

THE
ECCLESIASTICAL REVIEW

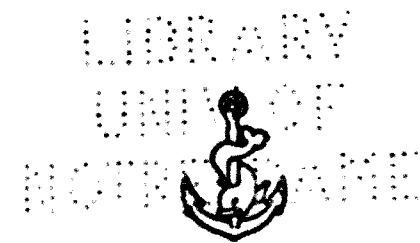
A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR THE CLERGY
Cum Approbatione Superiorum

Vol. C

JANUARY—JUNE, 1939

" Ut Ecclesia aedificationem accipiat."

I COR. 14: 5.



PHILADELPHIA
American Ecclesiastical Review
1939

higher degree to those who are to direct not only themselves but others.¹²

The Gifts of the Holy Ghost are inseparably connected with sanctifying grace and charity, which are infused into the soul through the instrumentality of the sacraments. The Holy Spirit with His gifts descends upon all who receive the sacraments worthily. In none of the sacraments is this doctrine more explicit than in the sacrament of Orders, which confers the power and grace of the priesthood. In conferring the diaconate the bishop says: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost for strength and for resisting the devil and his temptations in the name of the Lord". Later, in conferring the priesthood, he says: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain they are retained." In the consecration of a bishop the consecrating prelate says simply: "Receive the Holy Ghost." Only in one other sacrament, that of Confirmation, is there such emphatic reference to the Holy Spirit. We cannot therefore escape the conclusion that the feast of Pentecost is peculiarly the feast of the priest, nor that devotion to the Holy Spirit should be particularly the devotion of priests. The priest has special need for the assistance of God. He has special titles also that are not found in the faithful in general. The destiny of the Church is his destiny. He must be a guide and an example to the flock entrusted to him. Over him at ordination were spoken the words, "Receive the Holy Ghost," and the Council of Trent tells us that these words of the bishop are not spoken in vain.¹³

JAMES W. O'BRIEN

The Catholic University of America.

¹² II, II, Qu XLV, Art. 5.

¹³ Sess. XXIII, can. 4.

THE ACT OF THE MYSTICAL BODY.

THAT PART of theology which deals with the Mystical Body of Christ has been very well treated during the past few years. In Germany, Dr. Juergensmeier of the Paderborn Seminary has written a magnificent book on the application of this teaching to the spiritual theology,¹ while in France Dr. Anger of Rennes has shown the vivifying influence of the same teaching on the matter of dogma.² Father Mersch in a truly magisterial work has shown the historical development of this doctrine from its source in Sacred Scripture, through the writings of the Fathers and the theologians.³ Father Mura has made a valuable contribution to the science of theology in classifying the datum on the Mystical Body under the headings of the four causes, and thus delineating the fulness of the life of Christ, in the Head and in the members.⁴ Father Clerissac has written brilliantly on the essentially supernatural character of the Church.⁵ Our American theologians have made their own very able contributions, both in the splendid books of Monsignor Sheen⁶ and of Father Gruden,⁷ and in well written articles, among which those of Doctor McGarry⁸ are deserving of special mention. Indeed, the young American "nation" in the universal Church's faculty of sacred science has begun to exercise the influence which should belong to it particularly on this department of theology.

However, the very fulness of the subject matter is such that further progress must be made, progress which should be of service to the life and the activity of the Catholic Church. Apart altogether from the field of research, and from the problem of visualizing other departments of theology in the light of the Mystical Body, it would seem that there is latent in the doctrine itself certain elements which escape even the magisterial classification of Father Mura.

¹ *Der Mystische Leib Christi als Grundprinzip der Asketik*, (6th edition, Paderborn, 1936).

² *La Doctrine du Corps Mystique de Jésus-Christ d'après les principes de la théologie de Saint Thomas*, (4th edition, Paris, 1934).

³ "Le Corps Mystique du Christ," *Etudes de Théologie Historique* (Louvain, 1933).

⁴ *Le Corps Mystique du Christ, Sa Nature et Sa Vie Divine d'après Saint Paul et la Théologie*, (Paris, 1934).

⁵ *The Mystery of the Church*, (translated from the French—New York, 1937).

