

LAY PRIESTHOOD: TOWARDS A TERMINOLOGY

THANKS to the directives of the Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, theologians should be agreed on the realities that underlie the expression "lay priesthood." By virtue of the baptismal character, the laity share in the priesthood of Christ, and are privileged to offer "in their own way" the Eucharistic sacrifice.¹ In a sense, then, the layman has received a priestly dignity and is privileged to exercise a priestly function. One question remains: in what sense can the term "priestly" be applied to the layman?

Theologians of an earlier day, anxious to safeguard from Protestant denials the peculiar function of the priest in orders, reduced the layman's priesthood to the plane of metaphor and, considering the restricted view that they took of the Christian priesthood, they were correct. Theologians today are puzzled.² A metaphorical priesthood does not seem to do justice to the realities already agreed upon; and yet, to say more, is to imply that there is a wider concept of priesthood that can be applied at least by way of an intrinsic analogy to the individual layman. Before inquiring into this wider concept of priesthood that can be applied analogously to Christ, to the priest in orders and to the layman, let us state in the first place a concept of priesthood in which the layman in no way shares and, secondly, a concept of priesthood which does not take cognizance of the real nature of the layman's priestly function. In this way, the need of a wider concept of priesthood will be the better appreciated.

THE OFFICIAL PRIESTHOOD

The most restricted use of the term priesthood is found in the documents of Trent dealing with the sacrifice of the Mass and the sacra-

¹ *Mediator Dei*, nn. 88, 92. References are made to the America Press edition which follows the same enumeration as the earlier printing in the *Catholic Mind*.

² At the annual meeting of the American Catholic Theological Society in June of 1948, a panel discussion was held on the nature of the laity's priesthood. To the question that we have proposed (In what sense is the layman priestly?), three answers were given: (1) the laity taken collectively may be called priestly in a real sense but the individual layman is a priest only in a metaphorical sense; (2) the laity, taken individually or collectively, are priestly in an analogous sense; and since the analogy is extrinsic their priesthood is metaphorical; (3) the concept of priesthood can be applied to the layman in an analogous sense, and the analogy is intrinsic.

ment of orders.³ It is the external and visible priesthood of Christ as it is continued in His apostles and their successors in the hierarchy, and consists principally in the twofold power of consecrating and offering the Body and Blood of Christ and of forgiving sins. In fact, so intimately associated with the idea of priest is this ministerial priesthood of orders that the Fathers of the Council do not hesitate to censure those who "should assert that all Christians without distinction are priests of the New Testament, or that they are all mutually endowed with an equal spiritual power."⁴ There is, then, a concept of priesthood which can in no real sense be applied to the layman, and considering the source from which this concept is derived, we can refer to it as the official priesthood or priesthood in the restricted and technical sense.

Now despite the clear teaching of Trent that Christ entrusted the power of celebrating the Eucharist to His apostles and their successors in the priestly office, various attempts have been made to include the faithful as sharers in this strictly ministerial priesthood of orders. Starting with the quite valid premise that the Eucharist is a social sacrifice and that it is offered in the name of the whole Church, it has been erroneously suggested that the power of celebrating the Eucharistic sacrifice has been entrusted directly to the whole Church and that it is only *in actu secundo*, as it were, that this power branches off into a hierarchy of functions. It has been asserted that the act of consecration is not a strictly priestly function but at most a necessary condition for the faithful to offer with the priest the Eucharistic oblation. Finally, it has been stated that the laity offer the Body and Blood of Christ just as truly, really and immediately as the official priest.⁵

Now these various attempts to associate the laity with the strictly

³ Council of Trent, sess. XXII, XXIII.

⁴ Sess. XXIII, ch. 4.

