

The Rites of Consecration

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Introduction

The various modes of Christ's presence in the liturgy can be compared to the modes of Christ's presence in his Church, as described by Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Mysterium fidei*; but when the Pope speaks of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, which is brought about through consecration, he observes:

Quite different is the manner in which Christ is present to the Church in the sacrament of the Eucharist. This presence is called 'real', not in an exclusive sense, as if the other forms of presence were not 'real', but par excellence or 'by antonomasia', because it is substantial, and through it Christ, the God-Man, makes himself wholly present (cf. Council of Trent, Decree De SS. Euch. , c. 3).

We shall offer some theological reflections on the effects of the rite of consecration, particularly transubstantiation, and its significance in the Mass. We shall then address the errors opposed to these truths, after which we shall analyse the words and rites that properly constitute the consecration, accompanied by historical and theological commentary.

We shall frequently draw upon the Magisterium of the Church—which is the immediate rule of the Faith for every theologian—and the doctrine of Saint Thomas, whose theological and liturgical authority is indisputable, as the foundation for our considerations. This is particularly true with regard to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, on which he was an unrivalled poet (cf. Feast of Corpus Christi, *Corpus Domini*)

1. Some theological considerations on the effects of the rite of consecration

His Holiness Pope Pius XII, in an address delivered on the occasion of a liturgical congress, emphasised the vital importance of consecration and also recalled certain truths to be borne in mind for the liturgical study of the Mass. Among these are: that of the Real Presence and transubstantiation brought about by the words of consecration; that of the hierarchical or ministerial priesthood; and the sacrificial character proper to the Mass.

He said:

The priest's proper and principal office has always been, and remains, to offer the Sacrifice. (...) Under the New Law, his principal power and official function is to offer the one and sublime sacrifice of the Eternal and Sovereign Priest, Christ Our Lord. (...) The celebrating priest, representing Christ, is the one who offers the sacrifice, and he alone; it is not the people, nor the clerics, nor even the priests who assist devoutly.

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And furthermore:

The central element of the Eucharistic sacrifice is that in which Christ intervenes as ‘se ipsum offerens’, to use the very words of the Council of Trent. This takes place at the consecration, where, in the very act of transubstantiation wrought by the Lord, the celebrating priest is ‘personam Christi gerens’. Even if the consecration takes place without pomp and in simplicity, it is the focal point of the entire liturgy of the sacrifice, the focal point of the actio Christi cujus personam gerit sacerdos celebrans. (...) In reality, the action of the consecrating priest is that very same action of Christ, who acts through his minister. When the consecration of the bread and wine is validly performed, the entire action of Christ himself is accomplished. Even if everything that follows were not to be carried out, nothing essential would be lacking from the Lord’s offering.

Real Presence and Transubstantiation

Let us now turn to the truths relating to the subject at hand, namely, the Real Presence and transubstantiation.

The Church’s doctrine on the Real Presence affirms that ‘in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is truly, really and substantially present under the appearances of these sensible things.’

This presence begins at the moment of consecration, hence the close connection between the reality of the Real Presence and the transformation that gives rise to it—known as transubstantiation—regarding which the Council of Trent declared:

Because Christ our Redeemer said that what he offered under the appearance of bread was truly his body, it has always been held in the Church of God – and this is what this holy council declares once again today this holy council – that through the consecration of the bread and wine, a change takes place whereby the entire substance of the bread is transformed into the substance of the Body of Christ our Lord, and the entire substance of the wine into the substance of his Blood. This change has been rightly and properly called, by the Holy Catholic Church, transubstantiation.

2. The Errors

1) Reductionist errors

Ever since Bérenger, who in the 11th century reduced the Real Presence to a merely signified or symbolic presence, there have always been people who have denied the Real Presence or transubstantiation and, as is the case today, have sought to retain the words of the Church’s definitions whilst completely altering their meaning. Thus Pope Paul VI published the encyclical

Mysterium fidei to proclaim the doctrine of the Church and condemn the errors of transsignification and transfinalisation, and even of subjectivism—theories of the same order as that of Bérenger, which were false insofar as they were reductionist. The Pope affirmed:

Christ is made present in this Sacrament only through the conversion of the entire substance of the bread into the Body of Christ and of the entire substance of the wine into the Blood of Christ; a singular and marvellous conversion, which the Catholic Church quite rightly and appropriately designates by the term ‘transubstantiation’. Once this has been accomplished, the species of bread and wine undoubtedly acquire a new meaning and a new purpose, since there is no longer ordinary bread and ordinary drink, but the sign of a sacred thing and the sign of spiritual nourishment; yet the species possess this new meaning and purpose because they embody a new reality, which we rightly call ontological. Indeed, in the species of which we speak, there is no longer what was there before, but something entirely different; and this is not merely dependent on the judgement held by the faith of the Church, but by virtue of objective reality itself; for once the nature or substance of the bread and wine has been changed into the body and blood of Christ, nothing remains of the bread and wine but the species themselves, under which the whole Christ is present in his physical, and indeed corporeal, reality, albeit in a mode of presence different from that by which bodies occupy this or that place.

