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*Suscipe Munera Nostra: A Liturgical Theology From The Prayers Over the Gifts
For Sundays in Ordinary Time*

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By

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Suscipe Munera Nostra:
A Liturgical Theology From The Prayers Over the Gifts
For Sundays in Ordinary Time

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Many liturgical theologians understand the Church's euchology as a primary source for theological reflection. This dissertation examines the Prayers Over the Gifts (*super oblata*) for Sundays in Ordinary Time in their liturgical context in the current Order of Mass as such a theological source.

The study begins by examining the presentation of bread and wine and other gifts at the altar in early Eucharistic liturgies. It shows how a practical activity took on cultic and sacrificial connotations. This led to the increasing elaboration of the ritual actions and prayers associated with the presentation, with the *super oblata* appearing in the seventh century as the sole prayer of preparation for the Eucharistic prayer in the earliest sacramentaries of the western Church. The development of the preparation rite into the highly sacrificial Offertory in the *Missale Romanum* 1570 is followed. Here, the numerous offering prayers obscured the liturgical and theological import of the *super oblata*, which were now said silently. Next, in the revision of the Order of Mass following Vatican II the Offertory became the Presentation of the Gifts, in which the sacrificial elements were lessened and the *super oblata* recovered an approximation of their original significance. A study of some of the critiques of the current preparation rite and the role of the *super oblata* within it follows.

The dissertation then proceeds to a detailed analysis of the thirty-four *super oblata* for Ordinary Time. It shows how the orations elucidate the role of the liturgical act

of offering in the whole sacramental economy of the Eucharistic sacrifice and give particular expression to theological themes including grace, providence, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, sacramentality and eschatology. These liturgically founded notions can be applied in the construction of a comprehensive Eucharistic theology, which in turn can contribute to the ongoing development of systematic theology. Moreover, the theological content of the *super oblata* prayers can be employed in Eucharistic catecheses, mystagogy and homiletics. The prayers also provide language and imagery for further prayer and meditation, which can assist in the development of a spirituality and ethics of self-offering at both the ecclesial and personal level.

This dissertation of George A. Nursey fulfills the dissertation requirements for the doctoral degree in Liturgical Studies/Sacramental Theology approved by Kevin Irwin, S.T.D. as Director and Dominic Serra, S.L.D. and Mark Morozowich S.E.O.D. as Readers.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADI	<i>Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando</i> , Series I
ADII	<i>Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando</i> , Series II
AER	Martène, Edmund, <i>De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus Libri</i>
ASII	<i>Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II</i> , Vol. II
CCL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
DACL	<i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i>
EL	<i>Ephemerides Liturgicae</i>
HBS	Henry Bradshaw Society
MR	<i>Missale Romanum</i>
MRR	<i>The Mass of the Roman Rite</i>
OR	<i>Ordines Romani</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina Cursus Completus</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graecae Cursus Completus</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to construct and present a liturgical theology from the *Orationes super oblata* (Prayers Over the Gifts) for Sundays in Ordinary Time in the *Ordo Missae* of the *Missale Romanum* 1970. This preliminary section will introduce, first, the *super oblata* and then provide an overview of the method, scope, and aim of the study.

I. History

The *oratio super oblata* is a prayer said over the gifts of bread and wine and other offerings presented at the altar before the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer. Most commonly these offerings are identified with the bread and wine. The purpose of the oration has been concisely defined as “to commend the offerings to God, and ask him to receive them, and frequently to send his blessing upon the gifts and upon the offerers.”¹ The earliest textual witness to the form is the *Sacramentarium Veronense*, a sixth-century collection of Mass formularies dating from as early as the beginning of the fifth century.² The *super oblata* also appear in the eighth-century Gelasian and ninth-century Gregorian Sacramentaries, and they are mentioned in the *Ordines Romani* V, VII, XV, and XVII.³

¹ G.G. Willis, *Further Essays on the Roman Liturgy*, 122.