⁵ For a catalogue of these and similar errors which have found acceptance among certain theologians in Germany, cf. J. Brinktrine, "Das Amtspriestertum und das allgemeine Priestertum der Gläubigen," *Divus Thomas*, Freiburg, XXII (1944), 291-308. Similar ideas sought circulation in Italy some one hundred years ago. Cf. J. Perrone, S. J., *Praelectiones Theologicae*, VIII, 255 ff. Perrone observes that if the opinion of these "neo-terici" were to be countenanced, Trent ought not to have said that Christ offers himself in the Eucharist "sacerdotum ministerio" but "fidelium adstantium cum sacerdote ministerio."

ministerial function of the ordained priest are severely censured in the encyclical *Mediator Dei*. Referring to these errors as long since condemned,⁶ Pius XII teaches positively that strict priestly power belongs only to the priest in orders; that this power is received directly from Christ in whose name alone the priest consecrates; that it is not received through the mediation of the whole community, since the community does not possess it; finally that the laity in no sense are co-celebrants with the priest.⁷ Later in the encyclical the Holy Father returns to the point and insists that the liturgical rite of oblation is so completely the office of the priest in orders that neither the presence of the faithful—desirable as this is—nor, much less, their responding “Amen” are required for the validity of the Eucharistic sacrifice.⁸ The liturgical rite of oblation is wholly one with the act of consecration and in this act, demanding as it does strict priestly power, the laity can in no way concur. To quote the encyclical directly:

The unbloody immolation at the words of consecration, when Christ is made present upon the altar in the state of a victim, is performed by the priest and by him alone, as the representative of Christ and not as the representative of the faithful. It is because the priest places the divine victim upon the altar that he offers it to God the Father as an oblation for the glory of the blessed Trinity and for the good of the whole Church.⁹

The priest in consecrating, then, acts as the minister of Christ and not as a representative of the people, and since it is the common opinion of theologians, a view confirmed in the passage just cited, that the consecration is one with oblation, it follows that the people in no way cooperate in positing the liturgical rite of sacrifice. True, there is a sense in which the faithful do offer along with the priest the Eucharistic sacrifice, but the conclusion is not based on the fact “that being members of the Church no less than the priest himself, they perform a visible liturgical rite; for this is the privilege only of the minister who has been divinely appointed to this office.”¹⁰

From the above it should be clear the laity in no way share in the strictly ministerial priesthood that is conferred in the sacrament of orders. The priesthood of the laity and that of orders differ not only

⁶ *Mediator Dei*, n. 83.

⁷ *Loc. cit.*

⁸ *Op. cit.*, n. 96.

⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 92.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 93.

in degree but also in kind.¹¹ And this essential orientation of orders to a strictly liturgical ministry in which the layman has no essential role is pointedly stated in the earliest ritual that we possess. The Apostolic Constitution of Hippolytus makes the following significant observation relevant to the appointment of widows: "But she shall not be ordained because she does not offer the oblation (πρόσφορα), nor has she a ministry (λειτουργία). But ordination is for the clergy on account of their liturgical ministry (λειτουργία)."¹²

METAPHORICAL PRIESTHOOD

If we restrict the concept of priesthood to one who has been divinely appointed to posit the liturgical rite of oblation, it is evident that the layman is priestly in the most improper of all senses. True, he belongs to a body in which certain members are empowered to celebrate the Eucharistic sacrifice, but it is the sheerest form of extrinsicism to attribute to one member of a body what is the peculiar function of another. The hand does not see nor does the eye hear.¹³ And what is true of the individual layman is equally true of the laity taken collectively.¹⁴ We can, however, apply even this restricted function of priesthood to the whole Church. For just as we can say that the whole man sees, hears, talks and so on, although these functions are proper to individual organs of the body, so too we can say that the whole Church baptises, absolves and even immolates the Eucharistic victim, even though these actions are proper to those individual mem-

¹¹ From this it is clear that such parallels as the following are at least confusing if not actually erroneous: "The ordinary official priest has a real priesthood, even if he does not possess all the powers of the episcopal priesthood. In like manner, the ordinary Christian, due to the 'universal priesthood,' is a real priest, even though he does not possess all the powers of the priesthood" (O. J. Wittig, in *Das Alter der Kirche*, IV, 865; cited by Brinktrine, *op. cit.*). Actually, the simple priest shares in the fulness of the bishop's ministerial priesthood; the layman in no way shares in that fulness. His priesthood is simply not ministerial.

¹² *The Apostolic Tradition*, XI, 4, 5 (ed. by Gregory Dix, S.P.C.K., London, 1937, 20, 21).