And the Pope specifies:

It is not permissible, to give an example, to advocate the so-called ‘communal’ Mass in such a way as to disparage the private Mass; nor to emphasise the aspect of the sacramental sign as if the symbolic function—which no one disputes in the Holy Eucharist—were to express exhaustively the mode of Christ’s presence in this sacrament; it is not permissible to discuss the mystery of transubstantiation without reference to the wondrous conversion of the entire substance of the bread into the Body of Christ and of the entire substance of the wine into the Blood of the Lord – a conversion of which the Council of Trent speaks – whilst confining oneself merely to what is termed ‘transsignification’ and ‘transfinalisation’; it is not permissible to present and follow in practice the view that Our Lord Jesus Christ is no longer present in the consecrated hosts that remain after the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The real problem with the theories of transsignification and transfinalisation is the attempt to express the full reality of what takes place at the consecration, that is to say, to reduce the substantial change to a change of meaning or purpose.

But in fact, the whole flaw in these theological errors stems from philosophical errors. Pius XII had already warned us:

There are still those who claim that the doctrine of transubstantiation, being based entirely on an outdated philosophical concept (the concept of substance), must be

corrected, so that the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist is reduced to a form of symbolism...

It would therefore be a mistaken explanation of this kind of presence to ascribe to the Body of the glorious Christ an omnipresent spiritual ('pneumatic') nature; or to reduce the Eucharistic presence to the limits of symbolism, as if this most venerable Sacrament consisted of nothing other than an effective sign of Christ's spiritual presence and of his intimate union with the faithful members of the Mystical Body.

He was prescient regarding the doctrinal danger posed by modern philosophy:

Moreover, once Catholic doctrine has been reduced to such a state, the way will be open, they believe, to meeting the needs of the day by expressing dogma through the concepts of modern philosophy—immanentism, for example, idealism, existentialism or any other system yet to come (...)

The mysteries of the faith cannot be expressed by notions that are adequately true, but, according to them, by notions that are approximate and ever-changing concepts, through which the truth is undoubtedly indicated to a certain extent, but inevitably distorted.

Contempt for the words and concepts customarily used by scholastic theologians very quickly leads to the undermining of what they call 'speculative' theology, which they regard as devoid of any true certainty...

2) Transsignification and Transfinalisation

The theories of transsignification and transfinalisation in the thought of Dutch theologians, particularly in the work of Fr Schoonenberg, arose from a flawed philosophical conception of substance. It is existentialist phenomenology that does not consider things in terms of 'being-in-itself' but 'being-for-us' (thus the primacy of a thing's finality – 'for us' – over its being). Substance is therefore regarded as a node at which relations converge, an intersection of relationships, all ordered towards us. Thus, bread and wine have by nature a 'being-for-us' in that, for all people, they are ordered towards natural nourishment. But when the words of consecration are spoken, they essentially and completely alter their 'being-for-us', because from being signs of nourishment, they have become signs of the incarnate person of Christ. Christ thus becomes 'present' above all to bring about an interpersonal presence of a spiritual nature (that is to say, a presence that is not physical or corporeal but through knowledge and affection). Thus, the bread and wine, without changing in their 'being in itself', become natural symbols of the person of Christ and of his interpersonal relationships with his faithful.

The stated aim is not to deny transubstantiation, but to explain it in terms of the concepts of modern philosophy.

The aim of this lecture is not to criticise the errors of modern philosophy or to demonstrate the truth of St Thomas's realism—in particular, the notion of substance based on accidental change — but to show that these theories, even whilst using language that appears to be that of the Magisterium, give it an entirely different meaning, as the holy Pope Pius X stated in the encyclical *Pascendi*, thereby opposing the doctrine of the Church.

It may be said that, in the doctrine of the sacraments, the predicate 'relation' is of singular importance; yet we must not forget that whilst the sacraments belong to the category of 'signs', they are also efficacious, and that in addition to the *sacramentum tantum* there is the *res et sacramentum*, which, in the very special case of the Eucharist, is nothing other than the Real and Substantial Presence of Our Lord.

Consecration entails transubstantiation and transsignification, and even transfinalisation, since the change in substance is the cause of the change in meaning—from material to spiritual nourishment— and is also the cause of a change in finality, which consists in signifying and containing Christ Himself, who nourishes the supernatural life.