² Cyril Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*. Trans. William Storey and Niels Rasmussen. (Washington DC: The Pastoral Press, 1986), 39.

³ Michel Andrieu, ed., *Les Ordines Romani du haut moyen age*, 5 vols. Vol. II, *Les Textes* (Ordines I-XIII). (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1971).

Most early, Roman sources name the prayers *super oblata*, while Gallican witnesses call them *secreta*.⁴ This change in title is widely thought to have resulted from the prayers coming to be said silently, which, in turn, probably coincided with the rise of the silent recitation of the *Canon Missae*. Various dates and locations have been given for this development. Joseph Jungmann places it in Gaul in the eighth century.⁵ G.G. Willis, however, believes that Jungmann overlooked the seventh-century Roman *OR XI*⁶, which, Willis points out, mentions a silent oration at the placing of the gifts on the altar.⁷ In whatever era it came to be said in silence, the *super oblata* became known generally as the *secreta*. This title would remain until the *Missale Romanum* of Paul VI promulgated in 1970, which restored the older, more specific form.

The *super oblata* are written in the Roman collect style, which ordinarily follows a five-part pattern, consisting, first, of an address, usually to the Father—often to “God” or “Lord.” Second, a relative clause follows, qualifying the address usually by naming some aspect or work of God. While this element is regular in the *Collecta* and *Post Communionem*, such is not the case in most of the *super oblata*. Third, is a petition, usually stated in the subjunctive or imperative verb form and often with the verb *quaesumus*—“we beseech”, “we beg”, or “we pray.” Fourth, a final clause expresses the

⁴ This study will use the title *oratio super oblata*, or *super oblata*.

⁵ *Mass of the Roman Rite* (Missarum Sollemnia), v. II. Trans, Francis A. Brunner (Allen TX: Christian Classics, 1986), 91.

⁶ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, writes that *OR XI*, which “appeared around 650-700...is undoubtedly a Roman document....and is...one of the oldest *ordines* to have survived”.

⁷ G.G. Willis, *A History of the Early Roman Liturgy*, 124-5. Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani* II, 435: “et ponat ipsas [oblationes] super altare et dicit orationem secreta: *miseratio tua deus ad haec percipienda myteria...*

desired object or result of the petition. Fifth, the conclusion commits the prayer to God in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.⁸

An example of a *super oblata* that originally appeared in the earliest textual source of the prayers *Sacramentarium Veronense*—and in the current *Missale Romanum* on the Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time—contains the elements common to the type:

Munera, quaesumus, Domine,
 tuae plebis propitiatus assume,
 ut, quae fidei pietate profitentur,
 sacramentis caelestibus apprehendant.⁹

The prayer beseeches the Lord (address) to receive, and look favorably upon, the gifts offered by His people (request), and that what the gifts offered profess in faith—that is, the redemptive death and resurrection of Christ—they embrace or grasp in the heavenly sacraments or mysteries (desired result).

In the current Order of Mass, at the end of the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar, the celebrant says the *super oblata* immediately after the *Orate Fratres* and its response *Suscipiat Dominus* and before the opening salutation of the Preface dialogue, *Dominus vobiscum*. The rubric accompanying the prayer calls for the presider to say or sing it with his hands extended and for the assembly to

⁸ G.G. Willis, *A History of the Early Roman Liturgy*, 66.

⁹ C. Mohlberg, ed., *Sacramentarium Veronense* (Cod. Bibl. Capit Veron. LXXXV [80]) (Roma: Casa Editrice Herder, 1966), 1136.

Lord, we beseech you,
 mercifully receive the offerings of your people,
 so that, what they profess
 in the devotion of faith.
 they might grasp in the heavenly mysteries. Translation mine.

respond “Amen.”¹⁰ Article 31 of the current General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) designates the *super oblata* as one of the “presidential prayers”, or those “prayers...addressed to God in the name of the entire holy people and all present, [said] by the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ.”¹¹ The presidential prayers of the Mass, also include the *Collecta* (Opening Prayer) and the *Post Communionem* (Prayer after Communion).

