, a. 8) on whether it is lawful to add anything to the words in which the sacramental form consists. In Thomas's mind, the first objection overshoots the mark by equating sacramental words with the wording of divine revelation, while the second objection overshoots the mark by comparing the exact wording of a sacramental formula with natural or numerical species, so that the least change would be enough to obliterate the essence.[65] The reply to the latter is particularly helpful:

> Words pertain to the form of a sacrament by reason of the sense signified by them *[ratione sensus significati]*. And so, whatever addition or subtraction of words may be made that does not add to or take away from the due sense *[debito sensui]* does not destroy the essence of the sacrament.[66]

Similarly, in the reply to the third objection, Thomas considers whether change of word order and interruptions invalidate a sacrament and concludes that if the order is changed in such a way that the *sense of the words* does not vary or if the interruptions do not destroy the minister's intention, the sacrament is not invalidated. Though his argument is about moving around or interrupting words within a traditional formula, the general principle seems to be that what is crucial is the *sense* or *meaning* of the words employed in the formula and that this sense can be preserved even under a variety of modifications. It is fair to assume that in Thomas's mind, as a rule, one formula will prove superior to another legitimate one (for example, he values the Latin baptismal formula more

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[65] The first objection contains the premise: "these sacramental words are not of less importance than are the words of Scripture," but as it is not lawful to add to or subtract from the latter, so too with the former—implying that the exact words by which sacraments are conferred are unique and fixed. This is obviously false at the verbal level, since several sacraments are conferred through varying formulas that convey *essentially* the same meaning, as Thomas was well aware (the Greek and Latin formulas of baptism are the example he mentions in the *sed contra* of this article). In reply he says, pointedly: "if anyone were to pretend that something is *essential* to a sacramental form that is not so, it would amount to the same" (namely, forgery of the sacred text). Of course, Thomas himself believes that Jesus expressly revealed the exact and unchanging form of the Eucharist. But it will be the burden of my argument that from the fact that our Lord employed a definite form, Thomas need not have concluded that there *could not* be another form.

[66] *ST* III, q. 60, a. 8, ad 2.

than the Greek,[67] and strongly implies that while a formula adding flourishes to the Trinitarian persons or adding an invocation of the Virgin Mary may be valid, it is not desirable).[68] In the body of this article, our attention is turned to two aspects, both relevant to my overall argument:

> With regard to all the variations that may occur in the sacramental forms, two points seem to call for our attention. One is on the part of the person who says the words, and whose *intention* is essential to the sacrament. Wherefore if he intends by such addition or suppression to perform a rite other from that which is *recognized by the Church*, it seems that the sacrament is invalid: because he seems not to intend to do what the Church does. The other point to be considered is the *meaning of the words*. For since in the sacraments, the words produce an effect according to the sense that they convey, as stated above,[69] we must see whether the change of words destroys the essential sense of the words, because then the sacrament is clearly rendered invalid. (*ST* III, q. 60, a. 8)

For Thomas, then, the question of forms resolves to these two issues: the minister's intention (does he intend to do what the Church intends to do, which can be verified by his correct use of a rite recognized by the Church)[70] and the meaning of the words he employs. Notably, the words are said to produce their effect "according to the sense they convey," not according to their accidental features—otherwise, for their validity the words of consecration given by our Lord would have to be spoken in Aramaic, with a certain timbre of voice. Aquinas himself goes on to say that the essential sense is destroyed "if any substantial part of the sacramental form be suppressed."[71] For example, if one of the names of the Trinitarian

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[67] At least he appears to prefer it, because it expresses both the principal agent (the Trinity) and the instrumental agent (the minister): cf. *ST* III, q. 66, a. 5, ad 1.

[68] *ST* III, q. 60, a. 8. The question of what is desirable or not, or more technically what is licit or not, is most often presented by Aquinas in terms of "the custom of the Church," which is held, as a matter of faith, to be derived from Christ and the apostles. In other words, whatever the Church legislates to be done, is assumed, *ipso facto,* to be what Christ and his apostles willed and continue to will. We will meet this view in several passages cited below.

[69] A reference to *ST* III, q. 60, a. 7, ad 1.

[70] *ST* III, q. 64, a. 8, ad 2: "The minister of a sacrament acts in the person of the whole Church, whose minister he is; while in the words uttered by him, the intention of the Church is expressed; and that this suffices for the validity of the sacrament, except the contrary be expressed on the part either of the minister or of the recipient of the sacrament."

[71] "Si diminuatur aliquid eorum quae sunt de substantia formae sacramentalis." *ST* III, q. 60, a. 8. And so, as always, we seem to be brought back to the fundamental question: By whom or by what authority is the substantiality or essentiality of a

persons is omitted, baptism is invalid.[72] Then he gives an example of an omission that does *not* invalidate the sacrament—the omission of the word *enim* in the form of the Eucharist *(Hoc est enim corpus meum)*. This seems an obvious point because the omission is so incidental to the meaning of the phrase, but we have to ask why it should be seen as incidental, if, *per hypothesis,* the entire formula comes from the Lord himself. Surely, on that hypothesis, *every* word needs to be spoken. (Here is one place where St. Thomas could have argued that an equivalent phrase or description, if our Lord had permitted it to be handed down by the apostles, would also be valid.)[73] Thomas then argues that additions follow the same rule: If the addition does not affect the substance of the form, it does not invalidate the sacrament, though it may reflect irreverence or impertinence to introduce things not included in the rite of the Church; but if they change the meaning of the form, then it is invalidated.

The word *enim* in the formula for the consecration of the bread is admitted to be inessential, yet deserving of honor because it is "in accord with the custom of the Roman church derived from the blessed apostle Peter."[74] Such a remark recognizes the role of apostolic tradition in preserving sacramental form, even if Thomas does not seem to think that there is, or could be, notable difference in the forms; for him it would be a question of having or lacking a word like *enim*, or exhibiting a variation in word order, not a question of having or lacking the decisive sentence from the Last Supper.[75]

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given sacramental form determined? It is the Church herself who must determine this, in any and every case where a dispute arises. Earlier conciliar and papal teaching is also subject to continual authoritative interpretation that clarifies it and applies it to new situations.

[72] That is, such a baptism could not be valid in *ordinary* circumstances. If, for the sake of argument, we grant that a single-name formula was used (cf. note 62 above), a baptism performed thusly was valid *only* because it was done according to a ritual vouchsafed to the apostles as a temporary and exceptional measure. If one were *now* to return to this manner of baptizing, the baptism would *not* be valid, precisely on account of historical discontinuity. The Church's method of determining presently the validity or invalidity of various forms of baptism stands in agreement with this; no form of baptism is now accepted that does not mention the three Persons of the Trinity.

[73] Cf. *ST* III, q. 64, a. 2, ad 1, quoted below at note 98.

[74] *ST* III, q. 78, a. 2, ad 4.

[75] Were he writing now, he would have to reckon with the fact that the Roman church has modified both the formula for the bread (by adding back to it the phrase "which will be given up for you," lacking in the older *Ordo Missae*; cf. *ST* III, q. 78, a. 3, obj. 7) and that for the wine (by removing the phrase "mystery of faith" to after the elevation of the chalice). Here it is not my purpose to argue

What we have seen, then, is a willingness to recognize variability of form if the difference does not amount to anything "substantive." The question is: Just how much variability is compatible with substantial unity? The *enim* is as incidental as can be. Less incidental is a variation Thomas observes in the form of confirmation. He poses the objection thus:

> Just as the sacrament is the same among all, so also the form should be the same, for any given thing has unity, as also being, from its form. But not all use this form; for some say: "I confirm you with the chrism of sanctification" [instead of "chrism of salvation"]. Therefore this is not the fitting form of this sacrament.[76]

In his reply, he does not say "actually, the different versions are identical." Rather, because "sanctity is the cause of salvation," it follows that "what is said—'chrism of salvation' and 'chrism of sanctification'—both go back to the same thing."[77] Here, a logical structure is brought to bear on the problem; it is no longer a question of simple translation, but of a conceptual relationship between cause and effect. A similar point is made when Thomas accepts Ambrose's argument that the apostles were permitted to baptize in the name of Jesus because this name signifies the Son of God, and *implicit* in any mention of the Son is the Father and the Holy Spirit.[78]

3. The Church's Tradition Is a Fundamental Norm

Aquinas is convinced both by tradition and by reason that there is, in fact, no other form of the Eucharist, and maybe even that there *could* not be

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for or against this modification, but only to point out that the Church's authority extends to more aspects of the form than Aquinas recognized. In the apostolic constitution *Missale Romanum* of April 30, 1969, Paul VI wrote: "We have ordered that the words of the Lord be one and the same in every formula of the Canon. Accordingly, We will that in each Eucharistic Prayer that formula be pronounced thus: over the bread: 'Accipite et manducate [etc.]'; and over the chalice: 'Accipite et bibite [etc.].' The words 'The mystery of faith' *(mysterium fidei)*, however, have been taken out of the context of the words of Christ the Lord. Pronounced by the priest, they constitute as it were an occasion for an acclamation of the faithful."

[76] *ST* III, q. 72, a. 4, obj. 2.

[77] "In idem redit quod dicitur 'chrismate salutis', et 'sanctificationis.' " *ST* III, q. 72, a. 4, ad 2.

[78] *ST* III, q. 66, a. 6, ad 2, cited and discussed in note 111 below; cf. notes 62 and 72 above.

another.[79] The Gospel of Matthew is an obvious witness.[80] The Fathers are regularly invoked on this point, for example, St. Hilary ("by Christ's own declaration, and by our faith, his flesh is food indeed and his blood is drink indeed")[81] and St. Ambrose ("The consecration happens by the words and sayings of the Lord Jesus. . . . [W]here the sacrament is confected, then the priest does not use his own words, but uses the words of Christ").[82] The Last Supper formula is taken as an undisputed premise in many arguments. For example, the view that the substances of bread and wine continue to exist after consecration is rejected as "contrary to the form of this sacrament, in which it is said: 'This is my body.' This would not be true if the substance of bread remained there; for the substance of bread is never the body of Christ. But rather it would have to be said: 'Here is my body.' "[83]

However, there are times when St. Thomas speaks in a way that is less exclusive. The main response in the very article in which he defends the customary formula begins: "This is a fitting form of the consecration of the bread;"[84] if he had wanted to single out the formula as the *only* suitable form, he could easily have done so. He defends the form on the basis of its significatory value: "[T]he form of a sacrament must signify that which is effected in the sacrament. Hence, too, the form of the consecration of the bread should signify the very conversion of bread into the body of Christ." We have here a perfect account of what a Eucharistic form must be and do. The remainder of the account, closely scrutinized, establishes only that the customary formula fulfills its function most admirably;[85] it leaves open the possibility of another formula whose validity would be guaranteed by a like fulfillment of function. What does the form need to express? The conversion of the gifts as a completed fact *[in*

[79] St. Thomas, of course, holds that Christ instituted the Eucharist with determinate words that ipso facto count as the only form of the sacrament (*ST* III, q. 60, a. 7, and elsewhere, esp. q. 78). While it is obvious that our Lord did employ determinate words, as does anyone who speaks his thoughts, it is not so obvious that what he enacted can be signified in no other words than the ones he used.

[80] *ST* III, q. 78, a. 2: "The Lord used this form in consecrating, as is clear in Matthew 26:26." See also q. 78, a. 4.

[81] *ST* III, q. 75, a. 1, s.c.

[82] *ST* III, q. 78, a. 1, s.c.

[83] *ST* III, q. 75, a. 2; cf. q. 78, a. 2.

[84] "[H]aec est conveniens forma consecrationis panis." *ST* III, q. 78, a. 2.