¹³ For the various senses in which the Church and the laity may be said to offer, cf. the excellent study of S. Tromp, S.J., "Quo sensu in sacrificio Missae offerat Ecclesia, offerant fideles," *Periodica* XXX (1940) 265 ff.

¹⁴ We stress the point to offset a tendency to attribute to the laity what is denied to the layman; cf. *supra*, note 2. Sheer multiplication of metaphorical priesthood will not add up to a real concept of priesthood.

bers who minister the rite of baptism, of penance and of sacrifice. Not only can we attribute such actions to the whole Church but the use of such attribution underscores an important truth, namely, that the priest, though he consecrates in the name and power of Christ alone, does so as the organ of the Church in whose unity he remains. And it is in this sense that we should understand the teaching of Trent that Christ has left Himself as a victim "to be immolated under visible signs by the Church through (her) priests."¹⁵

If then we restrict the concept of priesthood to one who has power to offer (liturgically) the Eucharistic sacrifice, we can refer to the layman as priestly only in the sense that he belongs to a body which is priestly; and we can say that the body itself is priestly only in so far as certain members of that body are endowed with strict priestly power. And it is against the background of this restricted concept of priesthood that theologians and commentators of an earlier day were correct in characterising the lay priesthood as metaphorical or, more properly, extrinsically analogous.¹⁶

There is, however, another concept of priesthood which does apply to the layman although the sense is still metaphorical. It consists in the privilege of offering to God the personal oblation of oneself, an internal sacrifice that will be acceptable to God through Christ, the supreme Priest and Mediator of all our prayers and aspirations. This is but another way of saying that besides the visible and social sacrifice of the Mass, Christians are exhorted at all times to present their bodies "as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing unto God."¹⁷ It is this metaphorical concept of priesthood that has been applied to the laity by the earliest defenders of the official priesthood of orders, and it is a concept of priesthood that has loomed largest in any discussion of the sense in which the term "priest" can be applied to the laity. Thus, men like Blessed John Fisher, Eck, Herborn, Clitovaeus, Hosius and others were all concerned with showing that the priesthood of the faithful had for its function a sacrifice that was internal rather than external, a sacrifice that was personal rather than social, a sacrifice that was spiritual or mystical as opposed to the liturgical sacrifice of

¹⁵ Council of Trent, Sess. XXII, ch. 1.

¹⁶ Cf. the writer's earlier article, "Lay Priesthood: Real or Metaphorical," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES*, VIII (1947), 578 and note 12.

¹⁷ Rom. 12:1

the Mass.¹⁸ And it is in this sense that these theologians and subsequent commentators have interpreted the celebrated text of St. Peter in which the function of the "royal priesthood" is to "offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."¹⁹

Now we do not deny that this metaphorical concept of priesthood can be applied to the laity. Moreover, considering the state of the controversy that divided Catholics and Lutherans at the time of Trent, emphasis on the subjective and personal character of the layman's function as opposed to the liturgical and social character of the priest's function was essential to protect the faithful from the sophisms and equivocations of Luther and his followers. For Luther was not so anxious to grace the layman with the title "priest" as he was to reduce the office of priesthood itself to the plane of metaphor. By stating that all Christians are priests without distinction, Luther, in effect, asserted that all Christians, laymen, priests and bishops alike, are privileged to offer no more than a sheerly personal and individual oblation in the temple of their own souls.²⁰

Today, however, our problem is different. The more extreme among Catholic theologians have shown no tendency to restrict the powers of the official priesthood. Rather, their error has been to extol unduly the role of the laity by conferring on them powers that they in no way possess. Thus, no Catholic, however extreme, will deny that the priest in orders actually celebrates the Eucharistic sacrifice. Rather, there has been a tendency to assert that the laity are in some sense co-celebrants with the priests. And while error in any form is dangerous and must be met vigorously, we do not feel that truth is championed by reducing the priesthood of the laity to the plane of metaphor in the sense already explained. For while it is true that the laity are

¹⁸ Cf. the recent study in pre-Tridentine theology of the sacrament of orders by G. B. da Farnese, O.F.M. Cap., *Il Sacramento dell'ordine*, Roma, 1947, pp. 34 ff. The following conclusion will sum up the author's judgement of the teaching of theologians just prior to Trent on the nature of the "common priesthood": "Del resto la varietà dei vocaboli con cui viene designato il sacerdozio commune, manifesta anche le sue caratteristiche diverse dall'altro; e, in ogni caso non si può parlare d'altro che di sacerdozio metaphorico" (p. 39).