A *super oblata* for the Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, from which the title of this dissertation is derived, provides a good example of the type, both in style and theme:

Suscipe, Domine, munera nostra,
quibus exercentur commercia gloriosa,
ut, offerente quae dedisti,
teipsum mereamur accipere.¹²

Here, the prayer addresses God as “Lord”. In the petition, it characterizes the sacrifice offered as effecting a mutual exchange between the faithful and God and asks the Lord accept the offering—itsself consisting of gifts already given by God to those making the offering. Finally, it asks that in giving what the Lord has given, the faithful receive again from God.

¹⁰ See Appendix II for whole schema of the preparation rite.

¹¹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Including Adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States of America*, 5th Edition. (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2003).

¹² Lord, receive our offerings,
by which we accomplish a glorious exchange,
so that in offering what you have given,
we might be made worthy to receive your very self.
Translation mine. See Appendix III for the entire collection of the *super oblata* for Ordinary Time.

All of this refers to the liturgical actions of presenting the offerings—*munera*—of the faithful in preparation for the Eucharistic prayer. The study of the *super oblata* to follow will be guided by the principle that the *super oblata* are not simply words to fill the space between the presentation of the gifts and the lifting up of the Eucharistic prayer. Rather, they are content-rich, though tersely worded, expressions of basic theological notions about God, Jesus Christ, humanity, salvation, grace, the Church and other elements of systematic theology. Moreover, the orations perform some specific functions in their liturgical context: namely, they join the individual offerings of the faithful to the corporate offering of the Church and the material gifts of bread and wine to the spiritual sacrifice of thanks, praise, and the memorial the dying and rising of Christ offered in the Eucharistic prayer. While doing this, the *super oblata* bring into focus particular aspects of the offering. As will be seen in the analysis of the prayers, they depict the offering, variously, as gift, service, divine-human exchange, and redemptive sacrifice.

Situated as they are in the liturgical *action* of offering, the theological concepts communicated in the *super oblata* should not be thought of as static. Rather, it will be shown that sacred realities are present and actively encountered in the ritual complex of words, actions, gestures and symbols engaged in the Eucharistic liturgy.¹³ Thus, the study of the *super oblata* must begin with an examination of the liturgical context in which the orations are said, which, in turn, requires an investigation of the ecclesial

¹³ Kevin Irwin, *Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology*. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 45-7.

and societal matrices in which the preparatory rites originated and developed. This will involve tracing the development of the rite now known as the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar to its primitive origins—which will be done in Chapter One—its development in the Middle Ages into the *Offertorium* of the Mass of Pius V—Chapter Two—and its revision following the Second Vatican Council—Chapter Three.

The reason for the rather extended historical investigation is to show how the presentation of gifts for the offering was always seen as somehow more than a practical activity. From very early in the history of the Church the presentation was often interpreted as an offering, and more, a virtual sacrifice that participated in the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ commemorated in the Eucharistic prayer. As a result the ritual actions involved in the presentation of gifts became increasingly elaborate and solemnized. The study will attend to the details of this enlargement of the rite, of which the *super oblata* represent one, early feature. Moreover, this examination will show how the *super oblata* endured from at least the sixth century until the present, thus constituting an important element in the Church's *liturgical traditon*.¹⁴

While the present study takes as given the current Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar, several problems remain with this form that some liturgical scholars believe continue to hinder a proper performance and understanding of the rite. These will be examined in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five will involve a

¹⁴ Ibid., 60. This concept will be explained further in Chapter Five.

thematic analysis of the thirty-four *super oblata* for Sundays in Ordinary Time in the current *Missale Romanum*. The goal here will be the presentation of the *super oblata* as an element in the construction of a liturgy-based Eucharistic theology. The analysis will proceed by way of an exposition of how the orations give liturgical expression to themes treated in systematic theology—namely, grace, providence, sacramentality, soteriology, Christology, and doctrine of God. In order to establish a precise, tradition-based, and theologically productive account of the orations, the Latin texts will be the primary source examined. The author’s own translations will be used in the explication of the *super oblata*. This approach was chosen because the current ICEL English translations of the prayers do not fully capture the full range of the lexical and theological wealth of the originals.¹⁵ In order accomplish such an aim, the author’s translations are quite literal and, admittedly inelegant. This is so because the goal was not to produce translations suitable for public proclamation, but ones that could provide greater insight into the thematic abundance of the Latin sources.