[85] St. Thomas does offer a convincing defense of the unsurpassable fittingness of the words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper and preserved in the vast majority of liturgical rites. For an excellent summary of how Aquinas derives his Eucharistic theology from these words, see Jeremy Holmes, "St. Thomas Aquinas on the Eucharist," *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* 103, no. 6 (March 2003): 24–31.

facto esse], the *terminus a quo*, and the *terminus ad quem*.[86] For the chalice, the *terminus ad quem* has to specify not only the blood of Christ, but the blood of the new covenant poured out for the remission of sins, because it is precisely the "effect of the Passion" that is being signified in the separate consecration of the wine. Put differently, the form of the Eucharist—viewing both consecrations together as one totality[87]—ought to signify: (1) what occurs, namely, a change in substance; (2) the sacrament's efficient cause in the past, namely the Passion; (3) the present sanctification of the believer; and (4) the future glory to which the sacrament leads.[88]

St. Thomas sometimes overdetermines the form. For example, he takes the phrase *mysterium fidei* to be part of the form of the consecration of the wine[89]—a position no longer defensible after the promulgation of the *Missale Romanum* of Paul VI. What is more interesting is an observation he makes to explain why the phrasing of the prayers is not to be found verbatim in the Gospels: "The Evangelists did not intend to hand down the forms of the sacraments, which had to be kept hidden in the early Church, as Dionysius says. . . . Rather they intended to put together the history of Christ." The various elements can, however, be gathered either from Scripture or from "the tradition of the Lord, which comes to

[86] Further nuances are added, for example that the conversion has to be signified by a substantive verb in the indicative mood and the present tense (*ST* III, q. 78, a. 2, ad 2). It would take us too far afield to consider how this is verified in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, but it is interesting to note how many of Thomas's "desiderata" for an ideal Eucharistic form can be verified in this anaphora as a whole. What it lacks, of course, is a single simple statement of the conversion, which it rather describes at length, beseeching the Lord to make it happen. Nevertheless, the priest is asking that it happen to the sacramental gifts of bread and wine present before him. Hence nothing essential appears to be lacking from the scenario.

[87] *ST* III, q. 73, a. 2.

[88] *ST* III, q. 78, a. 3, ad 2 and ad 3; cf. q. 82, a. 3, ad 1.

[89] See, for example, *ST* III, q. 78, a. 3, esp. ad 9. This opinion is taken up by the Roman Catechism: "We are then firmly to believe that it [the form] consists in the following words" (stating then the formula as printed in the missal prior to 1969). "Concerning this form no one can doubt. . . . It is plain that no other words constitute the form" (*The Catechism of the Council of Trent,* trans. John A. McHugh, OP, and Charles J. Callan, OP [Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1982], 225; cf. 225–28). We have here one indication among many that this catechism does not possess inherent magisterial authority, but only as much authority as any given proposition in it bears from the approval of the ordinary or extraordinary magisterium. See the judicious remarks on the Roman Catechism in James Likoudis and Kenneth D. Whitehead, *The Pope, the Council, and the Mass* (West Hanover, MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 1981), 105–12.

the Church through the apostles."[90] This intriguing contrast between evangelical history and ecclesial tradition is made several times in the saint's writings, and each place is worth a look.

In the commentary on Matthew, we read:

> "For this is my blood," etc. These are the words of consecration. And notice that there is a difference between these words [in Matthew] and the words used by the Church [in her liturgy]. The Church adds, "This is the cup." Likewise, where he says, "of the new testament," the Church adds, "of the new *and eternal* testament." And where he says, "for many," the Church adds "*for you* and for many," etc. So where does the Church get this form from? One should say that, as Dionysius says, the evangelists did not intend to hand down the forms of the sacraments, but kept them as secrets; hence they meant only to recount the history. So where does the Church get it from? From the apostles' ordinance *[a constitutione apostolorum]*. Hence Paul said: "I will arrange the rest when I come" (1 Cor 11:34).[91]

The quotations from the Pseudo-Dionysian *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and 1 Corinthians 11:34 are often yoked.[92] For instance, when it is objected that the formula of confirmation is nowhere recorded in Scripture—the sort of objection that was to become especially influential at the time of the Reformation, with its novel doctrine of *sola scriptura*—Thomas

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[90] *ST* III, q. 78, a. 3, ad 9: "Evangelistae non intendebant tradere formas sacramentorum, quas in primitiva ecclesia oportebat esse occultas, ut dicit Dionysius, in fine Ecclesiasticae Hierarchiae. Sed intenderunt historiam de Christo texere. Et tamen omnia haec verba fere ex diversis Scripturae locis accipi possunt. . . . Quod autem additur, 'aeterni,' et iterum, 'mysterium fidei,' ex traditione Domini habetur, quae ad ecclesiam per apostolos pervenit, secundum illud 1 Cor 11, 'ego accepi a Domino quod et tradidi vobis.' "

[91] *Super Matthaeum* 26, lec. 4, no. 2200 in the Marietti edition. The *reportatio* on Matthew, though it has come down to us in a state that leaves much to be desired, is still a valuable resource when used in conjunction with other more reliable texts.

[92] The RSV renders 1 Cor 11:34: "About the other things I will give directions when I come." It should be noted that the context (1 Cor 11) is Paul's reproof of the church of Corinth for its careless and even scandalous manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper (cf. vv. 17–22), his teaching about the mystical significance of this meal (vv. 23–32), and his partial advice for clearing up the difficulties (vv. 33–34). He concludes with the statement (v. 34) that St. Thomas often quotes, and rightly, to show that the apostle left many matters of teaching and governance for his personal visitations and had no intention of committing everything to paper (cf. v. 2). In short, there are few better chapters in St. Paul for showing the inseparable connection between apostolicity, oral tradition, and sacramental life.

replies: When the apostles acted as ministers of this sacrament, "they used both matter and form according to Christ's command. For the apostles, in conferring the sacraments, observed many things which are not handed down in the Scriptures that are in general use."[93] He then cites the familiar text from Dionysius about the secret *traditio* of the mysteries and concludes with 1 Corinthians 11:34 as a proof text.

A parallel passage occurs within the commentary on the same chapter of 1 Corinthians, where St. Paul speaks of what he received from the Lord and delivered to the Church, as regards the celebration of "the Lord's Supper" (cf. 1 Cor 11:20). Thomas cites a view *(quidam dicunt)*: The words sufficient for consecration are the ones recorded in Scripture, so *any* of the scriptural formulations, as such, could be taken up and employed at Mass.[94] But instead of introducing an Augustinian harmonization of texts to minimize the differences in accounts, Thomas appeals to oral tradition:

> It seems more probable to say that consecration is accomplished only by those words that the Church, built from the tradition of the apostles, uses. For the Evangelists intend to recount the words of the Lord as far as this pertains to the notion of history, but not according as they are ordered to the consecration of sacraments, which were held in secret in the primitive Church on account of infidels.[95]

[93] *ST* III, q. 72, a. 4, ad 1.

[94] Here as elsewhere, Thomas shows himself a sensitive reader of Scripture, fully alert to the verbal differences, both obvious and subtle, in different accounts. He knows, moreover, that the words of consecration used in the liturgy are a synthesis and interpretation, not a straightforward quotation from a single Gospel or from 1 Corinthians. Cf. *ST* III, q. 78, a. 3, ad 9 (a text partially quoted above), which shows where in the New Testament each part of the formula is derived from, except for phrases attributed to oral tradition.

[95] *Super I Cor.,* 11, lec. 6, no. 680 in the Marietti edition. The first sentence reads in the original: "Probabilius autem dici videtur quod illis solis verbis perficitur consecratio, quibus ecclesia utitur ex traditione apostolorum structa." The last phrase could also be construed to be saying that the formula itself is constructed from an apostolic tradition. It is compatible with such ideas in Aquinas to assume that since the Eucharist is first and foremost a mystery celebrated in the liturgy, we can expect to find some slight differences depending on the liturgical practices of different churches that trace their origins (directly or indirectly) to the apostles. As Louis Bouyer summarizes: "It does seem that [Joachim] Jeremias was right in explaining the divergencies of detail in the institution accounts that the New Testament has handed down to us by the fact that these were already different local liturgical formulations" (*Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer,* trans. Charles Underhill Quinn [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968], 157). Dom Leclercq gathers evidence for no fewer than eighty-nine variations in the formulas for consecration over the course of the Church's history: cf. *Dictionnaire d'archéologie Chrétienne et de liturgie,* col. 730–50.

This account from *Super 1 Cor.* has some relevance for the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, which all historians and theologians accept as a rite of apostolic origin (however much they may disagree about its initial structure and content),[96] but which appears to embody a sacramental form that does not correspond closely to any of the formulaic elements in the written records of revelation. As for its content or *res significata*, it nevertheless corresponds in a dispersed way to the evident meaning of the written records—of that there can be no doubt.

Closely related to apostolic tradition is the "custom of the Church," which for St. Thomas constitutes a potent argument employed many times, notably in his commentary on the rite of the Eucharist.[97] Here, five out of six articles invoke the practice or custom of the Church as the *sed contra* arguments: Against objections to the times for celebrating Mass "is the custom that the Church observes in accord with the statutes of the canons" (a. 2); against objections to sacred building and vessels, "the things that are decreed by the Church are ordained by Christ himself" (a. 3); against objections to various ritual actions "is the custom of the Church, which cannot err, as being instructed by the Holy Spirit" (a. 5); against objections to the Eucharistic ritual on the grounds of various problems that might arise during it is the fact that "the Church, like God, does not command anything impossible" (a. 6). The *sed contra* of article 4, which expounds the text of the Mass, is particularly telling:

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[96] Of this anaphora Bouyer says: "undoubtedly by reason of its great age, the original text of these prayers was practically entirely respected. . . . And everything leads us to believe that this prayer is the most ancient Christian Eucharistic composition to which we can have access today. It represents a model that is quite different from the prayers of the patristic period. On the other hand, although all these expressions [in it] are Christian, it is still molded after the pattern of the Jewish prayers for the last cup of the meal" (*Eucharist,* 146–47). Bouyer himself agrees with Botte and other scholars that, on the basis of internal and external evidence, the original form of the anaphora must have contained words of institution. Ibid., 150–58.

[97] *ST* III, q. 83. But it is a commonplace throughout St. Thomas's works. Thus the *sed contra* to q. 66, a. 10—whether the Church observes a suitable rite in baptizing—reads: "The Church is ruled by the Holy Spirit, who does nothing inordinate." This is quite similar to other favorite *sed contra* strategies: "The authority of Scripture suffices" (for example, *ST* I, q. 69, a. 1; all articles of qq. 70–72; q. 91, a. 4; and q. 108, a. 5); "The authority of our Lord [or of Christ] suffices" (for example, *ST* I, q. 16, a. 5; and q. 27, a. 1; I–II, q. 3, a. 4; and q. 18, a. 1; II–II, q. 83, a. 9). Christopher Kaczor also recognizes the importance of the type of argument that appeals to local liturgical custom: see "Thomas Aquinas on the Development of Doctrine," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 290–91.

> It says in *On Consecration* [of the *Decretals*], dist. 1: "James, the Lord's blood relative, and Basil, bishop of Caesarea, redacted *[ediderunt]* the celebration of the Mass." From their authority it is evident that everything said in connection with the Mass is fittingly said *[Ex quorum auctoritate patet convenienter singula circa hoc dici]*.

In a comment on the nature of liturgy and its ancient roots, St. Thomas appraises the purpose of everything said and done at Mass:

> Human institutions observed in the sacraments are not essential to the sacrament, but belong to the solemnity that is added to the sacraments in order to arouse devotion and reverence in their recipients. But those things that are essential to the sacrament are instituted by Christ himself, who is God and man. And although they are not all handed down in the Scriptures, yet the Church holds them from the intimate tradition of the apostles *[ex familiari apostolorum traditione]*, as the Apostle says: "The rest I will set in order when I come" (1 Cor 11:34).[98]

Although Thomas considered that the form of the Eucharist had been precisely and singly determined by the Lord, he knew, at least to some extent, that there were different traditions when it came to the rite of Mass and the manner of conferring various sacraments.[99] In regard to such traditions, his position is simple and sound: If it is an ancient tradition—if, that is, it stems from the apostles—it is valid.[100] More than that,

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[98] *ST* III, q. 64, a. 2, ad 1. There are many such statements in the treatise on the sacraments, but they all come back to the same fundamental intuition: there is a worthy manner of celebrating the mysteries—*any* of the sacramental mysteries, especially the Eucharist. The more devotion we bring to the sacrament, the more we are rendered apt to receive its fruits.