¹⁹ Cf. the writer's "Lay Priesthood: Real or Metaphorical," *op. cit.*, p. 575 and note 4.

²⁰ "Atque itaque sacerdotium novi Testamenti prorsus sine personarum respectu regnat communiter in omnibus in spiritu solo" (*De abroganda Missa privata, Opera Latina*, Frankfort, [1886] VI, 121).

privileged at all times to offer "their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God," there is a moment in every Eucharistic sacrifice when they are privileged to offer "in their own way" the Body of Christ sacramentally present on the altar. And while it is true that the laity are privileged at all times to offer a personal and subjective sacrifice of prayer, mortification and good works, there is a moment when their personal oblation finds social expression, when their internal oblation finds liturgical expression in the sacrifice of the Mass through the ministry of the priest. As we shall see, so essential to the very concept of sacrifice is this personal oblation of the one offering that the full efficacy of the Mass will depend in no small measure on the sincerity and devotion of the members of the whole Church, hierarchical as well as lay.

These truths, obscured for so long by those who were preoccupied in defending the peculiar dignity of the official priesthood, have received added confirmation in the encyclical *Mediator Dei*. Thus far we have appealed to this great encyclical to correct the exaggerations of those who would ascribe to the laity some sort of concurrence in the liturgical rite of oblation. Henceforth, we shall refer to the encyclical to stress the very positive contribution that the laity make to the Eucharistic sacrifice taken as a whole. In the light of *Mediator Dei* we shall consider in turn the layman's priestly function and his priestly dignity in the hope of arriving at a definition of priesthood that can be applied at least by way of an intrinsic analogy to the layman.

THE LAYMAN'S FUNCTION

Although the encyclical *Mediator Dei* insists that the laity in no sense cooperates in positing the liturgical rite of oblation, they do offer the Eucharistic sacrifice. This they do "after their own fashion and in a twofold way."²¹ Liturgically, they offer only through the ministry of the priest; affectively they offer together with the priest and with Christ, the High Priest. Hence their offering is at once mediate and immediate; mediate in so far as the strictly liturgical rite of sacrifice is concerned, immediate in so far as the affective or mystical element of all sacrifice is concerned. This I take to be the meaning of the following passages from the encyclical: "Now the faithful par-

²¹ *Mediator Dei*, n. 92.

ticipate in the oblation, understood in this limited sense, after their own fashion and in a twofold manner, namely, because they not only offer the sacrifice by the hands of the priest, but also to a certain extent, in union with him."²² After insisting that the priest alone posits the liturgical rite of oblation—and in this sense the laity's offering is mediate—the encyclical explains the sense in which the laity offer together with the priest: "But the conclusion that the people offer the sacrifice with the priest himself . . . is based on the fact that the people unite their hearts in praise, impetration, expiation and thanksgiving with the prayers or intention of the priest, even of the High Priest himself, so that in the one and same offering of the victim and according to a visible sacerdotal rite, they may be presented to God the Father."²³

The oblation actually made by the faithful is, therefore, wholly affective. And yet it is not to be regarded as something extraneous and accidental to the Eucharistic sacrifice itself. Rather, this affective offering on the part of Christ, the priest and the laity is the reality signified by the visible rite of oblation. For the encyclical immediately adds:

It is obviously necessary that the external rite of sacrifice should of its very nature, signify the internal worship of the heart. Now the sacrifice of the New Law signifies that supreme worship by which the principal offerer himself, who is Christ, and in union with Him and through Him, all the members of the Mystical Body pay God the honor and reverence that are due to Him.²⁴

The layman's affective offering is, therefore, intimately associated with the Eucharistic sacrifice. Actually, it is his offering made in union with the whole Church and in union with Christ that is liturgically expressed by the celebrating priest. At that high moment of sacrifice when Christ is brought down upon the altar through the words of consecration, neither the layman nor Christ, the principal offerer, performs any liturgical gesture. True, the celebrating priest consecrates in the name and in the power of Christ, but the oblation itself, viewed as an external rite, is the work of Christ's minister alone.²⁵

²² *Loc. cit.*

²³ *Ibid.*, n. 93.