After the exposition of the theology the study will turn to considerations of a spirituality informed by engagement of the *super oblata* in their Eucharistic context. This will involve a proposal that the orations provide themes for mystagogy, catechesis and meditation that can lead to a personal and communal appropriation of the Eucharistic mystery as it is revealed in the *super oblata* throughout the liturgical

¹⁵ As of this writing ICEL is completing work on revised translations of the *Ordo Missae*, including the *super oblata*. The new English language Roman Missal will be promulgated on the First Sunday in Advent 2011.

year. Here, the orations in their liturgical context as well as their theological content will be explained and meditated upon in the same way as might be done with any sacred text—biblical, liturgical, spiritual, and so on. In this way, the *super oblata*, individually or as a unit, are treated as a *locus theologicus primus*. They provide source material for a Eucharistic theology that attends not only to the sacrament, but to aspects of systematic theology as well. Furthermore, they can serve as foundational for a Eucharist-centered spirituality and ethics. All of this requires that the prayers are treated with the seriousness and attention they merit as ancient riches in the Church's euchological treasury. They have endured as part of the Mass for a good reason: they say something concise and vital about what the Church does, believes, and hopes for as it presents its gifts and itself in offering to God at the Eucharistic altar.

CHAPTER ONE

FROM PROVISION TO OFFERING: THE EVOLUTION OF A RITE

Origin of the Rite

Perhaps equal in antiquity to the Eucharist itself, was the practice of the faithful providing the material elements for use in the Church's Eucharistic celebrations.¹ This chapter will examine the development of the apparently simple act of providing the material for the Eucharist to an elaborated rite of presenting gifts understood as *oblatio*, or *offering*. The sources investigated include: Church order manuals from the first to fourth centuries—the *Didache*, the *Apostolic Tradition*, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, *Didasclaia Apostolorum*, and *Testamentum Domini*; second and third century Church fathers Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Cyprian of Carthage; the Synod of Elvira and the Councils of Carthage and Maçon. The investigation will proceed chronologically from the first to the fifth century and follow two trajectories: one attending to the historical details of the development of the performative and textual elements of the rite, the other to the sacrificial significance that increasingly characterized it. Special attention will center on the early Church's ambivalent attitudes toward material sacrifices, and its ambiguous use of sacrificial language and imagery. A close reading of passages from Irenaeus of Lyons' *Adversus Haereses* will provide insight into a more

¹ It would go beyond the scope of this study to examine the voluminous data concerning the conjunctions and disjunctions of the Christian agape and the Eucharist properly understood. No clear lines either linking or dividing early Christian common meals and the Eucharist are readily available. Therefore, the terms Eucharist, "Eucharistic celebrations" and "Eucharistic meals" and so on will designate those communal gatherings at which bread and wine, taken from among other foods, are shared along with the offering of praise to God through Christ for the mighty deeds God has done, especially in the redemption achieved in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. See Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

clearly articulated and profound notion of Christian sacrifice as expressed in the offering of gifts for the Eucharistic feast.

I. Provision or offering?

A foundational question for this segment of the study concerns whether the rite known in the contemporary liturgy as the Preparation of the Gifts was, in fact, in the Church's infancy, simply an act of bringing and handing over the food employed in the Christian agape and Eucharist, or if it also could be understood correctly as an offering in some cultic sense.² The former stands an established fact; the latter can be affirmed, but with some important distinctions that will emerge in the course of this chapter.