[99] Did he know, one wonders, that the liturgy redacted by St. James and St. Basil (see the *sed contra* of q. 83, a. 4, quoted just above) was not the Roman rite he knew, but an oriental rite? Either he is saying, with a pardonable naïveté, that there is basically only one rite and it goes back to James, the cousin of Jesus, and Basil, bishop of Caesarea, or his argument is meant to imply that all the Church's rites are, by extension, traceable back to such apostolic roots. As my approach here is intended to be predominantly speculative, I leave aside many intriguing questions about the sources—and limits—of Aquinas's knowledge of liturgical rites and their history. For indications, see two classic studies from the septicentennial harvest: Liam G. Walsh, OP, "Liturgy in the Theology of St. Thomas," *Thomist* 38 (1974): 557–83; and Pedro Fernandez, OP, "Liturgia y Teologia en la 'Summa' de santo Tomas," *Angelicum* 51 (1974): 383–18. More recently there is David Berger's *Thomas Aquinas and the Liturgy,* trans. Christopher Grosz (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2004), cf. 11–26.

[100] See Thomas's remarks on the Eastern custom of using leavened bread (*ST* III, q. 74, a. 4). One of his rare mistakes in sacramental theology concerned the adding of water to the consecrated chalice. He argued that this should not be done

one sins gravely by not observing one's own rite in its fullness, as required by ecclesiastical authorities.[101] In question 83 we find an important elaboration on the role of tradition, with Aquinas taking the opportunity to identify, once again, the words that truly, in his view, constitute the form:

> As is said in John 21:25, many things were done or said by the Lord which the Evangelists did not write down. Among these was the fact that the Lord lifted his eyes up to heaven at the supper, which nevertheless the Church receives from the tradition of the apostles. For it seems reasonable that the one who lifted his eyes to the Father at the resurrection of Lazarus (as is found in Jn 11:41) and in the prayer he made for the disciples (Jn 17:1) would do this all the more in the institution of this sacrament, as in a more potent thing. And the fact that it [the text of the Mass] says *manducate* and not *comedite* makes no difference as regards the meaning *[non differt quantum ad sensum]*. Nor does what was said [in the objection] amount to much, especially since those words ["Take and eat"] do not belong to the form, as was said above.[102] And the "all of you" which is added is implied in the words of the Gospel, although it is not expressed, for Jesus himself had said: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, you shall not have life in you" (Jn 6:54).[103]

In most cases, Thomas does not pause to consider where a given rite of the Church comes from or how it acquired canonical force; enough for him is the common knowledge that it is the rite she approves and requires, for the benefit of all.[104] He takes it for granted, and rightly so,

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because the dilution would corrupt some part of the species of wine, and thus remove the condition for the possibility of Christ's presence under those species (*ST* III, q. 77, a. 8; q. 83, a. 6, ad 4). For many centuries, however, the Church has allowed the Greek custom of pouring the zeon or warm water into the consecrated chalice—a custom of which Thomas does not seem to have been aware. Pope Benedict XIV (1740–1758) expressly willed that this and similar rites be preserved: see his encyclical *Allatae sunt* of July 26, 1755, no. 26; cf. note 108 below.

101 See, for example, *ST* III, q. 78, a. 1, ad 4.

102 A reference to *ST* III, q. 78, a. 1.

103 *ST* III, q. 83, a. 4, ad 2. The last point is this: Jesus is reported to have spoken to "you," clearly "all of you," about the necessity of "eating the flesh of the Son of Man." Therefore, it is fitting to say in the liturgy: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it."

104 It is relevant at this point to recall a key theme of Thomas's moral theology, namely the theme of obedience to lawful ministers, sacred and secular, as a pathway to spiritual perfection. For Thomas it is far more important, more an expression of charity, that we do what we are asked or commanded to do by our superiors than that we do something that may be objectively superior. (It goes without saying that no one has authority to command us to do something sinful, and hence there is no obligation to fulfill such a command. It would not even be a command, but an act of violence.)

that the Church's traditional practice *as such* is worthy of acceptance.[105] For example, arguing in support of the Roman ritual of confirmation:

> Our Lord promised his faithful (Mt 18:20) saying: "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And therefore we must hold firmly that the Church's determinations *[ordinationes]* are directed by the wisdom of Christ. And for this reason we must look upon it as *certain* that the rite observed by the Church, in this and the other sacraments, is appropriate.[106]

Now, it is not enough to say that some practice "has always been done"; one must consider whether it is being done as inherited from the apostles, and in communion with the other churches, especially the church of Rome,

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[105] Perhaps the most forceful text in this regard is a famous statement at *ST* II–II, q. 10, a. 12: "The Church's custom has the greatest authority and ought to be jealously observed in all things *[maximam habet auctoritatem ecclesiae consuetudo, quae semper est in omnibus aemulanda]*, since the very doctrine of catholic doctors derives its authority from the Church; hence we ought to abide by the Church's authority rather than by that of an Augustine or a Jerome or of any doctor whatever." (See the similar remark at *ST* II–II, q. 11, a. 2, ad 3, where the Church's authority is said to "reside chiefly in the Sovereign Pontiff *[in summo pontifice]* . . . against whose authority neither Jerome nor Augustine nor any of the holy doctors defended their opinion.") The Church's doctrine *and* practice constitute the supreme measure for the believer, above all for the theologian who dares to probe into the mysteries of faith (taking "mysteries" in its double sense—the content of worship and the content of revelation). This in itself constitutes a point of departure for a powerful critique of the liturgical reform in the manner in which it was carried out after the Second Vatican Council—namely, by the adroit scheming of a clique of avant-garde specialists far out of touch with ordinary believers, and guided by theories incompatible with Catholic tradition. But this is quite a distinct topic. It is surely possible, at any rate, to raise grave objections against prudential or disciplinary decisions without violating the spirit of obedience praised in the preceding note. We have no meager example of this in the prepapal writings of Pope Benedict XVI.

I owe the two citations above to Edward A. Synan's suggestive article "Brother Thomas, the Master, and the Masters," in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274–1974: Commemorative Studies*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 219–42. Synan discusses how Aquinas, throughout his career, showed a willingness to contest or dismiss the authority of this or that theologian or faculty if he judged it to be in conflict with what he found recorded in Scripture or in collections of papal or conciliar writings. In this habitual way of acting, as in his latent ecclesiology, he shows himself a defender of the primacy of a transnational and transtemporal "Roman" (that is, papal and conciliar) magisterium over against the idiosyncrasies of locality and period.

[106] *ST* III, q. 72, a. 12. The *sed contra* in this article is also worth quoting: "On the contrary is the use of the Church, who is governed by the Holy Spirit."

mother and mistress of all churches. Nevertheless, a certain presumption in favor of validity can be made for the sacramental rituals of apostolic churches, unless it can be demonstrated that a corruption entered in at a certain point. And since this may not be discoverable by mere historical research, one must turn to theological argumentation and discernment.

Similarly, concerning the appropriate matter of the Eucharist, Thomas writes: "But it is suitable that every priest *observe the rite of his church* in the celebration of the sacrament. Now in this matter there are various customs of the churches" (going on to speak of the Latins who use unleavened bread and the Greeks who use leavened bread).[107] He concludes that it would be wrong to do anything contrary to the rite stipulated by one's own church. In supporting the validity of traditional rites and the respect due to them, St. Thomas only gives voice to the common teaching of the Catholic Church.[108]

4. What the Form Must Be to Be Valid

These things being said, however, the traditional rites of the sacraments remain precisely that—rites *handed down* by the successors of the apostles, rites whose roots go back to Christ the Lord. As we have seen throughout, Thomas is uncompromising on this point: "[T]he sacraments derive their efficacy from Christ's institution. Consequently, if any of those things be omitted which Christ instituted in regard to a sacrament, it is invalid." He continues, speaking with regard to baptism:

> Now Christ commanded the sacrament of baptism to be given with the invocation of the Trinity. And consequently whatever is lacking to the full invocation of the Trinity, destroys the integrity of baptism. Nor does it matter that in the name of one Person another is implied, as the name of the Son is implied in that of the Father, or that he who mentions the name of only one Person may believe aright in the Three; because just as a sacrament requires sensible matter, so does it require a sensible form. Hence, for the validity of the sacrament it is not enough

[107] *ST* III, q. 74, a. 4.

[108] There is abundant evidence that the Roman church has strenuously defended the validity of ancient rites and the honor due to them, but as an illustration one may consider two remarkable encyclicals of Benedict XIV, *Allatae sunt* of 1755, www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/B14ALLAT.HTM; and *Ex quo* of 1756, www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pope0247m.htm. In both, the pope rails against efforts made by Catholic bishops and missionaries to abolish or modify the rites and customs of the Eastern Christians. Some examples he cites: the discipline permitting married clergy; the use of leavened bread; the pouring of warm water into the chalice after consecration; bestowing chrismation and the Eucharist upon infants immediately after baptism; communion under both species.

> to *imply* or to *believe* in the Trinity, unless the Trinity be *expressed in sensible words*.[109]

At first, this argument may seem to speak against my position. In fact, however, the opposite is true. The point of departure is not a particular formula as such, but the command of Christ. Now, what Christ commanded in the case of the Eucharist was: "Do *this* in memory of me." What is the referent of the *this*? If we draw out from the context and from tradition what Jesus means, it could be phrased: "Celebrate with bread and wine the sacred mysteries of the Eucharist, as a living memorial of my passion, death, resurrection, and ascension into glory, as the sign, cause, and pledge of your salvation."[110] Implied would be that only certain ones, namely those to whom he is speaking—bishops and (later) presbyters—are empowered to enact this commemoration. Thus, to return to Thomas's argument and apply it to the Eucharist, one could say that whatever is lacking to the *full commemoration* of the paschal mystery destroys the integrity of the sacrament. Now, what is required for a full commemoration? In addition to other obvious requirements (a validly ordained minister with an intention to perform the rite, the correct matter), what Thomas focuses on here is the *explicit*, that is, sensible, expression of the truth or meaning of the sacramental rite performed. It is not enough to *imply* one thing by another, or to believe aright but not to speak aright. No, that which signifies the commemoration must be *spoken*. It seems difficult to maintain that the precise commemoration commanded by our Lord, as described above, is *not* expressly signified in the words of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari. The words by which the act and fact of transubstantiation are signified may be diffuse and not concentrated into one sentence, but they are still explicit rather than implicit and so do not fall prey to Aquinas's critique against inadequate or corrupted formulas.[111]

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[109] *ST* III, q. 66, a. 6.

[110] Cf. the Roman Canon.

[111] When Thomas comes around to replying to the second objection here (q. 66, a. 6), he agrees with Ambrose's view that in the early Church sacramental baptism could have been permitted in the name of Christ alone "because the whole Trinity is *implied in* the name of Christ, and therefore [when the apostles baptized in this name] *the form prescribed by Christ in the Gospel was observed in its integrity, at least implicitly*" (emphasis added). This is a striking statement. After having said that what is required should be explicit, he then seems to say that it is enough for validity, in special circumstances, if what one says explicitly clearly *implies* what should otherwise be explicit. At this point, one is risking excessive subtlety, but Thomas's view should be taken seriously: At times, one formula manifestly *includes* the *meaning* of another, though it does not formulate the latter in words.