For their part, Leenhardt and Vanneste state that the words of consecration leave the physical and chemical composition of the bread and wine unchanged, whilst acknowledging a transformation of these elements. They rely on the false philosophical conception which holds that the essence of things is not found within them, but in the depths of their *raison d'être*, which only those who have faith can attain. Because the ultimate meaning of things is religious, it depends on God's Will in relation to the salvation of humankind. Thus they assert that the substance of things is not in what we perceive, nor in the thing itself, but in the Divine Will which gives them religious significance. Thus transubstantiation consists in the new significance that bread takes on, that is to say, the Body of Christ. Bread, therefore, whilst remaining bread in the natural order, takes on the profound religious significance of the Body of Christ. All this is merely the consequence of adopting a certain form of dualistic Platonism at a philosophical level, where the real world is that of the Forms, and not the one we perceive through our senses.

3) The question of the epiclesis

We find another significant error concerning transubstantiation—not regarding transubstantiation itself, but concerning the moment of its realisation—which originates in the East. This is the famous question of the epiclesis, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, which is of considerable liturgical importance, particularly in Eastern liturgies. It is entirely understandable that it is appropriate to seek divine intervention (and thus the epiclesis) for the consecration to take place. But we must distinguish between appropriateness and necessity. A clear distinction must be made between the two types:

- the consecratory epiclesis, in which the Father is asked to send the Holy Spirit to transubstantiate the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ;

- the utilitarian epiclesis, in which the invocation asks for the acceptance of the sacrifice and the bestowal of blessings upon the participants.

Chronologically speaking, it may precede or follow the consecration. It should be noted that this is a deprecative formula, rather than an indicative or imperative one.

The problem arose from the 12th and 13th centuries onwards, when certain theologians, particularly amongst the schismatic Easterners (of whom Cabasilas [+1371] was the principal author), asserted that the epiclesis constituted the sole form of consecration or, more moderately, that the words of Christ: '*Hoc est corpus meum*' are not sufficient for transubstantiation, but that it is necessary to add the epiclesis (Catharin and Cheffontaines).

The scope of this lecture does not allow us to dwell too long on this question, but this theory finds no support in any text of Holy Scripture; on the contrary, the very meaning of the Gospel accounts or the writings of Saint Paul indicates that transubstantiation was effected solely by the words of Christ. Furthermore, it has no solid foundation in Tradition, since the majority of the Church Fathers speak in accordance with the true doctrine. Furthermore, the consecratory epiclesis is not found in the earliest documents and, according to Jungmann (page 109), 'it represents only the practice in force since the 4th century in one of the three great patriarchates, that of Antioch.'

The *Magisterium* has ruled on this matter on several occasions, either indirectly—that is, by affirming that the form of the sacrament of the Eucharist consists in the words of consecration (Clement VI, the Council of Florence, the Council of Trent), or directly (Clement XI, Benedict XIII, Pius VII).

Most recently, St Pius X regarded as a 'grave error' that

one might accept the view held by the Greeks that the words of consecration do not take effect until the prayer they call the epiclesis has been recited, since, on the contrary, it is evident that the Church has no right to introduce any innovation whatsoever concerning the very substance of the sacraments.

3. Analysis of the rites of consecration

Let us now set aside the Church's doctrine on the Eucharist to begin an analysis specifically of the words and gestures of consecration. Let us begin with the pragmatic and performative dimension of language.

Dom Vandeur offers us two keys to understanding the ceremony of consecration, namely that the principal priest is Our Lord Jesus Christ and that the celebrant's language is not merely narrative:

Consecration is the most solemn moment of the Holy Sacrifice; all the prayers that precede or follow it form a crown around this great act, the greatest of miracles, as St Thomas

Aquinas calls it, namely the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

To fully understand the rites of consecration, one must never forget that at this moment, more than at any other, the principal priest is Jesus Christ. The person of the minister is, so to speak, hidden: he will indeed consecrate, but the principal Priest will be Jesus. (...) The priest is not here merely a narrator of the Gospel account of the Last Supper; his words are truly effective and apply to the matter present on the altar.

1) The narrative and actual significance of the words of consecration

On the question of language we are discussing—namely, how the priest utters the words, whether in a purely narrative manner or in a significant one, that is to say, with actual significance—let us consider what Saint Thomas says:

Opinions have multiplied regarding this issue. Some have said that in the statement ‘This is my body’, the word ‘this’ implies a representation rather than an actualisation, since the entire statement is taken in a material sense, as it is uttered in a narrative manner. Indeed, the priest recounts that Christ said: ‘This is my body’. But this argument does not hold water. For, if that were the case, the words would not apply to the bodily matter present, and thus the sacrament would not be realised. For Saint Augustine says in his Commentaries on Saint John: ‘The word is united with the element, and therein lies the sacrament’. (...) It must therefore be said that, even when uttered by the priest, these words are employed for their symbolic value and not in a material sense (*significative et non tantum materialiter accipiuntur*). And it cannot be objected that the priest also utters them by way of narration, as spoken by Christ.

Father Roguet, O.P., states in his commentary:

Materialiter does not mean in a purely material sense, in the manner of inert materials; that belongs to the exaggerated conception of ‘opere operato’, which renders it quasi-magical. As in all sacraments, the form of the Eucharist acts through its significance.