The character of the rite as simple provision appears evident in the earliest witnesses. The Eucharistic meal required certain material elements for its enactment; the most obvious of these elements were the common and nutritionally basic foodstuffs in the first century Mediterranean world: bread and wine. Such, however, was by no means universal in the various early Christian communities. While this study takes as normative the use of bread and wine in the Eucharist as practiced in those Christian communities designated as orthodox, in fact, considerable diversity typified the matter used in Eucharistic celebrations. For example, some communities used bread and *water* rather than bread and wine—the sacrificial connotations of wine and its association with blood, which was considered unclean, being offensive to the sensibilities of some early Christian

² The term “cultic” in this study refers to actions, articles, persons, texts, and so on that play active roles within the liturgical worship of God in the Church, and that convey sacrificial and propitiatory connotations—either or obliquely or directly—as the sources examined in this study will show.

groups.³ Other communities of a more Gnostic and, thus, generally anti-materialist, tendency used water alone. Some partook in bread and cheese; others in fish. The variations and permutations are numerous, each bearing certain cultural assumptions and expectations.⁴

The New Testament texts that provide descriptions of the earliest Eucharist speak of Christ *taking* bread and the cup and speaking the blessing and the words “take and eat...” and “take and drink...” over them. The gospels give no clear indication of precisely who provided the bread and wine taken and blessed by Christ, or of any special significance or notice ascribed to them prior to Christ’s designating them as his body and blood.⁵ Later textual sources more explicitly describe the foodstuffs brought to the early Christian agape. In addition to bread and wine these might also include oil, cheese, olives, milk, honey, and an extensive array of other consumable items. A much later source, the third century *Apostolic Tradition*, contains the most detailed listing of the “firstfruits” offered, including grapes, figs, pomegranates, pears, apples, mulberries, peaches, cherries, almonds, and plums; also flowers, such as lilies and roses.⁶ Again, all of these items came from the common stores of the faithful and all played specific roles

³ McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 180.

⁴ Ibid. *passim*. An extended discussion of these elements and their cultural significance constitutes a significant part of McGowan’s much larger and noteworthy study.

⁵ W. Jardine Grisbrooke, “Oblation at the Eucharist,” *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 3 (1963): 230. Of course in the context of the whole NT bread and wine bear a significance in Christ’s identifying them with himself in his dining with others, the bread of life discourse, the miracle at Cana and the feeding of the crowds. In the Supper narratives bread and wine are simply taken and blessed by Christ.

⁶ Paul Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 170. Latin version. The AT will be further examined in a later section.

in Mediterranean culture and in the Eucharistic meal.⁷ This is especially true, of course, of the bread and wine, which would become the body and blood of the Lord. While bread and wine represented the primary and necessary elements of the Eucharist, the assembly consumed some of the other items in the love feast; others went as donations for the care of the poor and the ministers of the Church. This charitable feature of the offering in no sense represented an afterthought or simply the distribution of surplus. Rather, early Christian communities understood care for those in need as an essential element of Eucharistic worship of God.

In any case, the New Testament gives no description of the giving of gifts or the provision of elements for the Eucharist. Only in later Christian writings do descriptions of these appear.

II. First and Second Century Sources

Diadache

Among the earliest textual witnesses to the order of the primitive Church, the *Didache* from Syria in the first or second century, explicitly calls for charitable giving in the context of the Eucharistic assembly. Chapter 13 instructs:

But every true prophet who abides among you is worthy of support. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support. Every firstfruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, you shall take and give to the prophets, for they are your high priests. But if you have not a prophet, give it to the poor. If you make a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. So also when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets; and of money, and

⁷ McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, passim.

clothing and every possession, take the firstfruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.⁸