²⁴ *Loc. cit.*

²⁵ Whether Christ actually or, in the opinion of De la Taille, only virtually offers the sacrifice of the Mass is not relevant here. All will agree that the external rite of oblation is the work of Christ's minister.

Christ offered Himself but once and having given visible expression to that offering, He has left Himself a victim "to be immolated under visible signs by the Church through (her) priests." And yet dare we assert that Christ is the priest of our Mass only in a metaphorical sense, that His priestly function is metaphorical simply because He does not actually posit the liturgical rite of oblation, but does so through the ministry of His priests? The fact, then, that the laity do not actually posit the rite of oblation should not lead us to conclude necessarily that their affective oblation is priestly only in a metaphorical sense.

There is one further reason for insisting that the layman's priestly function is more than metaphorical and it is drawn from the contribution that the laity make to the efficacy of the Mass, a contribution which will be clear from a consideration of the reason or purpose of the Mass itself.

The Eucharistic sacrifice admittedly expresses over and over again to the Father the eternal sentiments of love and adoration of Christ, our celestial and glorified High Priest. And yet this is not the sole purpose or reason for the institution of the Mass.²⁶ Nor is the purpose of the Mass completed by giving liturgical expression to the sentiments of the celebrating priest. Rather the full purpose of the Mass is to give liturgical expression to the love and devotion of the whole Christ, Head and members of the Body alike. Now it would seem that just as the full purpose of the Mass is not realised unless the members unite their sentiments with those of Christ, the Head, so

²⁶ Père de Broglie does not believe that this is even the principal purpose of the Mass. "Imaginer la messe comme ayant pour but propre et fondamental d'exprimer à Dieu les seuls sentiments *du Christ céleste* serait un non-sens!" "Du rôle de l'Église dans le sacrifice eucharistique," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXX (1948), 453. The statement, we feel, is much too strong. Actually, Christ is the principal offerer and victim of the Mass, and even though Christians have been given the opportunity to unite themselves with Christ as priests and victims, the chief efficacy of the Mass is derived from the liturgical expression that is given to Christ's oblation of Himself. To say, as De Broglie does, that Christ "does not need our symbolic rites to express to His Father all the sentiments of His heart," that "He expresses these in a manner infinitely superior and more direct," is beside the point. As a matter of fact Christ redeemed us in virtue of His priestly sentiments *liturgically* expressed in a visible sacrifice; so too will He sanctify us in virtue principally of these same sentiments *liturgically* expressed in the sacrifice of the Mass (*ex opere operato*), and only secondarily in virtue of the sentiments of the whole Church offering (*ex opere operantis Ecclesiae*).

too the full efficacy of the Eucharistic sacrifice is not achieved unless the faithful as well as the celebrating priest unite themselves with Christ as victims of that sacrifice. True, our devotion or lack of it can never add to or detract from the offering that Christ once made in our behalf and which is liturgically represented in the Mass. And yet it would seem that the distribution of the graces of Calvary has been made dependent as well on the sentiments of those who offer anew the eternal victim to the Father.²⁷

The Eucharist as Christ's offering of Himself will always have its effect (*ex opere operato*) but that effect can be heightened by the dispositions of the members of the Church who offer. The Eucharist as the visible expression of Christ's sacrifice will always be infinitely acceptable to the Father. But the Eucharist is also the liturgical expression of the Church's offering of herself, and because it is such the priest can turn from the altar and beseech the brethren that his sacrifice and theirs may be acceptable to the Father.²⁸

It is in this sense that the author of the *Didache* could exhort Christians to fraternal charity and to the confession of their sins in order that their sacrifice might in effect be that clean oblation foretold by Malachy.²⁹ Not that there could be any blemish in the divine gift that was offered, but there might well be a blemish in the offering of the gift. Closer to our own day Pius XI could make his own the words of St. Cyprian in stressing the necessity of an internal oblation on the part of priests and laity alike:

Wherefore, with this most august sacrifice of the Eucharist, the ministers and the rest of the faithful ought to unite the immolation of themselves 'as living vic-