Materialiter means that a statement is quoted as belonging to another; for example, the psalmist says: ‘Dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus’. This way of speaking is called *materialiter*, *historice* or *recitative*.

Whereas *formaliter* would mean speaking the words as if uttered by myself; this is what ‘significative’ means, giving these words the meaning they naturally possess. When spoken by me, they are attributed to me.

St Thomas points out that the words are understood in two ways: namely, both materially and formally. He writes in the *Sentences*: ‘And because, through everything he does with regard to the external matter, he re-presents the person of Christ, for this reason these words are understood

both as forming a narrative (and *recitative*) and as having an actual meaning (and *significative*) with regard to the present matter.”

The *Salmanticenses* give us the example of the Lord’s Prayer at Mass: the priest recites it as taught by Christ, and also recites the prayer in his own name.

It is clear that the priest who reads the Epistle on Holy Thursday or on the feast of *Corpus Domini* pronounces the words of consecration, but does not consecrate, because he pronounces these words only *materialiter*, that is to say, solely by way of narration or recounting.

Billuart, following Q 78 a 5 of the Third Part of St Thomas’s *Summa Theologica*, tells us in his *Summa Sancti Thomae*:

The words of consecration are not uttered merely in a narrative and historical manner (*non recitative et historice tantum*). He asserts that the priest also pronounces them in a meaningful and effective manner, that is to say, by referring to the words which Our Lord spoke at the Last Supper and, at the same time, by intending to apply them to the present matter. Otherwise, the priest would not himself be acting ‘*in persona Christi*’ as taught by the Council of Florence, but would merely be recounting the words spoken by Jesus Christ; furthermore, he would have no need for the present matter, but the words would be applied to the matter which Christ had consecrated.

It is worth noting the objection that prompted this response from Billuart: ‘These words, *Hoc est corpus meum*, etc., are uttered solely in a narrative and historical manner, as is evident from the preceding words: “*Qui pridie quam pateretur...dixit.*” Therefore, they do not have the power to change the bread into the Body of Christ’.

This question of the manner in which the priest speaks seems to be of paramount importance, even touching upon validity.

Cardinal Ottaviani wrote: ‘Indeed, in the old Missal, this very point clearly signalled the transition from the narrative mode to the sacramental and *affirmative* mode; they were normally written in the middle of the page and in capital letters to clearly indicate the change in mode.’

The final point to clarify is whether the essential form of the sacrament begins with the ‘*Qui pridie*’. That is to say: if the priest says only ‘*Hoc est enim corpus meum*’, does he validly consecrate?

Although Scot maintains the necessity of ‘*Qui pridie*’, drawing on the reference to Christ in order to signify, through the use of ‘my’, the body of Christ, St Thomas takes a different view, pointing out that only the words of Christ constitute the form of consecration, and that to speak ‘*in persona Christi*’, the priest’s intention alone suffices. He quotes St Ambrose: ‘Consecration is effected by the words and utterances of the Lord Jesus. (...) It is therefore the word of Christ that accomplishes this sacrament.’ ” Hugon O.P., as well as the *Salmanticenses*, Vázquez, Cajetan, Billuart, etc., are of the same opinion. The *Missale Romanum* appears to support this view in the *De defectibus*: ‘The words of consecration, which are the form of this sacrament, are these: “This is

indeed my Body.” And: “This is indeed the Chalice of my Blood, of the new and eternal covenant: the mystery of faith, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.”” Even though, in the event of defects in the matter, the *Missale* requires the rite to be restarted from the *Qui pridie*, this does not mean that it is indispensable for consecration, since it also requires the Offertory to be performed, which is not indispensable.

2) Historical origin of the words of consecration

Let us therefore begin by analysing first the words and then the rites of consecration. We shall first examine what the Magisterium says regarding the origin of the words of our formula of consecration.

The Council of Florence states:

But since, in the preceding decree to the Armenians, the formula of the words which the Holy Roman Church, relying on the doctrine of the authority of the Apostles, uses in the consecration of the Body and Blood of the Saviour was not explicitly set out, we deem it necessary to insert it here. In the consecration of the Body, it uses this form of words: ‘For this is my Body’, and in that of the wine: ‘For this is the chalice of my Blood, of the new and eternal covenant, a mystery of faith, which for you and for many will be poured out for the forgiveness of sins.’

And Pope Innocent III, referring to the words of the institution, says: ‘Certainly we see many things—both words and deeds of the Lord—which were omitted by the Evangelists and which, as we read, the Apostles supplemented orally or expressed through their actions...’

The Catechism of the Council of Trent, in the same vein, when speaking of the form of the sacrament, draws particularly on the words of Our Lord, ‘Do this in remembrance of Me’ in Luke 22:15:

This command which He gave to His Apostles must refer not only to what He Himself had done, but also to what He had said, and especially to the words which were spoken both to bring about and to signify the effect of the sacrament.