⁶ *The Mystical Body of Christ*, (New York, 1933).

⁷ *The Mystical Christ*, Saint Louis, 1936.

⁸ *Thought*, Vol. XII, numbers 1 and 2 (March and June, 1937).

According to this brilliant theologian, the Mystical Body of Christ is something which can be understood in function of four real causes—material, formal, efficient, and final. The material cause is definitely the principle, not of unity but of multiplicity. The material cause of the Mystical Body is the Head and the members, those who go to make up the fulness of Christ. The other three causes are principles of unity, and the Mystical Body is one by reason of these. The formal cause is either exemplary or intrinsic. The Mystical Body is one by reason of exemplary causality because there is one, and only one Model to which its members must be conformed. That one ultimate exemplar is the Incarnate Word.

The internal formal cause is either substantial or accidental. The Church can have no properly substantial cause because it is something made up of individual persons. But the Holy Ghost, to whom the activities of love on the part of the Blessed Trinity are attributed, is the quasi-substantial cause of the Mystical Body. Obviously It does not enter into composition with the members to form a whole of which It would be a part. It fulfills the functions of a substantial cause by constituting the Mystical Body as a supernatural organism, binding the members together in their corporate unity.

The accidental and secondary formal cause of the Mystical Body is twofold. First there is the moral and judicial subjection to the glorious yoke of Christ the King within the Church. Then there is the perfecting bond of charity.

The efficient cause that binds and holds the Church together is principal and instrumental. The principal cause is the Blessed Trinity, and by appropriation the Holy Ghost. The instrumental cause is either conjoined or separate. The conjoined instrumental cause which makes the Church one is the humanity of Christ, hypostatically united to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The separate and secondary instruments are the sacraments, established by our Lord to signify and to cause our sanctification in Him. The final cause in which the unity of the Mystical Body is achieved is the Glory of God in the fulness of Christ.⁹

⁹ This is summarized in a schema on p. 112, vol. 1, of Father Mura's work.

As Father Simonin has pointed out very well,¹⁰ there is bound to be a certain incompleteness in any schema which attempts to classify a supernatural reality in function of natural standards. The work of Father Mura is exact, and in its own manner quite complete. Yet the very classification of which he made use precluded a very sharp insistence upon one principle of unity, one aspect of the Mystical Body. We are one with Christ not only for reasons which can be resumed under the heading of the four causes, but because we are deputized and empowered in a special way to make the act and the proper operation of Christ our own. The Mystical Body is one with Christ because it is the organization whose chief and central business is the eternal sacrifice of the Redeemer. His act, that for which He came into the world, is in a special way ours, in the sense that the members of Christ are constituted as a kingly priesthood by a real sharing in the priesthood of Christ. The unity of the Mystical Body is essentially something dynamic. That which is the proper act of the Head is the proper act of the members who are conjoined with Him.

There is one act which is fundamentally and primarily the proper operation of Jesus Christ. The act of Redemption itself is the motive of the Incarnation, in such a way that, in the present order of divine providence, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity would not have assumed a human nature had Adam, the father of the human race, not sinned.¹¹ The purpose of the Incarnation was accomplished in the passion and death of Christ, in an act which was at once satisfactory, sacrificial, redemptive, and thus efficaciously the cause of our salvation.¹² From the very moment of His conception Christ had merited eternal salvation for us in every act He performed, and in every hardship He endured. But, in the merciful decrees of divine providence, it had been established that all these other merits of Christ should be ordered to, and have their effects from and through the passion itself.¹³

¹⁰ The article "Implicite et Explicite dans le développement du dogme," p. 126 in *Angelicum* January, 1937.

¹¹ *Summa Theologica*, III, qu. 1 art. 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, III, qu. 48, *passim*.

¹³ *Ibid.*, III, qu. 44, art. 3 ad 3, and III qu. 48, art. 1 ad 2; see also Voete, *De Mysteriis Verbi Incarnati*, p. 355.