²⁷ According to De la Taille, the sacrifice of the Mass (*ex opere operato*) transcends the individual devotion of the priest who celebrates and the collective devotion of the Church offering (*Mysterium Fidei*, Elucidatio XXV, p. 321, note 1). However, the impetratory and propitiatory value of the Mass, viewed as our sacrifice, is commensurate with the devotion of those who offer anew (*noviter*) the Eucharistic victim. And it is against this background that De la Taille develops the thesis: "Praecipuum locum in offerendo obtinet Ecclesia, atque in valore sacrificii regulando Ecclesiae devotio" (*Ibid.*, Elucid. XXVI, pp. 326 ff.).

²⁸ Cf. the *Orate fratres* at the Offertory of the Mass.

²⁹ "On the Lord's Day, after you have come together, break bread and offer thanks, but only after you have confessed your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure. And let no one who is at odds with his brother assemble with you until he is reconciled lest your sacrifice be tainted. For it has been said by the Lord: 'In every place and time there is offered to me a clean oblation. . . .' " (*Didache*, c. 14, *Fl. Pat.*, I, 32)

tims, holy and pleasing to the Lord.' For as St. Cyprian does not hesitate to assert, 'the Lord's sacrifice is not celebrated with fitting holiness (*legitima sanctitate*) unless our sacrifice and oblation correspond to His passion.'⁸⁰

Finally, the encyclical *Mediator Dei*, after insisting that the "external rite of sacrifice should of its very nature signify the internal worship of the heart" draws the very obvious conclusion that the full efficacy of our sacrifice will depend on the oblation that the faithful make of themselves. "Now in order that the oblation by which the faithful offer the divine Victim in this sacrifice to the Heavenly Father may have its full effect, it is necessary that the people add something else, namely the offering of themselves as a victim."⁸¹

Hence, while it is true that the laity make no contribution to the external rite of oblation, yet they do contribute to what may be called the formal element of all sacrifice, the reality signified by the material rite of oblation. And once again we find ourselves far removed from a personal oblation that is unrelated to the Eucharistic sacrifice itself.

THE LAYMAN'S DIGNITY

Thus far we have restricted ourselves to the layman's priestly function. We have found that its high point is reached in the Eucharistic sacrifice where liturgical expression is given to his affective oblation. We must now stress the fact that this affective oblation is not effective unless the one who offers has in some way been anointed by God for the role of offerer. For no one can take upon himself the role of priest unless he has been called by God. In some way therefore the layman must be a priest before he can exercise a function which is priestly. He must in some way share in the priesthood of Christ, the sole Priest from whom all other priesthood is derived, before he is privileged to unite himself with Christ as the victim of the Eucharistic sacrifice. For that sacrifice will be acceptable only from those who have in some sense been called and appointed by God to offer sacrifice.

Have we expressed ourselves in terms too daring? Then let us appeal to the eloquent passage of St. Justin Martyr in which this truth is clearly underscored.

⁸⁰ *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, AAS XX (1928), 171.

⁸¹ *Mediator Dei*, n. 95.

We, who through the name of Jesus believe as one man in God the Creator . . . are set on fire by the word of His calling and are the true high-priestly race of God, as God himself testifies, saying that in every place among the gentiles they offer unto Him acceptable and pure sacrifices. *But God receives not sacrifices from any except through His priests.* God therefore testifies beforehand that *all* who through this name *offer* the sacrifices which Jesus the Christ commanded, that is, at the Eucharist of the bread and the cup, which are offered in every part of the world by Christians, are *acceptable* to Him.³²

Christians then are privileged to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, but the acceptability of that sacrifice will depend not only on the sincerity of their oblation but on the fact that they have been called by God to be members of the high-priestly race of God. The Fathers of the West trace the layman's priestly calling to the anointing that was, presumably, a part of the rite of baptism; the Fathers of the East seem to associate the layman's sacerdotal anointing with the anointing that is part of the rite of confirmation. Yet both traditions find in the sacerdotal anointing of Aaron a figure of Christ's anointing and the anointing of all Christians. Since we have developed this point in an earlier article,³³ we shall cite but two examples, one from the East and one from the West.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his famous *Catechesis* presumes that his neophytes have been well instructed in the significance of the anointing with chrism that follows baptism:

You should know that there is a figure of chrism in the Old Testament. For when Moses communicated the divine command to his brother, after he was washed with water, he anointed him, constituting him high priest, and he was called the anointed. So also the high priest making Solomon king, anointed him, after he had washed in Gihon. And these things took place in figure; but for you they do not take place in figure but in truth, since you are truly anointed by the Holy Spirit.³⁴

Writing in the same vein, as a representative of the tradition of the West, St. Augustine feels that he is introducing no novelty in attaching sacerdotal significance to the anointing with chrism:

None of the faithful doubts that the priesthood of the Jews was a figure of that royal priesthood which is in the Church to which are consecrated all who belong

³² *Dial. cum Tryphone*, c. 116 (PG VI, 745).

³³ "Lay Priesthood, etc." (*op. cit.* pp. 581 ff.).

³⁴ *Cat. Myst.*, III, 6 (PG XXXIII, 1093).

to the Body of Christ, the sovereign and true Head of all priests. For now all are anointed, something that was done formerly only for kings and priests; and when St. Peter proclaimed to the Christian people that they were a 'royal priesthood' he meant that both names belong to the people to whom the anointing pertains.³⁵

Thus was early adumbrated the teaching of St. Thomas and of theologians subsequently on the significance of the character of baptism and confirmation. Not only does the character of orders imply a share in the priesthood of Christ, but to cite St. Thomas directly, "the sacramental character is especially the character of Christ, to whose priesthood each of the faithful is configured according to the sacramental characters, which are nothing else but certain participations of the priesthood of Christ, derived from Him."³⁶

Finally, the encyclical *Mediator Dei* finds in the character of baptism the basis for the layman's privilege of offering the Eucharistic sacrifice:

Moreover the rites and prayers of the Eucharistic Sacrifice signify and show no less clearly that the oblation of the Victim is made by the priests in company with the people. . . . Nor is it to be wondered at, that the faithful should be raised to this dignity. By the waters of baptism, as by common right, Christians are made members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Priest, and by the 'character' which is imprinted on their souls, they are appointed to give worship to God; thus they participate, according to their condition, in the priesthood of Christ.³⁷

Hence, it is not enough that an individual affectively associate himself with the Eucharistic sacrifice—this the catechumen can do. Rather, he must in a sense be called or, in the words of the encyclical, be appointed by God. And this vocation on the lowest level is realised in the sacrament of baptism, and on the highest level in the sacrament of orders where the priest is not only authorised to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, but is "divinely appointed" to perform the visible liturgical rite.

PRIESTHOOD IN THE WIDER SENSE

Gathering together what has been said of the layman's priestly dignity and function, we are in a position to suggest a definition of priesthood that can be applied by way of an intrinsic analogy to Christ, to the priest in orders and to the layman. Restricting ourselves to the

³⁵ *Quaestionum Evangeliorum*, II, 40 (PL XXXV, 1355).

³⁶ *Sum. Theol.*, III, q. 63, a. 3.

³⁷ *Mediator Dei*, nn. 87, 88.

priesthood of the New Law and to the strictly sacrificial function of that priesthood,³⁸ we can say that a priest in the wider sense of the term (*sensu ampliori*) is one who has been consecrated or appointed by God to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice. This concept applies pre-eminently to Christ. Consecrated by the grace of union, Christ liturgically offered Himself at the Last Supper and continues to offer Himself through the ministry of His priests. The concept applies secondarily to the priest in orders. Consecrated by the grace of orders, he shares so intimately in the priesthood of Christ that he is empowered, as Christ's minister, to give liturgical expression not only to Christ's sacrifice but to the offering of the whole Church. The concept applies finally to the layman. Consecrated by the grace of baptism, he is appointed to offer together with the whole Christ and through the ministry of the priest the same Eucharistic sacrifice.