A discussion that amplifies these conclusions is the fifth article of question 78, on whether the consecratory formulas are actually *true*. The *sed contra* is simplicity itself: "These words are pronounced in the person of Christ, who says of himself in John 14:6, 'I am the truth.' " We know already that Christ is truly present in the Eucharist. Therefore a form of the sacrament, or an interpretation of the form, that resulted in a denial of the Lord's real presence in the consecrated gifts would be *ipso facto* illegitimate. In the context, Thomas is attacking a false understanding of the customary form, but his comments admit of a wider extension: If you have a form that rightly signifies the effect, it is orthodox. He goes on to say that "the truth of this expression ['This is my body'] does not *presuppose* the thing signified, but rather *causes* it; for this is how God's word stands to things made by that word" (emphasis added). God's word is a word of power. If you have an utterance duly signifying its effect together with the authority to pronounce it, then, by the very power of God acting through the completed utterance, the effect is infallibly produced.[112] At this point, the only way to refute the application of this argument to the Eucharist is to prove that it is *impossible* that any other utterance signify the effect of transubstantiation, or that Christ has revealed it to his Church that no other utterance exists under which the effect is accomplished—not just within the Latin and Greek traditions, but for any and every church with valid sacraments. To my knowledge, the magisterium has never made either of these claims.[113]

Recall the point raised earlier about baptism. "Since a man may be washed with water for several reasons, the purpose for which it is done must be expressed by the words of the form. . . . Wherefore unless the act of baptizing be expressed, either as we do, or as the Greeks do, the sacrament is not valid."[114] The criterion identified here for validity is a manifest clarity of purpose of the sacramental action: The minister's words and actions must make plain his intention to do what Christ and the Church intend.[115]

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[112] Cf. *ST* III, q. 82, a. 5, s.c., and ad 2.

[113] I shall return to this point in the next subsection, "5. The Need for Ecclesiastical Determination."

[114] *ST* III, q. 66, a. 5, ad 2.

[115] According to P. Benoit, philology does not support the claim that the words of institution sufficiently express, of themselves, a real transformation of the gifts ("The Holy Eucharist," 112). Nevertheless, as Benoit shows, other truths adduced in Scripture make it highly implausible to interpret these words differently, and more decisively, the Church teaches us their true meaning, since revelation has been entrusted to her guardianship. Still, it is important to recognize that the words accomplish what the Church understands them to signify because they are *intended* to do so by their speaker.

Note well, it is a question of *doing*: "[T]he words uttered in the sacramental forms are said not merely for the purpose of signification, but also for the purpose of efficiency, inasmuch as they derive efficacy from that Word by whom 'all things were made.' "[116] So the priestly words of consecration are words that *exercise* and *apply* divine power, in addition to signifying it. Hence any valid sacramental rite must exhibit an awareness of precisely this efficiency. It is not enough to express an intention *that* something occur in some way; it must be an intention *to bring it about*, and to do so by means of a verifiable prayer, not by means of something altogether hidden.[117]

In his discussion of the ministers of baptism, Thomas notes that some argue that a plural formula for baptism ("We baptize you . . .") would be invalid because it differs from the form of the Church ("I baptize you . . ."). [118] But he counters this by observing that the Greek form of baptism "is much more dissimilar to the form we use than if someone said: 'We baptize.' " He then argues against the plural form on different grounds, namely that it undermines the symbolism of the minister of the sacrament, who must be one in order to represent the one Christ who chiefly baptizes. In other words, the reason a form is invalid is not to be sought for in how similar or different it may be from the customary form in use in the Church, but rather, in whether or not *it rightly expresses the mystery taking place*. In baptism, the mystery is that God, by the power of the Spirit, immerses a human being in the death and resurrection of Christ. If the form fails to convey adequately this mystery of unity and unification, it is invalid. Similarly, if an anaphora were to contradict or to omit the signification of transubstantiation, it would be invalid for the same reason. Earlier I cited a text on why the form of confirmation goes unreported in Scripture. The *sed contra* in the same article (q. 72, a. 4) is, as so often in St. Thomas, "the authority of the Church, which commonly uses this form." The analytic argument in favor of the form used in the Roman church is presented, also typically, in terms of its fittingness: "[A]s the form of a natural thing gives its species to it, so the form of a sacrament should contain whatever pertains to the species of the sacrament." This is as much as to say that the form *must*, at a minimum, signify the essence of what is being done or accomplished in the sacrament. It may signify this more or less fully, more or less plainly, but should it fail to signify the essential "event," the peculiar "mystery," it fails simply.

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116 *ST* III, q. 66, a. 5, ad 3.

117 The anaphora in question satisfies this condition, though it may not be as easy to pinpoint a moment of consecration as it is in the Roman rite. We know *that* there must be such a moment; probably our best witness to it is to watch how the worshipers who use the rite behave, according to their traditional practices.

118 *ST* III, q. 67, a. 6.

Thomas argues that transubstantiation occurs precisely upon the completion of the *signification* of the words by which this mystery is effected.[119] Though Thomas has in mind the familiar words of the Mass, his principle is wider. If there be some *other* verbal formula by which the conversion is unambiguously signified, then—provided the other conditions I have discussed are adequately met—the successful completion of *this* formula, too, would effect what it signifies, namely transubstantiation.[120] Thus Aquinas states, "The various words that are in the form of the consecration of the bread constitute the truth of one expression."[121] The many words constitute one (partial) instrumental cause, inasmuch as out of them, taken together, a single meaning emerges: "This (thing that you see) is my body." It is hard to see that the same mystery of transubstantiation could not *in principle* be expressed by any other words, for there would be other ways of stating that what was once bread and wine *is now,* owing to the power of the Holy Spirit as invoked by legitimate priestly power, the body and blood of Christ, and is to be venerated and received as such. From a remark made about why the priest says "This is my *body*" and not "This is my *flesh*,"[122] we can deduce that the form of the Eucharist has to be such that it signifies the *whole* body of Christ, that is, all that pertains to the human body of the Lord except for its blood,[123] and not merely some part of his body (such as "flesh"). Again, while the customary form reveals itself to be perfectly suited to its purpose, who is to say that there could not be different words able to convey the same mystery of the totality of the Lord's presence, effected by the power of the Spirit transforming the gifts?

Whatever "form" it takes, it remains true that a *verbal formulation* of the

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[119] *ST* III, q. 75, a. 7, ad 3.

[120] Is it a glimpse of some flexibility when Thomas speaks as if the words he is considering are a certain "case" that illustrates the rule? "Forma huius sacramenti importat solam consecrationem materiae, quae in transubstantiatione consistit; *puta cum dicitur*, 'Hoc est corpus meum,' vel, 'Hic est calix sanguinis mei' " (*ST* III, q. 78, a. 1, emphasis added). Similarly, he concludes q. 78, a. 2 with the remark: "Unde haec forma est *convenientissima*, 'hoc est corpus meum' " (emphasis added). In the first of the questions on penance we find a parallel phrase: "haec est *convenientissima* forma huius sacramenti, 'ego te absolvo' " (*ST* III, q. 84, a. 3, emphasis added). A remark more suggestive still comes in the opusculum *De forma absolutionis*, no. 2: "Now in the sacraments the words have efficacy from the divine institution. Therefore, the determinate words *consonant with* the divine institution are to be retained *[tenenda sunt verba determinata consonantia divinae institutioni]*" (emphasis added).

[121] *ST* III, q. 78, a. 6, ad 3.

[122] *ST* III, q. 76, a. 1, ad 2.

[123] Cf. *ST* III, q. 76, a. 2, ad 2; q. 76, a. 7, ad 2; q. 78, a. 2.

Eucharistic mystery is absolutely required. If we imagine a hypothetical liturgy in which all expression of faith in the mystery of the real presence and the sacrifice were limited to internal intention and a presumed traditional belief, or in which this faith was expressed in ambiguous language open to contrary interpretations, this would not be enough to constitute a valid rite; indeed it would be enough to *invalidate* a rite. With the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, the priest manifestly verbalizes the mystery he intends, and since he is empowered by Christ to act *in persona eius*, the gifts are therefore consecrated. It remains a challenge to ascertain which particular set of words in this anaphora brings the intended change to its completion, in contrast to the evident primacy of the words of institution in the Roman rite.

Here, again, it is more important that the minister be *acting as Christ acts*, that is, in his words and actions doing *what* the Lord has done and with lordly authority to do so, than that he speak exactly as Christ spoke. One may object that to do what Christ did necessarily involves saying what he said; but this does not seem to follow. If one says what he said, then one is doing as he did; but one might do *what* he did without *saying* what he said. The reason is that there is more than one way to signify one and the same truth or action. Granting that equivalency is theoretically possible, it would still be desirable to trace the substance of any formula to Christ himself, as to its historical origin. In other words, while obviously Jesus spoke only *one* set of words at the Last Supper (anything beyond that would have been superfluous and, in fact, ridiculous), he must have approved, in principle, at that very moment, the eighty-nine or so variations of the same words that liturgical scholars have identified in the anaphoras of orthodox Christianity.[124] These variations are just what one would expect in the rapidly growing Christian Church as it took root in different localities through the ministry of different apostles and their successors.

It is true that in the response of question 78, article 1, Thomas considers, and rejects, the view that Christ might have consecrated the Eucharist at the Last Supper "with certain other words unknown to us." Here, the argument assumes that "if the consecration was not done *then* through these words, neither would it happen *now*." But this is a lapse of logic; Thomas never proves that Christ had to specify one, and only one, exact verbal formula for the perfecting of a sacrament, and historically it is impossible to sustain such a hypothesis, as we have just seen in the large number of formulas. Rather, one could take for granted that Christ had

[124] Cf. note 95 above on the research of Leclercq.

established the sacraments and their nascent rites in such a way that there could be no doubt in the Church about the precise *nature, effects,* and *minister* of any given sacrament. In this way, all sacraments are instituted by Christ, and even their necessary form and matter determined, but not, as it were, *super*-determined.[125] This is compatible with a large leeway not only of sacramental rites or ceremonies, but also even with the exact formulas under which the sacraments are administered. Thus, it seems that Thomas fails to catch the equivocation involved in saying that "such words [namely, those of consecration] only have force by Christ's pronunciation of them."[126] This is indeed true, but in the sense that Christ truly pronounces *any* word of blessing that he authorizes his ministers to speak on his behalf, not merely a word that he himself has first pronounced. Something similar could be said of another comment: "No creature can do miraculous works as a principal agent; yet it can do them instrumentally, as the very touch of Christ's hand healed a leper. And in this way the words of Christ convert bread into his body."[127] The "words of Christ" need not be restricted to a few particular words; *all* the words he continues to speak authoritatively through the priests of his mystical body are really *his* words. In the Eucharist it is not only the sacrament that is an image but "the priest, too, bears the image of Christ, in whose person and by whose power he pronounces the words that

[125] Example: That wheaten bread and wine of the grape must be employed is beyond doubt; but that the bread must be leavened or unleavened, or the wine red or white, stronger or weaker in alcoholic content, was not determined by Christ. Or rather, he determined that there was more than one possibility within the genera he established.

[126] Indeed, St. Thomas may have thought that the only way the priest can consecrate is for him to say *exactly* the formula that Christ historically said (albeit translated as neatly as possible into Latin or another tongue), so that the words empowered by Christ at the cenacle and delivered secretly to his apostles could once again have their identical effect through the minister. We have seen evidence that Thomas believed that the variants found in the four Scriptural narratives of the institution (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and 1 Corinthians) do not touch the sacramental formula as such, which he appears to believe is one and the same everywhere. If he held such a simplistic idea, it was surely owing to the lack of a detailed knowledge of the wealth of liturgical rites and their varying formulations. Nevertheless, as Kaczor shows ("Thomas Aquinas on the Development of Doctrine"), St. Thomas does have a nuanced understanding of how a certain variety and evolution of expression are compatible with an essential stability of content.

[127] *ST* III, q. 78, a. 4, ad 2.

[128] "Etiam sacerdos gerit imaginem Christi, in cuius persona et virtute verba pronuntiat ad consecrandum." *ST* III, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3. For commentary on this text and others like it, see Mansini, "Representation and Agency," 514–17.

accomplish consecration."[128]

5. The Need for Ecclesiastical Determination

The overriding doctrinal objection to my position could be taken succinctly from St. Thomas himself: "Some heretics in conferring sacraments do not observe the form prescribed by the Church: and these confer neither the sacrament nor the reality of the sacrament."[129] Add to this the minor premise that Christ expressly instituted a single formula for the Eucharist, namely the "words of institution," and one will conclude that any liturgical rite, no matter how ancient or venerable, that lacks these words thereby lacks the form and thus lacks something essential to the confecting of the Eucharist. It is an argument persuasive in and of itself, and should it prove true that the Catholic Church has *defined* the minor premise, it could not belong to the sphere of mere theological opinion, but would belong to the domain of faith, or at very least, would be a *sententia ad fidem pertinens*. But this view begs two questions. First, must there be, either in principle or in practice, precisely the same form in all ancient liturgical traditions? Second, and more importantly, has the Church actually defined that one and only one form is efficacious?