And when He prescribes the form of the Precious Blood, He adds: ‘Many of these words are drawn from Scripture, and the Church has received the others from apostolic tradition.’

Dom Cabrol, in his article on the Roman Mass in the DTC, states:

The Gospel account is followed step by step, with the notable exception of the ‘*sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas*’ , and ‘*elevatis oculis in caelum ad te Deum Patrem suum omnipotentem*’.

It should be noted that, whilst the account of the institution does not follow the words of the Synoptic Gospels exactly, the two variants we have identified are found almost everywhere. This proves that, as with the form of baptism, there was in the early centuries a text for the Eucharist

which was the same everywhere, and which may be regarded, without rashness, as the apostolic form.

And Jungmann goes even further, stating:

The heart of the Eucharistic celebration—and thus of the entire Mass—is, in all known liturgies, the institution narrative containing the words of consecration. What strikes us most here is the observation that the texts of this account – and this feature is particularly evident in the oldest ones, whether they have been handed down to us or reconstructed through comparative studies – never simply reproduce one of the texts of Scripture. They go back to a tradition predating the Scripture. We are touching here upon a consequence of the fact that the Eucharist was celebrated long before Paul and the Evangelists put pen to paper. The current text (of our ancient Roman Mass) is already that of the oldest sacramentaries that have come down to us, with the difference that in three passages the verbs were often juxtaposed without coordination.

And Cardinal Schuster adds:

Let us consider that the liturgical freedom of the ancients was manifested in the composition of a great number of anaphora of the most varied forms and concepts, and yet, amidst such variety and such great flexibility of rites and prayers, the only element that has remained truly fixed consists in the sacred words of the Eucharistic institution.

3) Reading followed by the words of consecration

a) The consecration of the bread

In Western liturgies, the rite of consecration begins with the phrase '*Qui pridie quam pateretur*', which is common to almost all Latin liturgies (according to Blessed Cardinal Schuster, this coincidence confirms what the *Liber Pontificalis* states, attributing the origin of these words to Pope Alexander I), whilst the Eastern and Mozarabic liturgies always begin with '*In qua nocte tradebatur*', according to Saint Paul. On Holy Thursday, the phrase '*pro nostra omniumque salute*' is added to the '*qui pridie*'; according to Morin, this was introduced in the 5th century against the Predestinationists, and was later omitted from daily use. It is preserved in the Ambrosian Canon.

It is worth noting the parallelism found in the texts between the two consecrations: for example, '*in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas, Tibi gratiens agens, benedixit, deditque discipulis suis dicens, Accipite, etc.*'; which shows that there is a deliberate symmetry in its origin.

It is worth noting how the celebrant will meticulously imitate the rite observed by Our Lord at the Institution.

The '*Accipit panem*': is already well attested in the Gospels and in St Paul.

The '*In sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas*': although not found in the Gospel, we find similar expressions in most liturgies. The Liturgy of Saint Mark and that of the Apostolic Constitutions say '*holy and spotless hands*', following an expression already found in Saint Clement; we find them further in the Greek liturgies of Saint James, Saint Basil, St John Chrysostom, and in the Apostolic Constitutions.

'*Et elevatis oculis in caelum*': these words, which do not appear in this passage of the Gospel, are also found in the liturgies of St James and in that of the Apostolic Constitutions.

Lebrun asserts that at the Last Supper, Jesus Christ raised his eyes to Heaven. This is, moreover, a typically sacrificial gesture which we see him perform in the multiplication of the loaves—which was a Eucharistic miracle (Jn 6:5)—and in the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:41).

'*ad Te Deum Patrem suum Omnipotentem*': the solemn enumeration of the divine titles appears to be influenced by the Apostles' Creed and the Preface; this formula is therefore very ancient and of Roman origin. Furthermore, it is the attribute of Divine Omnipotence that will bring about the miracle of transubstantiation.

The '*Tibi gratias agens*' is clearly attested in the Gospels: it is worth noting that Christ gave thanks to his Father on the occasion of great miracles such as the raising of Lazarus. Furthermore, the giving of thanks is specific to the Eucharistic mystery.

The '*benedixit*': its meaning is said to be both to praise and to give thanks. It involves preparing the elements for consecration (the final disposition). The priest imitates this gesture by blessing with the sign of the cross, which is the source of all graces.

St Thomas points out that the order of the verbs in the text is not necessarily chronological:

This is why others have said that the Evangelists, in their accounts, did not always follow the order of events: Saint Augustine demonstrates this in his book on the Agreement of the Evangelists. We must therefore understand that the actual order of events can be reconstructed as follows: 'Taking bread, he blessed it, saying: 'This is my body' and then he broke it and gave it to his disciples'. But the same meaning can be derived from the words of the Gospel without changing anything. For the participle 'saying' (*dicens*) indicates a certain simultaneity between the words spoken and what precedes them.