For those who might care to develop further the nature of the analogy we would suggest that the analogy is, first, one of dependence. For just as the priest in orders can exercise his liturgical ministry only dependently on Christ, in whose name and in whose power he celebrates, so too the layman can exercise his priestly function only in union with Christ and dependently on the priest in orders, who alone gives liturgical and social expression to his internal and personal oblation. But the analogy is also one of proportion. Just as the humanity of Christ was assumed by the Word to be the instrument of the Godhead in the redemption of mankind, so too, in a sense, has the priest in orders been assumed by the Word Incarnate to be His instrument in the application, by way of sacrifice, of the fruits of the redemption. So also to a lesser degree has the individual layman been drawn from the mass of humanity into vital union with Christ, to offer with Him and through the ministry of the priest that same sacrifice.

This analogy of proportion as applied to priest and layman is nowhere more beautifully expressed than by Pius XI, who never failed to impress on the laity the sublimity of their vocation and the need of measuring up to the demands of their calling:

³⁸ Priestly mediation is both descendant, bringing to men God's truth and God's life, and ascendant or God-ward, offering prayer and gifts to God by way of sacrifice. We are interested only in this last function of priesthood.

Those whom our High Priest uses as His ministers to offer to God a clean oblation in every place from the rising of the sun even to the going down, are indeed partakers of that sacred priesthood in that office of offering satisfaction and sacrifice. But not only they: the whole body of Christians, rightly called by the Prince of the Apostles 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,' must offer sacrifice for sin both for themselves and for the whole human race, much in the same way (*prope modum*) as every priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that pertain to God.³⁹

PRIESTHOOD IN THE MYSTICAL SENSE

It remains now to find a term that will set due limits to the layman's priestly dignity and function, a term that will not be confused with the strictly liturgical function of the priest in orders nor with the sheerly metaphorical function of the laity in such moments, if there be such,⁴⁰ when their personal oblation is not orientated either actually or habitually to the sacrifice of the Mass. We suggest the term "mystical," although the expression itself is not so important as the realities that we wish it to convey.⁴¹ The term may commend itself for two reasons. First, without denying the essential orientation of the layman's personal oblation to the liturgical sacrifice of the Mass, the term "mystical" does stress the subjective and affective element in that sacrifice. Secondly, the term "mystical" underscores an important truth, namely that the layman's priesthood results from his incorporation into the "Mystical Body of Christ the Priest."⁴² It is

³⁹ *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, loc. cit., p. 171.

⁴⁰ *Mediator Dei* stresses the presence at Mass of those who offer affectively the Eucharistic sacrifice. Since, however the laity are exhorted at all times to offer themselves as a victim (n. 99), since too the Mass is always a social sacrifice whether the laity are present or not (n. 96), we need not conclude that actual presence is required for the laity to contribute to the efficacy of the Mass, in the sense already explained. Obviously, their presence will make them more intimate sharers in the fruits of the Mass and we may well believe that their presence will actually heighten their concurrence in the affective oblation which is made by the whole Church.

⁴¹ Actually, the term "mystical" has been used by St. Thomas and by not a few commentators to express what would appear to be a metaphorical concept of priesthood. Thus, according to St. Thomas, "Every good man is said to be a priest mystically in the sense that he offers himself as a living holocaust in a mystical sacrifice to God" (*In IV Sent.* d. 13, q. 5).

⁴² *Mediator Dei*, n. 88. This does not mean that the layman is a priest only in so far as he is a member of a body in which the Head and certain chosen members are priestly. Rather, the grace of priesthood, in the wider sense already described, actually touches the

only through such incorporation that the grace of priesthood flows from Christ the Head to the members of the Body. Thus, the layman will possess and exercise his mystical priesthood not in isolation but as a member of the whole Christ, who affectively and effectively offers the Eucharistic sacrifice through the ministry of the ordained priest.

ⁱ individual layman because he is a member of the body upon whom the grace of priesthood is poured forth. Notice how accurately as well as eloquently this truth is presented by St. Leo the Great on the anniversary of his own elevation to the supreme pontificate: "You have good reason to celebrate this anniversary; for by baptism, according to the teaching of St. Peter, the royal dignity of the priesthood is common to all of you. The anointing of the Holy Spirit has consecrated all of you as priests. It is good and religious that you should rejoice in our elevation as in an honor in which you yourselves share. In the entire body of the Church there is but one sole pontificate. And if the grace of Him who holds it descends with the greater abundance upon the members who hold high place, it flows with no little generosity upon those of lower place" (*Sermo IV*, [PL, LIV, 148]).