St. Thomas argues that although Christ *could* have shared his power of excellence with the apostles such that they would be able to institute sacraments, he chose not to share it, for wise reasons.[130] Nevertheless, the argument in that place is about the power to institute sacraments as such (and to lend them their efficacy); it is not about ecclesiastical regulation of the exact form and matter within preset bounds. Wheaten bread has to be used for validity, and the Church can never change this; but must the bread be leavened or unleavened? Wine has to be used, but does it have to be white or red? Water has to be used in baptism, but does it have to be fresh water or can it be salt water? Must the minister of baptism express his ministerial role in the words used ("I baptize you . . .") or is it possible to say "The servant of God, [N.], is baptized . . ."? All the more

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[129] *ST* III, q. 64, a. 9, ad 2.

[130] Cf. *ST* III, q. 64, a. 4.

[131] Indeed, marriage continues to be a topic of considerable disagreement between Eastern and Western theologians; and while the Catholic Church has taught definitively that the consent of the spouses is constitutive of the sacrament, the separated Eastern churches have by no means been convinced that this position accords best with the evidence from tradition, not to mention dogmatic issues. I mention this not to call into question the Catholic teaching (far from it) but merely to indicate how complex is the history of the sacraments and how challenging are the problems it continues to pose.

evident from historical research is an evolution in the administration of other sacraments, such as holy orders, penance, and marriage.[131] Now this shows, if anything does, the need for definitive doctrinal authority in the Church, because such things should not be left indeterminate if the salvation of souls could be in any way jeopardized by a lack of clarity. But it also shows that the determinations made by such an authority should not be overinterpreted in favor of a clarity that may not in fact exist. It has long been a habit of Western theologians to interpret everything decided within the sphere of the Latin church as if it admitted of immediate universal application across all frontiers. In some cases this is true, in others it is not.[132]

There are countless Neo-Scholastic commentators who overshoot the mark of what may be concluded with certainty from the magisterial statements. Passages from Garrigou-Lagrange and Ott come to mind,[133] as do the words of Tanquerey:

> *It is certain* that for the valid consecration of the bread Christ's words are required: "This is my body"; similarly for the consecration of the wine, the words: "This is the chalice of my blood"; or "This is my blood." The Lord employed the aforesaid words. The Council of Florence declared: "The words of the Savior, by which he instituted this sacrament, are the form of this Sacrament." *It is also certain* that for a valid consecration the *epiclesis* is not required, the prayers through which the priest asks that the bread be changed into Christ's body, the wine into Christ's blood.[134]

There is here a palpable oversight in logic. We have already seen how the authority of the decree from the Council of Florence is not entirely unambiguous. But what can be concluded as a matter of fact, *pace* Tanquerey and others, is that *for the Roman rite*, as for many other rites too, the traditional words of consecration are necessary and sufficient. The words "Hoc est corpus meum" are indeed the form of the sacrament *as celebrated in the Latin church*; and barring a dogmatic teaching that speaks explicitly, and intends to speak, of any and every rite whatsoever, this is all that we are entitled to

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[132] The popes of modern times, among them Benedict XIV in the eighteenth century, have been adamant in opposing men who sought to impose Western liturgical and sacramental practice on the Eastern churches. See notes 100 and 108 above.

[133] See the quotations from Garrigou-Lagrange (at notes 7 and 8 above) and from Ott (in note 29 above).

[134] *Manual of Dogmatic Theology,* trans. John J. Byrnes, vol. 2 (New York: Desclee Company, 1959), 285, emphasis in original.

assume. The Church's teaching to date does not exclude the possibility of another valid form of the sacrament having been bequeathed to a non-Western church during the apostolic period.[135] Moreover, that Christ employed such words as these does not, of itself, mean that he excluded other words or that only such words could be efficacious. Finally, that the epiclesis is not strictly necessary in Western rites does not settle the question of whether it may not once have been or may still be necessary in other rites at some time or in some circumstances, according to the intention of the celebrants of those rites, and provided the Roman church had not or has not yet decided in a contrary sense.

On the general level at which we are moving, there is little more to be said about St. Thomas's views on sacramental form and its "flexibility." We have seen that while he himself does not think there has been or could be much in the way of variety, he nevertheless articulates wide-ranging principles that enable clear distinctions to be drawn between the *res significata* and the *modus significandi*, and, as regards the latter, between what is essential and immutable in the signification and what is incidental and variable. In summary, one might draw together the subheadings from this section: (1) There must be a definite "form" or verbal formula; (2) but some diversity of formulation is possible. Moreover, while (3) the tradition of the Church is a fundamental norm, nevertheless, this is not to be understood in a positivistic or relativistic way, because (4) there are objective requirements as to what the form *must* be if it is to be valid. Finally, what this entire discussion reveals time and again is (5) the need for ecclesiastical determination. Unless the magisterium (1) can guide us as to the nature, number, origin, and purpose of the sacraments and how they are administered, (2) can approve or correct sacramental rites should any question of validity arise, (3) can define or clarify not only the particular norms that may be drawn from Tradition, but even define what really *counts* as apostolic Tradition, as opposed to an ancient and stubborn deviation, and (4) presupposing divinely established foundations, can establish and uphold canonical criteria of validity and licitness—unless, to repeat, the magisterium can do all this, we will be unable to *start* a fruitful discussion of the sacraments,

[135] Edward McNamara recognizes the same point: "While the Church has defined what is essential for the consecration in her own rites she does not thereby declare that this is the only possibility." "Communion Hosts at Papal Masses," *Zenit*, December 9, 2003, www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=45923.

[136] On the larger questions raised by my final remarks, see Louis Bouyer's opusculum *The Word, Church, and Sacraments in Protestantism and Catholicism*, trans. A. V. Littledale (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1961, 2004), in which Bouyer expounds the necessary mutual relationship between Scripture, Tradition, Church authority, and sacramental life.

much less nudge a disputed question toward its resolution.[136]

VI. Criteria for Validity

Drawing upon classical sacramental theology and the foregoing discussion of form in St. Thomas, I propose four criteria for the validity of a Eucharistic rite or celebration, including the Anaphora of Addai and Mari:

1. The intention to confect the sacrament according to the Church's orthodox understanding of it, namely, to transubstantiate bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, with an unambiguous, express signification of the fact that this is being intended;[137]
2. An identifiable accomplishment of the intended effect, bringing to completion the sacramental signification—a practical indication of which would be that after this moment the priest and the faithful can and should begin to adore the Lord present under the sacramental species;
3. The priestly authority to intend and to accomplish this; and,
4. Historical continuity with apostolic tradition.

The first and third criteria are obviously necessary, but if the second were lacking, the first and third would not suffice, in and of themselves. For one might have a validly ordained priest, with a right intention, who indicates his intention with liturgical words or gestures, as well as his belief that his intention has been realized; yet if there were not a recognizable transition from the intentional order to the real order, his belief that the sacrament had been confected would remain unverifiable, even to himself. In such a case, it *might* have happened or it *might not*; yet this is already proof that it *cannot* have happened. This argument rests entirely on the fact that it should be possible to *know* that a sacrament or sacrifice has been accomplished—that one is dealing with an extramental reality and not a figment of the imagination. This would still be a knowledge in the order of faith, of course, because one does not *see* with one's eyes or one's intellect that the sacrifice of Christ our Pasch has been truly made present on the altar through the consecration of the gifts. Nevertheless, if a priest could not say

[137] To put it more technically, one could say that, on the one hand, a valid formula for consecration must always suitably express, without error, ambiguity, or deficiency, the *res significata*, the thing meant to be signified by the words; but, on the other hand, that the *modus significandi*, the manner in which this reality is signified in words, permits of variation, from incidental *(enim, mysterium fidei)* to extensive (as in the case under discussion).

with certainty that there has been a transition during the liturgy, even if he may not think he could specify a given word as the point of separation, then it is questionable whether he could have orthodox faith in the real presence and the sacrificial nature of the Mass. Put simply, if the form is not clear, there is no form, since it must be unambiguously pronounced to be a form at all. All this may be confidently asserted without prejudice to a form's being brief or long, concentrated or dispersed. Evidently, if there were a Eucharistic prayer so lengthy and so dispersed in its conceptual components that it could not be grasped as a single intelligible whole by at least the priest, it could not be valid. But the Anaphora of Addai and Mari would certainly not fit this description, as anyone can see who reads it.[138] Note that the need for a lack of ambiguity about the real presence of the Lord under the sacramental species does not demand the adoption of a linear conception of time, as though no reference could be made to "the body and blood of Christ" until these are actually present on the altar. The liturgy circles around and around the central mystery from start to finish, even though that mystery comes to be present in its full reality at a definable moment or at some moment within definable limits.[139] In all liturgies we find the conflation of temporal dimensions, for example, the bread and wine being referred to, *by anticipation*, as an "immaculate victim" *(suscipe . . . hanc immaculatam hostiam)* in the offertory prayers of the ancient Roman rite. Such examples are plentiful. Thus, the requirement of definiteness is a theological requirement, not a linguistic one. Transubstantiation must occur at some point; it is *spoken of* throughout. This is particularly important when it comes to the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, which, almost from the start, speaks *as if* the holy and life-giving mysteries were already present on the altar and the oblation had been offered, when in fact the change is likely to be occurring at the epiclesis.[140]

The fourth criterion differs from the other three in specifying an external *source* and *guarantee* of the authenticity of a liturgical rite: its continuity with Tradition. Joseph Ratzinger emphasizes that it is impossible for the Church to compose a "new rite" in the strict sense, because the Church must preserve apostolicity, and this can only happen if the

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[138] See below, where I quote several passages from the anaphora to verify these criteria.

[139] See note 8 above.

[140] For further analysis of the criterion discussed in this paragraph and of its implications for the structure of any Eucharistic rite, see the appendix below.

[141] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy,* trans. John Saward (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2000), 159–70. The point is made succinctly on p. 169: "We saw above that each of the various ritual families grew out of the 'apostolic sees,' the central places of the apostolic Tradition and that this connection with apostolic

Church in her life of faith and worship preserves historical continuity with apostolic tradition.[141] A genuine historical continuity of liturgical rite is necessary for validity; one could not create a new liturgy *ex nihilo* that possessed validity simply because it fulfilled the other three criteria mentioned. This last criterion explains why the Council of Trent insisted on the essentiality of the words of institution: These words are absolutely necessary for validity *in the family of the Roman rite*—Europe's liturgical heritage, which that council had the momentous task of defending against unlawful modification or even repudiation at the hands of Protestants. This rite cannot be modified in such a way as to preserve validity *without* these words, though there may be *another* rite, with a quite different historical origin and cultural context, that is valid but has no such words. Were one to reconfigure the Roman rite by removing the words of institution, it would *ipso facto* lose the constitutive element of historical continuity, and thus lose its validity, regardless of any other prayers that might be added on to it.

One must take seriously historical continuity, or at least what one might call historical veracity. The prayers we use are part of a tradition that bequeaths them to us, they cannot be "manufactured on demand." Nevertheless, two qualifications have to be added. First, evidently there was a time when any particular prayer was "new," even if inspired by or based upon past prayers.[142] And surely we should say that as long as the author was authorized to be an author, and the new composition does not represent a break but a development (in Newman's sense), the new prayer may become part of the tradition. Second, the Church has authority to institute prayers on the same condition. For example, we only had one anaphora or canon in the Roman rite for over a thousand years, but in the postconciliar reform three more canons were approved (Eucharistic Prayers II, III, and IV), and later on, still more.[143] What do we say about anaphoras that do not show the

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origins is essential to what defines them. From this it follows that there can be no question of creating totally new rites."

[142] According to some historians, a certain freedom of "regulated improvisation" in worship persisted through the third century (see Gelston, *Eucharistic Prayer,* 11).