The life of Christ in this world actually centered about the passion. Our Lord could and did look to His exaltation upon the cross as the crowning achievement of His life on earth. The sacrifice of Calvary was the act toward which every other work of His life was ordered, and to which He looked forward with eager anticipation. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straightened until it be accomplished?"¹⁴ The sacrifice of Calvary is the proper act and perfection of Christ in such a way that the Apostle of the Gentiles could speak of his evangelizing work in the terms, "We preach Christ crucified".¹⁵ And, standing amidst the eternal glories of heaven, Saint John describes Him as "a Lamb, as it were slain".¹⁶

The Mystical Body of Christ is the organization of those to whom God has accorded the signal favor of being united to Christ in such a way that His act becomes their own. The operation of a thing constitutes its proper perfection, and, in the final analysis, a thing is one in so far as it operates as one. The proper act of the Mystical Body is not different from the proper act of Christ Himself. The act of the head is the act of the body. Our union with Christ is not merely an affair of position. It is not quiescent but dynamic. The Mystical Body, as an organization, has a central affair, an essential business, which constitutes the proper basic concern of all its members. That operation is none other than the great sacrificial act of Christ.

The Church has given us a very definite teaching on the manner in which the passion of Christ and its effects are communicated to the person whom God has called into the unity of the Mystical Body. In the first place it is of faith that the justice of Christ is not merely imputed to us. That was the position of Luther, justly condemned in the Council of Trent.¹⁷ Neither does that justice become ours merely by a sort of material conjunction, according to which the member of Christ would be justified formally by the justice of Christ Himself.¹⁸

¹⁴ Luke, 12:50.

¹⁵ I Cor. 1:23.

¹⁶ Apoc. 5:6.

¹⁷ Trent, Session 6, canon 11; Denz. 821.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, canon 10; Denz. 820.

The member of Christ is sacramentally a participant of the justice of Christ. "Unless they be born again in Christ, they will never be justified, since the grace by which they become just is given to them in that rebirth through the merit of His Passion."¹⁹ The men to whom the merit of His passion is communicated are the ones who receive the benefit of His death. The members of the Church receive the benefits of the passion and death of Christ, not as separated individuals, but as persons dynamically joined and configured to Him in the sacrament of Baptism, the sacrament of faith.

Saint Thomas has given us a clear and authentic teaching on the mode of our dynamic union with Christ, on the manner in which we participate His activity. The heart of what is properly the doctrine on the Mystical Body in Saint Thomas is contained in the question on the sacramental character. Considered in its immediate context, the treatise on the sacraments, in general and in particular, and in its proper background of the theological science as a whole, the Thomistic teaching on the sacramental character affords us the basis for a properly dynamic concept of the Mystical Body. The epitome of the Thomistic teaching on the sacramental character, and on the dynamic nature of the Mystical Body is found in that apparently recon-dite article stating that the character itself is a power, and should be classified by reduction under the second species of quality.²⁰ The men who, under the pretext of philosophical acumen, played with that notion, and attempted the apparently harmless pastime of substituting the first (habit and disposition), for the second (potency and impotence) species of quality, did considerable harm to the development of Catholic theology, and contributed largely to a lessened appreciation of the doctrine of our union with Christ in the Mystical Body.

All of the teaching of Saint Thomas on the sacramental character hinges upon the definition of a sacrament in its general acceptance, contained in the traditional Catholic theology. "A sacrament is the sign of a sacred thing in as much as it actually sanctifies man."²¹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, chapter 3; Denz. 795.

²⁰ *Summa Theologica*, III, qu. 63, art. 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, III, 60, art. 2.

This sacrament signifies at the same time the cause of our salvation, the passion of Christ. Thus it is rememorative of a past event. It signifies the form of our sanctification, habitual grace and the supernatural virtues. In this way it is demonstrative of a present effect produced within us by the passion of Christ. Finally the sacrament is the sign of the ultimate effect of our sanctification, eternal life. Thus it is prognostic of future glory. In this way the passion of Christ itself, the cause of our salvation, is communicated to us in a certain manner in the sacraments.²²