The *Didache* here employs cultic language: firstfruits (ἀπαρχή), commandment (ἐντολή), and high priest (ἀρχιερεῖς). Written within the time of, or perhaps shortly following, the composition of the gospels and Pauline epistles, with their sparse description of the provision of produce by the faithful, the *Didache* here presents a somewhat developed listing of items given as well as a simple, but well-honed theology and ecclesiology of this giving. Each Christian shared the duty of offering support, first, to the ministers of the Church—especially prophets, who came proclaiming the Word of God and often presided over the Eucharist—and then to the poor. Due to the solemnity of this obligation, it acquires a force of law analogous to that of the sacrifices of the Hebrew covenant as mandated in Deuteronomy 26, especially verses 2 and 12:

You shall take some of the first of all the fruits of the ground, which you harvest from your land that the Lord your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place which the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. And you shall go to the priest...[and]the priest shall take the basket from your hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.

When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year...giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within your towns and be filled...(RSV)

⁸ *The Apostolic Fathers I*, trans. Kirsopp Lake, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 328-9. “Πᾶς δὲ προφήτης ἀληθινὸς θέλων καθῆθαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἄξιός ἐστι τῆς τροφῆς αὐτοῦ. ὡσαύτως διδάσκαλος ἀληθινὸς ἐστὶν ἄξιος καὶ αὐτὸς ὡσπερ ὁ ἐργάτης τῆς τροφῆς αὐτοῦ. Πᾶσαν οὖν ἀπαρχὴν γεννημάτων ληνοῦ καὶ ἄλωνος, βοῶν τε καὶ προβάτων λαβὼν δώσεις τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῖς προφήταις· αὐτοὶ γὰρ εἰσὶν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς ὑμῶν. ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἔχητε προφήτην, δότε τοῖς πτωχοῖς. ἐὰν σιτίαν ποιῇς, τὴν ἀπαρχὴν λαβὼν δὸς κατὰ τὴν ἐντολήν. ὡσαύτως κεράμιον οἴνου ἢ ἐλαίου ἀνοίξας, τὴν ἀπαρχὴν λαβὼν δὸς τοῖς προφήταις· ἀργυρίου δὲ καὶ ἱματισμοῦ καὶ παντὸς κτήματος λαβὼν τὴν ἀπαρχὴν, ὡς ἂν σοι δόξη τὴν ἐντολήν.” Translation mine, with reference to Lake’s translation.

While the early Church held ambivalent attitudes towards Jewish and pagan sacrificial notions and practices, the *Didache*'s clear language and imagery of sacrifice gave fitting expression to Christian ethical ideas. Moreover, it is highly probable that earlier cultic forms and vestiges of the sacrificial systems of neighboring religions influenced Christian rites of worship.⁹ Thus, it becomes clear how the bringing of firstfruits to the Eucharistic *synaxis* may have taken on sacrificial connotations.

Paul Bradshaw, however, sees this offering of firstfruits more in pragmatic than cultic terms. The offering constitutes

a tithe for the financing of the prophetic ministry rather than an offering of firstfruits...the primary concern [of which] was not theological but economic...the motive is charity towards the needy rather than the worship of God.¹⁰

Furthermore, as a tithe, the offerings of firstfruits developed in the early Church “from a harvest offering into a tax on total income.”¹¹ But the admonition to hold Sunday Eucharist that follows immediately in chapter 14 complicates Bradshaw's interpretation. The giving of firstfruits occurs within or near the context of the “pure sacrifice” offered in the Eucharist. It seems, then, that the giving over of firstfruits represents more than simply an “income tax.” It may well be this, but more, it is an offering of charity closely associated with the public offering of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. In this sense, even at this

⁹ Paul F. Bradshaw, “The Offering of the Firstfruits of Creation: An Historical Study.” In *Liturgy and Creation: Essays in Honor of H. Boone Porter*, ed. Ralph N. McMichael, Jr. (Washington: Pastoral Press, 1993), 32. Bradshaw here argues that while the offering of firstfruits prescribed in Deuteronomy 26 might have been foreign to non-agrarian members of the early Church, it “does not seem to be the case...that the liturgical practice [of offering firstfruits]...disappeared within the Christian tradition.” He offers an analysis of *Didache* 13 as evidence.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Bradshaw limits this interpretation to the offering of firstfruits as prescribed specifically in *Didache* 13.

early stage, the presentation of bread, wine, and other foods concurred with cultic activity in some way other than as simple provision for the sacred meal, and certainly as more than a tax.