[143] One has good reason to be troubled by the situation prevailing in the sphere of the Roman rite, which witnessed the academic fabrication of a plurality of anaphoras discontinuous with its own heritage. No question can be raised about the theological soundness of the new anaphoras nor about the pope's authority to give them due force of law, but a question must be raised about the attenuation (or even repudiation) of the principle of tradition implicit in this development. See the lucid account given by Cassian Folsom, OSB, "From One Eucharistic Prayer to Many: How It Happened and Why," in *Adoremus Bulletin* 2, nos. 4–6 (Sep.–Nov. 1996), www.adoremus.org/9-11-96-FolsomEuch.html.

expected connection with the past? Are they invalidated by being composed from scratch? This would seem to call into question the indefectibility of the Church vis-à-vis the sacraments, the custody of which pertains to her essence if anything does. This raises the question: Who determines what counts as "sufficient" continuity with apostolic tradition? If one answers "the Church herself," then it seems the argument is circular, or rather, the Church has *carte blanche* to determine the criteria of continuity.[144] If one answers "the testimony of tradition," then that opens up a hornet's nest of problems. Who is the trustworthy spokesman for the testimony of tradition? Who will find out just what it is and discern it without error?

A solution would be to say that the *only* words *strictly* necessary for the accomplishment of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the Roman rite are the words of institution. Admittedly this is a radical position, but it seems to be what St. Thomas himself holds: If a priest walks into a church-supplies store and, with an intention of consecrating, speaks the words of Christ over thousands of packaged hosts, he would at that moment effect transubstantiation.

> Some have said that this sacrament *cannot* be accomplished if the aforesaid words [of consecration] are pronounced but the others [in the Missal] are omitted, especially those that are found in the canon of the Mass. But this is clearly false, as can be seen both from the words of Ambrose cited above [in the *sed contra*], and also because the canon of the Mass is not the same among all, nor at all times, but different things are added by different ones. Hence it is to be said that if a priest pronounced only the aforesaid words with the intention of confecting this sacrament, this sacrament would be accomplished; for the intention would cause that these words be understood as pronounced in the person of Christ, even if they were not recited with the preceding words.[145]

And inasmuch as St. Thomas holds that the Mass is a true and proper sacrifice precisely in and through the representative double consecration, which

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144 Indeed, this is one of the principal objections of the Orthodox as well as of some Protestants, who believe that they can find "objective" criteria either in Scripture or in Tradition that *measure* the pronouncements of later ecclesiastical authorities, even the popes. And surely in some sense there *have to be* criteria that bind the pope; he is not simply free to pronounce or legislate as he pleases.

145 *ST* III, q. 78, a. 1, ad 4.

146 Cf. Pius XII, *Mediator Dei,* no. 70, which synthesizes St. Thomas's doctrine in this regard. Aquinas and Pius argue that *both* consecrations are required for a proper representation of the sacrifice of the Cross. If the bread alone or the wine alone were consecrated, the sacrifice of Calvary will still have been *offered*, yet it will not have been duly *represented*.

symbolizes the real separation of Christ's body and blood on the altar of the Cross,[146] the sacrifice of the Mass will have taken place in that church-supplies store—albeit, as Thomas immediately adds in the same passage, with massive illicitness: "Yet the priest would sin gravely confecting this sacrament in this way, as not preserving the ritual of the Church *[utpote ritum ecclesiae non servans]*." It would be a sort of ultra-thin Mass of the Roman rite—against all Church legislation, yet still a Mass.[147] Whereas, looking to the rite's wording, the Byzantine divine liturgy relies on the epiclesis as an intention-expressive component of the miracle of transubstantiation, and so, a Byzantine priest in an Eastern Christian supplies store who said the words of institution but *not* the epiclesis would effect nothing. The bread in its packaging would remain mere bread, though undoubtedly the priest would

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147 Thomas envisions the scenario several times—for example, *ST* III, q. 74, a. 2, obj. 2, and ad 2; q. 78, a. 1, ad 4 (just quoted); q. 83, a. 3, ad 8. The last text leaves no room for doubt about Aquinas's position: "If the priest pronounces the words of consecration over the proper matter with the intention of consecrating, then, without every one of the things mentioned above—namely, without house [that is, a church building], and altar, consecrated chalice and corporal, and the other things instituted by the Church—he consecrates Christ's body in very truth; yet he is guilty of grave sin, in not following the rite of the Church." (For background, see Pierre-Marie Gy, OP, "Les paroles de la consécration et l'unité de la prière eucharistique selon les théologiens de Pierre Lombard à S. Thomas d'Aquin," in *"Lex orandi–lex credendi": Miscellanea in onore di P. Cipriano Vagaggini,* eds. G. J. Békés and G. Farnedi [Rome: Pontificio Ateneo Sant'Anselmo, 1980], 221–33.) Nevertheless, this position has always had its opponents, and there are few today who would defend it without nuance. Most authors want to say that, in some sense, the entire liturgy or at least the entire canon is a single prayer, even if transubstantiation occurs at the moment of consecration. That is, while the sacrificial victim of Calvary is made present in time at a given moment and through a determined formula, yet the prayers before and after are essential to the meaning of what is being said and done at that moment. The conclusion: A priest actually *could not have* the right intention outside of some kind of authorized liturgy (though he may deceive himself into thinking that he does); cf. A. M. Henry, OP, *Christ in His Sacraments,* trans. A. Bouchard (Chicago: Fides, 1958), 109. For a recent statement of the view that the *entire canon* is consecratory, see Vanhoomissen, "Une Messe sans paroles de consécration?" 39–43. However, there are still reasons to believe that in the Roman rite the only words strictly necessary for effecting transubstantiation are the words of institution. As usual, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has a balanced perspective: while the special efficacy of the words of consecration is affirmed (nos. 1375–77), the institution narrative is viewed in the context of the entire Eucharistic prayer and of the celebration as a whole (nos. 1348–55).

148 Bear in mind that this example prescinds from relevant ecclesiastical determinations. In the final analysis, it belongs to the Church to determine, if there be any doubts, what is and is not necessary in the formula of a sacrament.

have committed a sin of mockery if he had really intended to effect something.[148] Finally, if an errant *Assyrian* priest walked into the shop, he might have to recite nearly the entire Anaphora of Addai and Mari before something could be effected. What this example is intended to illustrate is the fact that different liturgical rites seem to have irreducibly distinct consecratory formulas that are more or less self-contained, more or less explicit, owing to a diversity of origin and evolution.[149]

If I am right, this would be a solution to the Church authority question raised earlier. One could argue that the Roman rite is so minimalist in its essential content (not, take note, in all the accidents required for its full splendor) that the patriarch who has jurisdiction over the faithful of this rite—the pope—has power to authorize or validate a rite of Mass that was newly composed in every respect *except for* the words of institution. If the same pope attempted to give force to an Assyrian liturgy lacking any of the elements that seem to be required to make the priest's intention of transubstantiation clear, then these rites would be invalid and no amount of legislation from any number of popes or councils could endow them with validity. Therefore, arguing a priori, it is impossible that the Holy Spirit would allow a pope to attempt to give force to such a deformed Byzantine or Assyrian rite. Arguing a posteriori, any rite to which the pope has given force must accordingly be valid, but *only* within the liturgical tradition to which the rite belongs.

Now, let us return to the Anaphora of Addai and Mari to see how these five elements or conditions are verified.

1. The intention to confect the sacrament as the Church understands it can be gleaned from the abundant references to the Eucharist as oblation or sacrifice commemorative of the sacrifice of the Cross, as divine and life-giving mysteries, and so on. In fact, this "order of hallowing"—if we review the *entire* liturgy, as we should do, and not merely the portion that scholars are wont to identify as the "anaphora" in isolation—contains *more* explicit references to the *reality* of the Body and Blood of Christ both as sacramental nourishment and sacrificial immolation than are to be found in most liturgical rites of East or West. Some examples:

[149] It seems difficult to deny a certain irreducible diversity of liturgical "approaches" originating in the early centuries, nor does this fact, by itself, present any serious challenge to a comprehensive theological account of the sacraments. See Daly, "Eucharistic Origins: From the New Testament to the Liturgies of the Golden Age."

The poor shall eat and be satisfied. The body of Christ and his precious blood are on the holy altar. In awe and love let us all draw near to him. And with the angels let us cry aloud unto him, Holy, holy, holy Lord God.[150]

Let us lift up praise to your glorious Trinity always and for ever. May Christ, who was sacrificed for our salvation, and who commanded us to make a remembrance of his death, burial, and resurrection, accept this sacrifice from our hands in his grace and mercies for ever, amen.

By your command, our Lord and our God, these glorious, holy, life-giving, and divine Mysteries are placed and arranged upon the absolving altar until the coming of our Lord the second time from heaven, to whom be glory always and for ever, amen.

Our hearts being sprinkled and cleansed of an evil conscience, may we be deemed worthy to enter the holy of holies, high and exalted. May we purely, worthily, and in holiness stand before your holy altar and offer to you spiritual and reasonable sacrifices in true faith.

And may this oblation be accepted with confidence. May it be hallowed by the word of God and by the Holy Spirit, that it may be a benefit to us, and salvation and life for ever and ever in the kingdom of heaven through the grace of Christ.

Glory to you, my Lord, for you have called me, even feeble me, in your grace, and have brought me near unto you in your compassion, and have established me as a designated member in the great body of your holy catholic Church, to offer before you this living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice, which is the memorial of the passion, death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through whom you were well-pleased and reconciled to forgive the sins of all men.

The people say to the priest: May Christ hear your prayers. May Christ accept your oblation. May Christ adorn your priesthood in the kingdom of heaven, and may he be well-pleased with this sacrifice which you offer for yourself, for us, and for utterly all the world which looks for and awaits his grace and mercies for ever. *The priest then says softly:* We give thanks, O my Lord, for the

[150] All quotations are taken from the translation made by M. J. Birnie from the Aramaic original of Mar Addai and Mar Mari, "The Order of the Hallowing of the Apostles," www.cired.org/liturgy/apostles.html. The descriptions of the detailed gestures and a number of other rubrics are omitted here for simplicity's sake. Another translation of the fixed portions of this liturgy is furnished in Attwater, *Eastern Catholic Worship,* 163–84. Shortly after the Sanctus, Attwater adds in a footnote: "From here to the end of the consecration [the text] is borrowed from the Roman rite, the Chaldean form in this hallowing being no longer extant" (175). Attwater does not entertain the possibility that this rite was always missing the kind of consecratory formula found in the Roman rite.

abundant riches of your loving kindnesses toward us, for though we are sinners and unworthy, you have deemed us worthy to administer the Holy Mysteries of the body and blood of your Christ. We ask for help from you for the strengthening of our souls, that with perfect love and true faith we may administer your gift to us.

Stand aright and look upon those things which are done in the fearful Mysteries being hallowed. The priest draws near to pray, that by his mediation peace may be multiplied for you. Lower your eyes, and stretch out your mind to heaven. . . . O Lord God of hosts, assist my weakness in your mercifulness, and through the assistance of your grace, make me worthy to offer before you this living and holy sacrifice, for the aid of the whole community and for the praise of your glorious Trinity, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for ever.

Yea, our Lord and our God, according to your mercies and the abundance of your kindness, deal with your people and with my misery, not according to my sins and offenses, but may we—I and these—be deemed worthy of the pardon of debts and the forgiveness of sins through this holy body which in true faith we receive through the grace which is from you. Amen.