The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ. We become members of the Church when we receive the sacrament of Baptism. The enduring quality which constitutes us as members of the Church is the character of Baptism. Baptism itself is a conformation to the passion of Christ, an effective sign whereby we make the passion of Christ our act. Through this sacrament "we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death. For we are buried together with Him in baptism into death, that, as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. . . . So you also reckon that you are dead to sin but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord."²³

We can appreciate the sacramental economy only in the measure that we realize that the passion and death of Christ not only constituted an act of redemption, by which we were liberated from our sins, but was also the supreme act of religion, a sacrifice, in which all who are to be saved in Christ must participate. The sacraments of the new law, which have their power from the passion of Christ, have also this double orientation. The theology of Saint Thomas gives adequate expression to this twofold function of the sacraments, freeing men from sin, and perfecting him in the worship of God according to the rite of the Christian religion. "Sacramental grace (in general) seems to be ordered especially toward two things; that is, in taking away the effects of past sins, in so far as these are finished in act but yet remain in guilt, and again for perfecting the soul in those things which pertain to the worship of God according

²² *Ibid.*, III, 60, art. 3.

²³ *Rom.* 6:3, 4 and 11.

to the religion of the Christian life. It is evident from what has been said above that Christ has freed us from our sins, not only sufficiently and meritoriously, but also by way of satisfaction, especially through His passion. Likewise, also through His passion He initiated the rite of the Christian religion, offering Himself as an oblation and a victim to God."²⁴

The sacrament of Baptism, by which we are made members of Christ, has this twofold effect. It takes away the state of sin and it gives the sacramental grace of regeneration or rebirth. This sacramental grace is habitual grace itself, carrying with it an exigency for those actual graces that are requisite in the conduct of that life begun by Baptism. The habitual grace is that which makes us living members of Christ. But to know the grace of regeneration, which we receive in Baptism, is not merely to know the concept of habitual grace itself.

Habitual grace is essentially the ultimate intrinsic principle of a life. That life is the formal, physical, though still analogous participation of the intimate life of God. Habitual grace constitutes the person who possesses it as able connaturally to know God as He is in Himself, either in the obscure cognition of faith, or in the final clarity of the beatific vision, and able to love Him as known in this way. The life of grace, either in the preparatory condition of this world, or in the consummate perfection of the next, constitutes a real worship of God. It is an activity in which God is given the tribute of service and recognition which is due to Him for His supreme excellence.

But that activity of the life of grace is modified in the member of the Church of Christ by the fact that the grace which he receives in Baptism is the grace of Christ. The grace which we possess as living members of the Mystical Body possesses certain modifications which the grace of the angels and the grace of Adam, that which we would have possessed in the event that Adam had remained faithful to God, have not. Not only does the grace of the Church come to us through the sacrifice of Christ, but the life of which it is the ultimate intrinsic principle is summed up and expressed in the sacrifice of Christ itself. That, in the last analysis, is the reason why we can truthfully say that the death of Christ gave to man more than man had

²⁴ *Summa Theologica*, III, qu. 62, art. 5.

lost in the sin of Adam. All true religion among men is summed up and expressed in sacrifice. The life of which habitual grace is the intrinsic source constitutes a religion. It is the special and unique glory of the grace of the Church, of the Mystical Body that its life is summed up and expressed in the effably perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Baptism introduces us into the life of the Mystical Body. It is not the ultimate manifestation and expression of that life. Because that life is a service of God, or a religion, God in His mercy has constituted that Sacrament of Baptism so as to make it confer upon the person who receives it a special character, empowering and designating him for this service, by configuring him to the priesthood of Christ Himself. The same quality which is a configurative sign of our partaking in the priesthood of Christ is the distinctive sign by which the member of Christ is differentiated from all men who have not been really united to Christ sacramentally.

In this light we see the teaching of Saint Thomas on the nature of the sacramental character as a key to thesis in the dynamic theology of the Mystical Body. The "Doctor Communis" and all the Thomistic school after him teach that the sacramental character must be allocated by reduction to the second species of quality. It is a certain spiritual potency or power by which men are designated and enabled to perform the worship of God according to the rite of the Christian religion. It is an abiding instrumental potency, and as a result the character does not fall under the natural designation of the second species of quality, but is only reduced to it. It is an instrumental potency because it enables man to enter into an activity of which Christ is the principal cause in His passion.²⁵ The man who has the baptismal character belongs to an organization which worships God as an instrument of Christ. The worship, or religious activity, of the possessor of the baptismal character is not merely individual but truly corporate.