The '*fregit, deditque discipulis suis dicens*': among the Western Syrians, the Copts and the Maronites, the gesture of breaking the bread is imitated or simulated without actually separating the pieces. Just as in the Mass the breaking of the bread and Communion follow the consecration, it is likely that Christ broke it and distributed it after having spoken the words of institution.

“ '*accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes*': Dom Folsom, in a brilliant lecture at the 1996 Colloque du Ciel, points out that these words do not traditionally form part of the formula of consecration, which is limited to the words that bring about transubstantiation.

“*Hoc est enim Corpus meum*”: Let us consider St Thomas’s explanation regarding the difficulties encountered in accurately expressing the substantial change. He clarifies the reason for “*hoc*” and the verb “*esse*”.

This form of consecration of the bread is perfectly appropriate. We have seen, in fact, that this consecration consists in the conversion of the substance of the bread into the Body of Christ. Now, the form of the sacrament must signify what is realised within the sacrament. Consequently, the form of the consecration of the bread must signify precisely the conversion of the bread into the Body of Christ. Three elements may be considered: the conversion itself, its starting point and its end point.

The transformation can be considered from two perspectives: in its becoming (*in fieri*) and in its result (*in facto esse*). However, in this form, the transformation had to signify the result (*in facto esse*). Firstly, because this transformation is not successive—as we have seen—but instantaneous. Now, in instantaneous changes, the becoming is identical to its result. Secondly, because sacramental forms signify the effect of the sacrament (...) Thus, in this sacramental form, conversion must be expressed in its result, towards which the intention is directed.

And since this form signifies conversion in its result (*in facto esse*), it must signify the terms of the conversion as they are found in that result. Thus, the point of arrival possesses the proper nature of its substance; but the point of departure does not subsist according to its substance, but only according to the accidents that make it discernible to the senses. It is therefore appropriate to designate the point of departure of the conversion by a demonstrative pronoun referring to the sensible accidents that subsist there.

As for the point of arrival, it is expressed by the noun denoting the substance of the being to which the conversion leads: which is the whole body of Christ and not merely his flesh, as we have seen. Consequently, this form is entirely appropriate: ‘This is my body’.

And he makes two observations: ‘And that is why, in this saying, the final effect of the consecration must be signified by the verb “to be” in the indicative mood and the present tense.’”

The adjective ‘my’, which implies the first-person demonstrative—that is, the speaker—sufficiently expresses the person of Christ, in whose name these words are spoken.

Regarding the *enim* : ‘This conjunction “*enim*” (“for”) is added to this formula in accordance with the practice of the Roman Church, inherited from the Apostle Saint Peter. This is to mark continuity with the preceding words; that is why it is no more part of the form than the words that precede it. ’”

The text of the *De Sacramentis* attributed to St Ambrose states, in the consecration of the bread: “*Hoc est enim Corpus meum, quod pro multis confringetur*”.

Righetti [*Historia de la Liturgia*, vol. II, p. 352] tells us that these words ‘*quod pro multis confringetur*’, specific to St Luke and St Paul—‘*datur*’ and ‘*tradetur*’—are not found in the canon, although they are preserved in a large part of the Eastern liturgies. However, many of these have preferred the phrase ‘*quod pro vobis datum*’, relating it not to the sacrifice but to communion.

Why has our liturgy not retained the analogous specification added to the form of consecration of the bread in St Luke and St Paul (‘given for you’)?

We may answer with St Thomas: ‘Since, as we have seen, the blood consecrated separately explicitly represents the Passion of Christ, it is in the consecration of the blood that mention is made of the effect of Christ’s Passion, rather than in the consecration of the body, which is the subject of the Passion.’ [III, q. 78, a. 3, ad 2].

And he adds in the Commentary on the Sentences [IV, dist. 8, qu. 2, art. 2, sol. 2 and 3]: ‘Since the sacrament of the Eucharist is the memorial of the Lord’s Passion, in the consecration of the Body of Christ only the subject of the Passion is represented; but in the consecration of the blood, the mystery of the Passion is represented... and that is why the circumstances of the Lord’s Passion are expressed by the words that follow in the consecration of the blood rather than in the consecration of the body.’

b) The consecration of the wine

Let us now turn to the consecration of the Most Precious Blood. We shall not analyse every word of the purely *recitative* part, since most of them are repeated. We shall make just two brief remarks: concerning the ‘*postquam cenatum est*’, which suggests that the consecration of the Precious Blood took place, within the context of an Old Testament Passover meal, at the end of the meal, in place of the cup of blessing or thanksgiving; and regarding the ‘*hunc praeclarum calicem*’, which lends a certain dramatic quality borrowed from Psalm 22, verse 5.

With regard to the form of consecration of the wine, Saint Thomas does not hesitate to assert that the Church uses this form as it was taught by the Apostles. [q78 a 3 *sed contra*].