The priest says: The mercifulness of your grace has brought us near, O our Lord and our God, to these glorious, holy, life-giving, and divine Mysteries, though we are not worthy. *The deacon answers:* In truth, my Lord, we are not worthy. Pardon us, O my Lord, though we are not worthy because of our many sins. *The priest continues:* Praise to your holy name, O our Lord Jesus Christ, and worship to your Lordship at all times for ever. Amen. For [this is] the living and life-giving bread which descended from heaven and gives life to utterly all the world, for those who eat of it do not die and those who receive it are saved by it and by it are pardoned and live for ever. Amen. Glory to you, O my Lord. Glory to you, O my Lord. Glory to you, O my Lord, on account of your ineffable gift to us for ever. Amen. We draw near, O my Lord, in the true faith of your name toward these holy Mysteries, and we break in your compassion and sign in your mercifulness the body and blood of your Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever. [And after the fraction and careful arrangement of the body and its commingling with the blood, the priest continues:] These glorious, holy, life-giving, and divine Mysteries are set apart, hallowed, perfected, fulfilled, united, commingled, joined, and sealed, one with another, in the worshipful and glorious name of the glorious Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that they may be to us, O my Lord, for the pardon of debts and the forgiveness of sins, for the great hope of the resurrection from the dead, and for new life in the

> kingdom of heaven, to us and to the holy Church of Christ our Lord, here and everywhere, now, always, and for ever and ever.
>
> [And near the time for communion, the deacon proclaims:] Let us all with awe and reverence approach the Mystery of the precious body and blood of our Savior. With a pure heart and true faith let us recall his passion and consider his resurrection. For on our behalf the Only-begotten of God took from men a mortal body and a rational, sentient, and immortal soul, and by his life-giving laws and holy commandments brought us from error to the knowledge of the truth. And after all his dispensation for us, the First-fruits of our nature was tested by the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven. And he committed to us his holy Mysteries, that by them we might recall all his grace toward us. Let us, then, with overflowing love and a lowly will, receive the gift of eternal life, and with pure prayer and manifold sorrow, partake of the Mysteries of the Church in the hope of repentance, turning from our offenses and sorrowing for our sins, and asking for mercy and forgiveness from God, the Lord of all. . . . [Meanwhile the priest says quietly:] Through him you have loosed and destroyed the dominion of death, and have given us eternal life which is indestructible. And now that you have made us worthy to stand before your pure and holy altar, and to offer to you this living, holy, and unbloody sacrifice, make us worthy in your mercifulness to receive this, your gift, in all purity and holiness. And may it not be to us for judgment and vengeance, but for mercy and the forgiveness of sins, for resurrection from the dead, and for eternal life. And may we all serve your glory, and be made pure sanctuaries and holy temples for your dwelling, that when we have been united to the body and blood of your Christ we may appear with all your saints at his great and glorious manifestation, for to you, and to him, and to the Holy Spirit belong glory, honor, confession, and worship, now, always, and for ever and ever.

In truth, the Anaphora of Addai and Mari is one of the richest liturgical expressions of faith in the Eucharistic mystery in all its dimensions—the sublime miracle of transubstantiation; the making present of the sacrifice of Calvary with its saving power; the ineffable gift of the Lord's own flesh and blood, really, truly, and substantially present; divinization in Christ by holy communion. There can be no question about the orthodoxy of the Assyrian Eucharistic confession; and, since beauty is a handmaid of truth, it is not irrelevant to point out that this anaphora has no rivals when it comes to the ravishing beauty of its dogmatic poetry.

In the rite there are, as already noted, manifold and manifest expressions of the priest's intention to confect, and his having confected, the sacrament that the Church understands the Eucharist to be: the spiritual nourishment of the true Body and Blood of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine, re-presenting in an unbloody manner his immolation on the Cross.

2. Confronted with so complex a liturgy, one might be initially at a loss to identify a moment of consecration. A careful evaluation of the structure of the whole and the content of its parts leads to a strong presumption in favor of the epiclesis.[151] The priest stretches himself out upon his face before the altar and says:

> We too, my Lord, your feeble, unworthy, and miserable servants who are gathered in your name and stand before you at this hour, and have received by tradition the example which is from you, while rejoicing, glorifying, exalting, and commemorating, perform this great, fearful, holy, life-giving, and divine Mystery of the passion, death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
>
> And may there come, O my Lord, your Holy Spirit, and may he rest upon this oblation of your servants. May he bless it and hallow it,[152] and may it be for us, O my Lord, for the pardon of debts, the forgiveness of sins, the great hope of resurrection from the dead, and for new life in the kingdom of heaven with all who have been well-pleasing before you. And for all this great and marvelous dispensation towards us we will give thanks to you and praise you without ceasing in your Church, which is saved by the

[151] This article is primarily concerned with the anaphora as it exists now, and so with the validity of the anaphora in its present form. For attempts at recovering earlier forms of the text of the epiclesis, see Gelston, *Eucharistic Prayer,* 120–23; and the creative approach of Jammo, "Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari."

[152] While past forms of the anaphora are not my central concern, I maintain, with Ratzinger (cf. note 141 above), that some continuity of the present with the past is a requirement for sacramental validity. Hence it is not irrelevant to note that scholars say the phrase "May he bless and hallow it" was probably not present in the earliest versions of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari. While many see the addition of the phrase as bestowing a consecratory meaning on the epiclesis, it does not seem to us that the presence or absence of this particular phrase necessarily changes the substance of the text. Indeed, it seems reasonable to conjecture that the phrase in question was added to express more forcefully the meaning of the epiclesis as it was already understood by those using the anaphora at the time. See Wilson, "Anaphora of Addai and Mari," in Bradshaw, *Early Eastern Eucharistic Prayers,* 34–35; Gelson, *Eucharistic Prayer,* 112; Bryan D. Spinks, "Eucharistic Offering in the East Syrian Anaphoras," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 50 (1984): 352.

> precious blood of your Christ, with unclosed mouth and open face, while lifting up praise, honor, confession, and worship to your living, holy, and life-giving name, now, always, and for ever and ever. *And he signs over the Mysteries, and they respond:* Amen.

Shortly after this the priest prays:

> I give thanks to you, my Father, Lord of heaven and earth, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for though I am a sinner and feeble, because of the abundance of your mercy you have deemed me worthy by your grace to offer before you these fearful, holy, life-giving, and divine Mysteries of the body and blood of your Christ, that I may minister to your people, the sheep of your pasture, the pardon of their debts, the forgiveness of their sins, the salvation of their souls, the reconciliation of all the world, and the tranquility and peace of all the churches.

Most of the prayers that follow after this point either refer in the past tense to an offering already made (for example, "The mercifulness of your grace *has brought us near*, O our Lord and our God, to these glorious, holy, life-giving, and divine Mysteries") or make preparation for the communion of the clergy and the faithful, suggesting that the epiclesis is the crucial moment in the liturgy—an assumption all the more secure given the unquestionable place and function of the epiclesis in many other liturgical rites.

3. The priestly authority is there, since the Assyrian Church of the East has preserved apostolic succession and valid ordination, as the Holy See recognizes.

4. The final criterion, historical continuity with apostolic tradition, is manifestly demonstrable in the case of the Assyrian church of the East, which cherishes the belief that its first members were evangelized by the "apostles" Addai and Mari, two of the seventy (or seventy-two) disciples sent out by the Lord. While the veracity of this legend is questioned by scholars, the foundations of the Assyrian church are, on all accounts, extremely ancient.[153] The origin of the Anaphora is lost in the mists of time, but some form of it was in use well before the separation of the churches after the Council of Ephesus in 431.[154] The Holy See had no difficulty admitting that it was dealing with an

[153] See Gelston, *Eucharistic Prayer,* 21–22.

[154] For a summary of what is known about the history of the anaphora, see Lang, "Eucharist without Institution Narrative?" 227–60, esp. 233–34.

ancient Christian community of apostolic roots. The tragic state of separation was only partially overcome in the sixteenth century when a portion of the Assyrian church entered into full communion with Rome (the "Chaldean Catholic Church"). In recent decades significant progress has been made in clearing away even the largest of obstacles to the reunion of the Assyrian Church of the East with the Church of Rome.[155]

Discussion of the history of the anaphora has centered largely around the presence or absence of the institution narrative. Many scholars in the past maintained that the narrative must have been present at one point but later dropped, while the current majority opinion holds that the anaphora never contained the narrative.[156] Certainty does not seem attainable on this point. But the historical question that is really necessary—the one regarding continuity—can be answered beyond reasonable doubt.

VII. The Danger of Undue Assumptions

It may be helpful to consider, for a moment, the consequences of a simplistic approach to the issues at hand. An article published in *The Latin Mass*, "Ecumenical Agendas and Liturgical Anarchy?," aiming to show the danger (if not heresy) of the pontifical council's decision, succeeds rather in exemplifying the egregious misinterpretation shared by traditionalists and neo-modernists alike. Already in the second sentence, the article's author, Romano Tommasi, formulates the topic in a skewed manner:

> The document advanced the worrisome proposition that the words of institution (This is My Body/Blood) are not at all necessary in the valid composition of Eucharistic prayers (the Eastern equivalent of the Roman Canon). . . . The words of institution are no longer considered essential in the consecration of bread and wine for the valid celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass.[157]

But the document never asserts anything like this, nor could it have done so.[158] It renders a decision about *one special case*, the reasoning for which

[155] See the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity's "Admission to the Eucharist in Situations of Pastoral Necessity," no. 2.

[156] See note 44 above.

[157] *Latin Mass* 13, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 38.

[158] Indeed, no. 4.4 of the "Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist" explicitly states that "the above considerations on the use of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari and the present guidelines for admission to the Eucharist are intended exclusively in relation to the Eucharistic celebration and admission to the Eucharist of the faithful from the Chaldean church and the Assyrian church of the East, in view of the

not only does not but *cannot* apply to rites of non-Assyrian provenance. As I have argued (and as the pontifical council's document evidently assumes), each liturgy has its own integrity, its own specific nature; they are not interchangeable, much less infinitely malleable. A Roman rite or Byzantine rite liturgy *sans* words of consecration would be absolutely null and utterly void, because the apostolic tradition that delivers this liturgy to us includes these words in the rite's "ordinary," and as a consequence, the minister's intention to do as Christ did, to accomplish what the Church intends to accomplish, is *bound up* with these words. As I have argued, moreover, there is no reason to think that, in principle, there could not be any other way to do as Christ did, to accomplish what the Church intends to accomplish. But should there be another way, a decision concerning this special case could have nothing to say to the other cases—to the Roman rite, or the Byzantine rite, and so on, where the sacramental form is already fixed by tradition and by the Church's judgment. The "special case" would remain forever a mere theological hypothesis unless a true instance of it exists. It does appear to exist in this anaphora. The only authority that can recognize its validity is the Catholic Church. In so recognizing it, the Church effectively declares that this rite constitutes an exception to a rule that is sovereign and immutable for other rites. In all this, there is no logical contradiction whatsoever, contrary to Tommasi's claims. By no means can the pontifical council's argument about "eucho-logical dispersion" in itself ever support the view that "all sacraments could take on any form whatsoever according to the mind of the minister"; even less is it true to say that the argument "seems to assume the *absolute change-*

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pastoral necessity and ecumenical context mentioned above." This does not sound like a blanket endorsement even of the anaphora itself, but a pastoral concession in times of necessity (cf. nos. 4.1 and 4.3). In other words, nothing is further from the content and tenor of the July and October 2001 documents than a general approbation of Eucharistic prayers without an institution narrative. On the contrary, the Assyrian anaphora is being treated as something extraordinary, unusual—and, therefore, worthy of being questioned, investigated, and judged. The conclusion, then, is as narrow and specific as can be: This prayer is exceptional and, as such, may be employed as it is customary to employ it in the church to which it belongs, and only in that church.

159 Tommasi, "Ecumenical Agendas," 41, original emphasis. The fact that some theologians immediately announced that the decision amounted to a dissolution of the concept of fixed sacramental form does nothing to prove that this was, or could have been, the mind of the pontifical council. Distortion of promulgated texts has been the rule, not the exception, since the Second Vatican Council, as one can see in regard to the famous no. 8 of *Lumen Gentium* on the one Church of Christ "subsisting in" the Catholic Church.

able nature of the form of sacraments."[159]

Such misunderstandings are not infrequent. A similar assertion was posted in an online newsletter of the Society of Saint Pius X: "The consequences of this decision are very weighty, for it completely overthrows the sacramental theology ratified by the Council of Trent. For a sacrament to be valid three elements are necessary: the matter, the form, and the intention of the priest to do what the Church intends. Here the form (the words of consecration) is lacking."[160] We see, in more primitive guise, the same begging of the question that characterizes both traditionalist and neo-modernist interpretations of the pontifical council's decision.