The operation of the principal cause is one very definite act, the sacrifice of Christ. The sacramental character empowers a man to act, in one capacity or another, as an instrument of this sacrifice. The man possessing the character as a member of the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, III, qu. 63, art. 2 and qu. 62 art. 5.

Church is the instrument. The Eucharistic sacrifice, the true sacrifice of the Mass, in which the Catholic participates according to his rank in the Mystical Body is the proper activity of the Church as an instrument, and the proper operation of the Catholic as such. The worship of God, in the Mystical Body, is summed up and expressed in one definite act, the Eucharistic sacrifice.

The principal cause and the instrument have one act, and produce one effect. The act of the principal cause is the act of the instrument. In the eucharistic sacrifice the Mystical Body acts as the instrument of the passion of Christ, and in this sacrificial operation it makes the passion of Christ the act of the Church. The sacrifice of the Mass is then, in a special and metaphysical sense, the act of the Mystical Body, the tremendous instrumental function in which the baptized person is empowered to participate. To define it by its proper and immediate function, the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, is that organization which exists to offer the sacrifice of the Mass. The Christian or baptized person is marked as distinct from other men in that he is empowered to participate in the essentially corporate activity of the eucharistic sacrifice.

The Church does not act as an amorphous unit in the performance of the eucharistic sacrifice. The Church is constituted as an ordered, hierarchical society. Since the act of a thing is proportioned to what it is, the proper act of the Catholic Church, the sacrifice of the Mass, is an ordered hierarchical act. In this proper operation of the Mystical Body of Christ there are some constituted as empowered to fulfill an active function with reference to their fellow members. These are the men signed with the character of Holy Orders. Those who have the fulness of the priestly character are enabled to confect the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and thus to fulfill the sacerdotal office of sacrifice. The others are empowered to participate in that corporate function actively, according to the perfection of their order.

Those who possess a relatively passive character, those who are recipients rather than agents in the proper activity of the Church are the possessors of the baptismal character, who are thus enabled to receive the other sacraments. This power is centered principally upon the Holy Eucharist, "in which the

worship of God consists principally, in so far as it is the sacrifice of the Church."²⁶

The worship or cultus of God is "a certain protestation of faith through exterior signs". And, because this protestation of faith is destined to be carried on until the end of time in the face of opposition coming from the inevitable enemies of the cross of Christ, there is a sacramental character officially empowering and designating the members of the Church for the spiritual conflict against the enemies of the faith.²⁷ This is the character of Confirmation, which thus resolves itself into an official empowering designation for the conduct of the Eucharistic sacrifice against the attacks made against it. Vincent Contenson,²⁸ in commenting upon this phase of the sacramental economy, shows the close analogy between the sacramental character and the military designation in natural affairs. Whilst any citizen can actually fight the enemies of his country, only the soldier is officially designated and empowered for this work. So the confirmed Christian is the officially designated defender of the eucharistic sacrifice.

Finally, all the teaching on the Holy Eucharist itself brings out the fact that it is the immediate operation, the proper act and perfection of the Mystical Body. It is rightly called a sacrifice "in so far as it is rememorative of the Lord's passion".²⁹ That the Mass is "a true and proper sacrifice" is a dogma of Catholic faith.³⁰ Furthermore, it is a sacrifice that belongs in a special way to the Mystical Body of Christ as an organization. Even those Masses in which the priest alone communicates sacramentally must be considered common to the Church as a whole, "partly because the people communicate spiritually in them, and partly because they are celebrated by a public minister of the Church, not for himself alone but for all the faithful who belong to the body of Christ."³¹ Saint Thomas brings out the same point in the *Summa Theologica*. "In private Masses it is

²⁶ *Ibid.*, III, qu. 63, art. 6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, III, qu. 72, art. 5.

²⁸ *Theologia Mentis et Cordis* (Lyons 1687), Lib. XI, pars 1, diss. 1, cap 2.