‘*Hic est enim calix Sanguinis mei*’: It should be emphasised that in the accounts of Matthew and Mark we find directly ‘*hic est sanguis meus*’ without any mention of a chalice. ‘This “chalice” clearly presents the Lord’s blood to us as a “cup” to be drunk,’ says Jungmann [*Missarum sollemnia*, vol. III, p. 114].

Billuart says: ‘We speak of the chalice of my blood by metonymy, taking the contents to represent the container, just as we say: “Drink the chalice of wine” [as we say today, “a glass of water”], that is to say, the wine contained in the chalice.’ [Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae*, vol. IX, Tractatus de almo Eucharistie Sacramento, dissertatio V, Art III, § II]

The ‘*Novi et aeterni testamenti*’: the words ‘*novum testamentum*’ are found in all the accounts’. Saint Paul tells us that just as the Old Covenant was confirmed by the shedding of Blood, so the

New Covenant was confirmed in the death of the Mediator ‘so that, through his death, those who are called might receive the eternal inheritance promised to them’ (Heb 9:15) . And the word ‘*aeterni*’, although not found in Scripture, has been handed down to us through Tradition. It refers precisely to this eternal inheritance which we shall obtain through the power of the Blood of Christ, says Saint Thomas [III, q. 78, a. 3, c.] ‘*Mysterium fidei*’: some authors maintain that the *Mysterium fidei* is an interpolation of Gallican origin. However, according to Jungmann, it is already found in the oldest sacramentaries, which confirms its Roman origin. It seems to be taken from Scripture, which says: ‘*Habentes mysterium fidei in conscientia pura*’. [1 Tim 3:9].

The Magisterium of the Church and Saint Thomas speak very clearly to us of the apostolic origin of the expression [cf. Council of Florence; III, q. 78, a. 3, ad 9°]. Pope Innocent III states this explicitly in a letter to the Archbishop of Lyon [Innocent III, *Letter Cum Marthae circa to the Archbishop of Lyon*, DH no. 782]:

You have indeed asked, regarding the wording used by Christ himself when he transubstantiated the bread and wine into his body and blood, who added this phrase to the canon of the Mass used by the whole Church, and which none of the Evangelists recorded, as we can read...; namely, ‘mystery of faith’.

Admittedly, we do see many things—both the words and deeds of the Lord—which were omitted by the evangelists and which, as we can read, the apostles supplemented orally or expressed through their actions...

Nevertheless, we say ‘*mysterium fidei*’ because what is believed in it is other than what is seen, and what is seen is other than what is believed. For we see the species of bread and wine, and we believe in the truth of Christ’s flesh and blood, as well as in the virtue of unity and charity...

Leo XIII wrote in the encyclical *Mirae caritatis*: ‘In this single mystery are contained, in singular abundance, various wonders, all supernatural realities’.

It is called *Mysterium fidei* because it is solely through Faith that we see Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist. Others say that it is a kind of profession of Faith by the Church, that is to say, in the mystery which encompasses all the mysteries of our salvation.

‘*Qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur*’: the Catechism of the Council of Trent tells us:

The other words: ‘*pro vobis et pro multis*’, are taken partly from Saint Matthew (26:28) and partly from Saint Luke (22:20).

And it is the Church, inspired by the Spirit of God, that has brought them together. They serve to express the fruits and benefits of the Passion.

If we consider their virtue and efficacy, we are compelled to admit that the Lord’s Blood was shed for the salvation of all. But if we examine the fruits that people derive from it, it is evident that only some, and not all, benefit from it. When Jesus Christ said: ‘*pro vobis*’,

He meant by this, with the exception of Judas, those who were present and to whom He was speaking, or else the elect amongst the Jews, such as His disciples. By adding: '*pro multis*', He wished to refer to all the other elect, whether from amongst the Jews or from amongst the Gentiles. Thus it was rightly not said: 'for all' , since what was being referred to here was the fruit of the Passion, which brought salvation only to the elect." [Catechism of the Council of Trent, Dominique Martin Morin, 1991, Part 2, Chapter 18, § III, p. 216].

Although 'multis' may be translated as 'multitude' in certain cases, the situation appears quite different when one refers to the Greek of the scriptural text. In Greek, there is the same distinction as exists in Latin and English between 'many' and 'all'. The nominative form of 'all' in Greek is *pas, pasa, pan (omnis, omne)*, in the plural *pantes, pasai, panta (omnes, omnia)*; and the nominative form of 'many' is *polys, polle, poly (multus, multa, multum)*, and the plural *polloi, pollai, polla (multi, multae, multa)*. The phrase '*qui pro multis effundetur*' is found in Matthew 26:28 (*to peri polon ekkynnumenon*) and in Mark 14:24 (*to ekkynnomenon hyper pollon*). [cf. Daniel Boira, Roma 82, *Una Voce Argentina*].