Although the weightiest problem in contemporary theology is amnesia of tradition and contempt for the magisterium, still it is not uncommon to find a traditionalist reaction that overdetermines the magisterium and overaccentuates one or another aspect of Catholic tradition, at the expense of other legitimate aspects. In our zeal for defending Church teaching, we have to be on guard against assuming that certain issues have been determined once and for all when the Church has not, in fact, given such closure.

VIII. Conclusion

If St. Thomas's explanation of Eucharistic form is adapted to exploit the full significance of the distinction between *speaking* from the person of Christ (that is, speaking the words of institution at the behest of Jesus) and *doing* from the person of Christ (that is, enacting or carrying out, with authority conceded by the Lord, a symbolic ritual that must be accompanied by *some* adequate traditional formula but not necessarily the words of institution), it becomes evident that the latter, the doing-as-Christ-did, is the genus, while the speaking-as-Christ-spoke is a particular way of performing the act of the High Priest. It is probable that this particular way of performing the high-priestly act is the most sublime inasmuch as it conforms the minister most intimately to his Lord, collapsing, as it were, the "gap" between servant and master. The mystery of the priestly character permits and even demands that the instrument, at the high point of the liturgy, the victim's immolation, be *transparently* an instrument. The customary formula

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[160] From "The Anaphora of Addai and Mari, or the Revolution in Sacramental Theology," *DICI* 46 (2002), cited in *Communicantes* (July 2002) of the Society of Saint Pius X, www.sspx.ca/Communicantes/July2002/Brief_News_from_here_and_there.htm.

[161] Nevertheless, the liturgy is more than the consecration, as Thomas frequently notes, and so on the balance, the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, with its lavish poetry of praise and thanksgiving, makes up for its deficiency in regard to the

conveys this with an awesome simplicity.[161] Moreover, although a simple overlapping of the speaking and the doing has always been the standard approach in liturgical rites—that is, the priest *does now* what Jesus did at the Last Supper, precisely by *speaking now* what Jesus spoke then—nevertheless it is possible that they might also be separated in a certain liturgical rite, so that the priest does what the Lord did, and with the same intention, but *not* by speaking the phrases that the Lord spoke when doing it. Granted, there is something obvious and fitting about keeping the two dimensions together, as there is something counterintuitive about separating them.[162] Hence, even prior to knowing how the facts stand, one might guess that the vast majority of rites will conflate the two dimensions, and that a minority, or maybe none at all, will display the *doing* without the *saying*, even if it is theoretically possible.[163] Our hypothetical observer would not be surprised to find out that, in actual fact, of the dozens of liturgical rites known to us, only one exhibits this trait. Still, "in a dispersed euchological way, that is, integrated in prayers of thanksgiving, praise, and intercession,"

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sacramental symbolism of the institution narrative. If anything, this anaphora, like the Eucharistic prayers of the East in general, challenges us in the West to recover the riches of our own tradition, the birthright we have bartered away for modern pottage.

[162] This is why St. Thomas's account of the form of the Eucharist is close to being a universal account, applicable across the board. Thomas was able to craft such an account because, while looking to a particular rite, he was always thinking of the *principles of the sacramental sacrifice* as such. If he errs at all, it is by having identified as intrinsic to liturgy elements specific to the rite of Mass he knew and loved. This can be readily forgiven if we consider the comparative poverty of knowledge about non-Western rites in the Latin Middle Ages.

[163] It needs to be said in this connection that the Anaphora of Addai and Mari does meet the requirements set forth by Aquinas in *ST* III, q. 78, a. 1 (quoted above): The words of the anaphora treat of the *consecration* rather than the *use* of the sacrament, and the priest does nothing but speak the words that signify this consecration. One could even say that the priest who recites this anaphora distances himself further than a Roman priest does from the idea that *he* accomplishes anything in and of himself. The Roman priest takes on the role of Christ and dares to speak as though he *were* Christ, while the Assyrian priest in this prayer simply asks *God* to work the miracle for him. Nevertheless, it would not follow that this anaphora is superior to others. On the contrary, one can identify at least two weaknesses from the standpoint of dogmatic theology: Because the anaphora does not clearly express the identity of the clerical priesthood with Christ's own priesthood, it fails, first, to represent visibly the *unity* of priest and victim in the sacrifice of the Mass, and fails, second, to symbolize the *unity* of the ministerial priesthood (see Thomas's comments on why concelebration does not amount to a superfluous multiplication of agents: *ST* III, q. 82, a. 2, ad 2, quoted in note 17 above).

this anaphora accomplishes what the others accomplish.

After discussing St. Thomas's thoughts on flexibility in formulas and having gleaned from his observations some insights into our question, I then identified four criteria of a valid Eucharistic rite, and argued that they are verified in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari.

We are therefore in a position to conclude that the decision of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity—namely, to allow, in some circumstances, intercommunion between Chaldean Catholics and members of the Assyrian Church of the East, thereby endorsing the validity of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari—is reasonable and defensible. The decision rests on firm theological principles. It furnishes no grounds for asserting that St. Thomas's theology of the Eucharistic conversion has been undermined or proved inadequate; for this theology has more resources, and more room for development, than we might have thought. Neither does it entail that the Church has implicitly abandoned what she taught at Florence and Trent, much less that the words of institution are seen as no longer necessary for consecration. These conclusions are false because they fail to recognize the manner in which the exact form of the sacrament is deeply embedded in the context of a specific liturgical rite deriving from a definite tradition and proposed by a definite apostolic authority. The rite embodies a certain approach to the mystery of the ministerial priest's "impersonation" of the High Priest—his saying and doing on behalf of, as empowered by, and as instructed by the one definitive priest of the New Covenant. The manner in which he is to speak and act is set before him by the ritual of the Church. Hence, we may confidently believe that when a validly ordained priest intends, says, and does at the altar what an apostolic church asks him to intend, say, and do, even he, lowly sinner though he is, will make present anew the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, the bread come down from heaven, the Lamb of God who surrendered himself for the life of the world.

Appendix

The Formal Structure of the Eucharistic Rite with Respect to Transubstantiation[164]

An anaphora (as well as the larger rite of which it is a part) is divisible into three parts; the first part signifies transubstantiation as something *to be*

[164] I owe much of the analysis found in this appendix to Joseph Bolin. The argument presented here can be applied to any Eucharistic rite, but it is meant to shed light on the problem of "when" transubstantiation occurs in a rite that does not announce this moment in an obvious way.

accomplished; the second part signifies transubstantiation as something that *is* accomplished; the third part signifies transubstantiation as something that *has been* accomplished. Such a division seems to follow necessarily from two principles—first, that it is clear that there *is* a transition; second, that sacraments effect what they signify *by signifying*.[165] For if it is clear that there is a transition, there must be some point when it is clear from the rite that the bread *is not yet* Christ's body, and some point when it is clear from the rite that the bread *is* Christ's body. References to transubstantiation made *before* any point of the first kind, taken in context, must then signify it as something *to be* accomplished, or by anticipation, while references to transubstantiation made *after* any point of the second kind, taken in context, must then signify it as something that *has been* accomplished.

Now, speaking theoretically, (1) every point might fall into one or the other of these divisions (that is, *to be* accomplished or *has been* accomplished), or there might be a middle period. If there is a middle period, the transubstantiation could be (2) signified as something that will be, is, or has been, but indeterminately; or could be (3) signified as something that is accomplished. The first two options would be consistent with the principle that there must be a recognizable transition. However, they are not consistent with the principle that sacraments effect *by signifying*. For what signifies something as future or as past does not and cannot bring it about, nor what signifies it as something merely possible but quite uncertain.[166] Therefore there must be some section of the anaphora that, taken as an integral whole, *determinately* signifies transubstantiation as something *presently* effected.

It does not follow, however, that we can be absolutely certain about

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[165] See John F. Gallagher, *"Significando causant": A Study of Sacramental Efficiency* (Fribourg: University Press, 1965).

[166] Although anointing of the sick has a reference to the future, it must be understood also as implying something effected now, for example, that the sick person receives God's grace as something to help him continually, especially through the duration of the sickness.

[167] For example, a section recalling the manna from heaven; a section recalling the Last Supper, a section imploring reconciliation with God, a section imploring God to come down to us, etc. All such texts are "conversion prayers" in the broad sense—that is, they are about the conversion of the gifts (and, interpreted spiritually, of ourselves through partaking of the gifts), and they are, directly or indirectly, asking God for this conversion; even a commemoration of blessing, in the context of a prayer, is a form of thanksgiving and a petition for further blessing. Therefore on the basis of textual content alone, apart from the guidance offered by a living liturgical tradition or the Church's determination in cases of doubt, it can be difficult to judge the moment of transubstantiation. It was for this reason that I suggested earlier that we would do well to judge the commencement of the real presence

precisely which part of the anaphora this middle section encompasses,[167] since it is *Christ* who instituted the sacrament, and it is primarily *his* signification, not ours, that brings about the effect. In other words, the one who institutes the sacrament is the one who signifies *through* it and effects what it signifies. This is just a way of repeating the truth that Christ is the principal celebrant of each sacrament and the author, according to his divinity, of its effects. Therefore what is required of the human minister, strictly speaking, is that he lend himself freely to Christ by saying and doing what the Church asks him to say and do. In this way, even if the minister is not certain exactly when and how Christ is acting in and through him (indeed, how could he ever really understand such a profound mystery?), he can nonetheless be absolutely certain *that* Christ is so acting, and *that* certain effects occur in definite ways. Regarding the Eucharistic liturgy in particular, he knows as he begins that transubstantiation *will occur*; he knows, from the rubrics instructing him to adore and to receive heavenly food, that after a certain point it *has occurred*; and he knows that during the peak of the liturgy it *is occurring*. That is enough for him to know in order to fulfill his ministerial role worthily.

An argument that aims at some measure of specificity and certainty will have to be based more upon fittingness than upon a necessity following from the essential nature of the sacraments. Obviously the manifestness of the time of the change pertains to the nature of the sacraments as sensible signs, but not in such a way that the time must be *very* specifically manifest with *very* great certitude in order to preserve the essential nature of a sacrament. If, say, a liturgical rite has the priest ascending the altar at a given moment to begin the most solemn portion of the prayer, and a few minutes later has him fall down in adoration before the altar, the congregation is not likely to mistake the visible lesson: The Lamb of God is now present on the altar. They are certain of that and regard it as manifest to their believing eyes.

In oriental liturgies, where the ministers, somewhat hidden from the people, are gathered around an altar, whispering and chanting prayer after prayer, bowing and signing themselves, it is difficult to point to a "moment" when all is, as it were, "said and done"; there tends to be a kind of plasticity and flow of liturgical time that makes it a less urgent question. One adores the Lord in his multifarious presence—in the temple of worship, in the priests, in the people, and ultimately, of course, in the blessed

during a liturgy employing the Anaphora of Addai and Mari by watching how the Christians who customarily worship in this rite behave, or what the better-catechized among them believe to be the case. This, too, is no infallible guide, but it is often the best witness we have.

sacrament itself, where the mode of presence is the most real, the most exalted.[168] In the Western rites, on the other hand, there tends to be a dramatic emphasis placed on consecration as such, which at a certain point compelled theologians and pastors to seek a resolution to the dilemma about when to begin adoring the gifts.[169] Due to the desire for worshiping the Lord's Body and Blood—a "natural" supernatural response that led to and strengthened the custom of elevating the host—an answer had to be given to the question: Is the bread, immediately after *its* consecration, already the Body of Christ, even before the wine has been consecrated? Thus it was desirable to settle the issue with certainty and to affirm that the conversion is effected by Christ's own words from the Last Supper, precisely when spoken over *each* gift. The Anaphora of Addai and Mari could not be more different from Western rites in this regard and hence must be approached from a different angle.

[168] On the various modes of "real" presence, cf. Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei,* nos. 20–23.

[169] On this matter I have already referred in note 35 above to Kennedy's valuable study, "The Moment of Consecration and the Elevation of the Host."