²⁹ *Summa Theologica*, III, qu. 73, art. 4.

³⁰ Trent, Session 22, canon 1, Denz. 948.

³¹ *Ibid.*, chapter 6, Denz. 944.

sufficient to have one minister who takes the rôle of the entire Catholic people."³²

The Holy Eucharist is the perfective sacrament of the Church in that it signifies and causes our union in Christ by charity. At the same time it is the sacrifice of the people of God. Since the proper operation of the Mystical Body is the sacrifice of the Mass, a social rather than a merely individual function, the members of the Church as a whole could be called by Saint Peter "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a purchased people." And because sacrifice is the supreme act of religion, summing up and expressing the acts of the interior worship of God and testifying in a unique way to the divine excellence, he could continue to speak of them as constituted in this special dignity "that you may declare His virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light".³³ Because this action is the one in which the Church makes its own the very passion of the Redeemer, the priest who performs this act of sacrifice is said in all truth to assume the person of Christ Himself. It is in the eucharistic sacrifice, the proper operation of the Church of God, that the words of Malachias find their fulfilment. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same My name is great among the gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation: for My name is great among the gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts."³⁴

Understanding the Mystical Body of Christ in function of its proper operation has the decided advantage of high-lighting the unity of Catholic activity. The operation in which the Church finds its immediate perfection, that which is preëminently the act of the Mystical Body is the Mass, a true and proper sacrifice. A sacrifice is a sign, an expression of the interior acts of religion, particularly of devotion and prayer. The essential act of consecration then expresses the acts of prayer and devotion which constitute the text of the Mass itself. The prayers themselves of the Mass express desires and hopes which demand, for their consistent background, the complex fulness of the Chris-

³² *Summa Theologica*, III, qu. 83, art. 5 ad 12.

³³ 1 Pet. 2:9.

³⁴ Mal. 1:11.

tian life. The acts of all the virtues enter into the background of prayer, and the eucharistic sacrifice, offered by the priest in the name and the person of Christ, for the members of His Mystical Body, demands the sincerity of prayer and devotion among those for whom it is offered.

Thus the life of the Mystical Body, so brilliantly resumed in the work of Father Mura, finds its bond in its common expression in the eucharistic sacrifice, the act of the Mystical Body.

JOSEPH C. FENTON

Washington, D. C.

OUR LADY IN THE MODERN AGE.

CRITICAL TIMES such as those through which we are passing serve to bring out all the resources of the Church. In the spiritual warfare we are waging there are reserve battalions—truths the full value of which has not been previously realized—that are thrown into the conflict. Thus, for instance, the dynamic character of our epoch has resuscitated the Pauline conception of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. Only such a conception would be adequate in order that we might be in a position to contend successfully with the exaggerated nationalism which threatens the Faith. Since the political societies from which the threat comes have adopted a mystical philosophy and speak of themselves in biological terms, Divine Providence has brought to the mind of this generation a conception of the Church which may be said to correspond, on the supernatural plane, to this new, vitalistic sociology. In the same way, it will be found that the special circumstances of the present age have given a new emphasis to Our Lady as the Mother of the faithful.

At first sight there would seem to be little warrant in Scripture or tradition for assigning to her the rôle in the creation of the Mystical Body which the modern theologian is discovering. In the story of Pentecost as related in the *Acts of the Apostles* she occupied but a humble position in the background. All that we know from these sources is that, when the Holy Ghost descended upon the assembled disciples of the risen Christ, she was present. The fact is only casually mentioned as if it had no particular significance. But this is consistent with the entire character of the *Acts*, which, as the title suggests, is concerned with the militant and aggressive aspect of the divine society. It is, for the most part, a record of the apostolate and naturally gives prominence to what may be called the masculine element. But this cannot be the whole story. "Male and female made He them" is as true spiritually, as it is physically. In every creation there are two factors, the passive or receptive factor and the active. We might almost equally well speak of the feminine and the masculine attitude toward the Truth. "The soul is as a woman before God," wrote Coventry Patmore. That is true of the more essential aspect of religion, but it is not the