An example involving two words of Greek origin may clarify the matter: it is the difference between pantheism and polytheism, which derive from *pantes* and *polloi*. Thus there is a passage from Saint Paul (Romans 5:12–21) , where he plays on the two terms whilst distinguishing between them, which allows us to appreciate the difference clearly:

Propterea sicut per unum hominem peccatum in hunc mundum intravit, et per peccatum mors, et ita in omnes homines (pantas anthropous) mors pertransiit, in quo omnes (pantes) peccaverunt (...) Sed non sicut delictum, ita et donum; si enim unius delicto multi (hoi polloi) mortui sunt, multo magis gratia Dei et donum in gratia unius hominis Iesu Christi in plures (tous pollous) abundavit (...) Igitur sicut per unius delictum in omnes homines (pantas anthropous) in condemnationem, sic et per unius justitiam in omnes homines (pantas anthropous) in justificationem vitae. Sicut enim per inoboedientiam unius hominis peccatores constitui sunt multi (hoi polloi) ita et per unius oboedientiam iusti constituentur multi (hoi polloi).

'*Effundetur in remissionem peccatorum*': the verb *effundetur* is in the future tense because the Blood will be shed the following day, at the Passion. 'The Blood of Christ will purify our consciences from dead works' (Heb 9:14) and again 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission' . (Heb 9:22). This is one of the principal effects of the Holy Mass.

'*Haec quotiescumque feceritis in mei memoriam facietis*': Our Lord was thus asking His disciples to do what He had done, and to do so in remembrance of Him, as is indeed clearly explained in the Anamnesis.

4) Liturgical gestures

Finally, we must speak briefly about certain liturgical gestures which clearly emphasise dogmatic truths and demonstrate reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament. Among other gestures, the priest wipes his thumbs and fingers on the corporal before the *Qui pridie*. He imitates the gestures of Christ by raising his eyes, etc.; just before the words '*Hoc est enim Corpus meum*' , he places both elbows on the altar and bows his head. Immediately after the consecration, he makes a genuflection as a sign of adoration [cf. Dz 888], since transubstantiation has just taken place; he raises the consecrated Host for adoration and, after placing the Host back, makes a second genuflection. From that moment onwards, he will not separate the thumb and index finger of each hand until after Communion. Most of these gestures were discussed in the lectures given by Father Chanut and Dom Folsom OSB at the 1996 Colloque du Ciel.

Keeping the fingers clasped

We shall merely highlight the gesture of keeping the fingers clasped from the consecration until the ablutions. Dom Eugène Vandeur states in his book on the Holy Mass: [The Holy Mass – Notes on its Liturgy, Maredsous Abbey, 1937, p. 219]

From this point onwards, until the ablutions are complete, the priest shall not separate the four fingers with which he has touched the Host; in this way he avoids soiling them. In this manner, too, he preserves any fragments or particles of the Sacrament that might be attached to them; moreover, it seems more respectful to use the fingers solely for touching the Host itself. ' It is therefore a gesture which is a liturgical consequence of the truth of the Real Presence of Our Lord in every particle of the consecrated Host. [cf. Dz 886]

Jungman explains the origin of this gesture:

By way of comparison, it must be said of the Roman liturgy of the first ten centuries that, once the sacramental act had been performed, it did not seek to make people immediately aware of it or to draw all the immediate liturgical consequences from the sacramental presence. It was in the 11th century that, alongside a more careful attention to all matters concerning the Blessed Sacrament, the first signs of a new attitude began to appear.

According to the Customs of Cluny, recorded around 1068 by the monk Bernard, the priest, at the moment of consecration, must hold the host '*quattuor primis digitis ad hoc ipsum ablutis*'. Many priests, after consecration, even with outstretched arms, began to keep the fingers with which they had touched the Body of the Lord pressed together; some even did so immediately after the washing of the hands associated with the Offertory; in one form or another, this precaution soon became the general rule'. [Missarum Solemnia, vol. III; p. 122].

Durand de Mende attests to this practice in the 13th century, [Rational des divins offices IV, 43, 5] with a few minor variations:

The priest then clenches his fingers, that is to say, the thumb and forefinger, and he only unclenches them when he must touch the Host or make signs”. Among the reasons he gives, we find respect for the sacrament: ‘lest his fingers touch anything after having touched the Body of Christ’, he says; and also ‘for fear that dust or a particle of the Host might cling to them and fall to the ground.

We find the same rule of clasping the fingers in the Ordo Romanus XIV. It is also found in other rites, such as the Dominican rite, as early as 1256.

Conclusion

We have analysed the theological and liturgical aspects of consecration and the Real Presence—aspects that are not far removed from our everyday reality, since we ourselves must nourish our spiritual lives with this Mystery of the Faith, which is the Holy Eucharist.

And we must grow in our faith, our devotion and our reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament; we shall do this through prayer, but also through outward acts of adoration, which are of great importance to us as bodily beings. And in particular, in the practice of our liturgical acts, we must seek to increase our faith in Christ, who is truly present in the Sacrament of the Altar; and so we must devote ourselves to all the acts that nourish it and avoid those that might diminish it.