In contrast to Bradshaw's legal and economic understanding of the offering, Niels Rasmussen posits a close connection between care for the poor and the primitive Church's cult:

The concern to share with the poor...is always present in [the Church's] cultic activities...this care for the poor is not separated from the fraternal meal; they [the assembly] keep it in the offering of gifts for the Eucharist.¹²

He continues, pointing out "the profound conviction that one should provide for the needs of the poor whenever one takes part in the Eucharist."¹³ Here, Rasmussen finds a conviction or habit of the communal heart, rather than an adherence to legislation. Giving of one's bounty to one's neighbor represents a *necessary* ethical outgrowth of the Eucharist—more so than a legal requirement or surcharge for it. Such a close bond joins the liturgical sacrifice of thanks and praise to God and the personal practice of sacrificial giving, that the two constitute complementary aspects of the one, developing notion of sacrifice in the early Church.¹⁴

In addition to readily consumable food, the gifts brought in offering by the assembly included items of real property: livestock, crops, other agricultural and

¹² "Les rites de présentation du pain et du vin," *La Maison-Dieu* 100 (1969): 46. "Le souci de partager avec les pauvres...est toujours présent dans ses activités cultuelles...ce souci ne disparaît pas avec le repas fraternal pour les pauvres; il se maintient dans l'offrande des dons pour l'Eucharistie." Translation mine.

¹³ Ibid. "[l]a conviction profonde que l'on doit subvenir aux besoins des pauvres lorsqu'on prend part à l'Eucharistie." Translation mine.

¹⁴ This notion will be discussed in detail in the section on Irenaeus of Lyons later in this chapter.

manufactured goods, and other possessions, including money. While no evidence exists as to the exact procedure of the presenting of these items in the Church of the *Didache* and its surroundings¹⁵, other extant texts depict the practice of bringing foodstuffs as being quite ordinary, like the food brought forward: in the context of the Eucharistic synaxis,¹⁶ the laity carried the provisions to the altar where the deacon received them, and, after separating the bread and wine from the rest, placed them on the table. Again, all this proceeded with no apparent solemnity or elaboration. Of the early witnesses, *Didache* 9 describes only the blessing (εὐχαριστία) said over the bread and cup.

Justin Martyr: *The Apology*

Later, Justin Martyr in his *Apology*—probably composed in Rome around 150 CE¹⁷—gives an only slightly more developed picture of the proceedings:

There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he, taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen.¹⁸

¹⁵ Alan Clark, “The Function of the Offertory Rite in the Mass,” *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 20 (1950): 314-18.

¹⁶ *AT* calls for the people to hasten to bring offerings to the bishop, but does not specify that this be done in the context of the synaxis.

¹⁷ Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, eds., *Justin Martyr and His Worlds*. (Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2007), xiii, 22ff.

¹⁸ *Apologie pour les chrétiens*, ed. Charles Munier. Sources chrétiennes, no. 507. (Paris: Les Éditions Du Cerf, 2006), 302, 304. “Ἐπειτα προσφέρεται τῷ προεστῶτι τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἄρτος καὶ ποτήριον ὕδατος καὶ κράματος, καὶ οὗτος λαβὼν αἶνον καὶ δόξαν τῷ πατρὶ τῶν ὅλων διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου ἀναπέμπει καὶ εὐχαριστίαν ὑπὲρ τοῦ κατηξιῶσθαι τούτων παρ’ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ πολὺ ποιεῖται· οὗ συντελέσαντος τὰς εὐχὰς καὶ τὴν εὐχαριστίαν πᾶς ὁ παρὼν λαὸς ἐπευφνμει λέγων· Ἄμεν.” Translation mine, with reference to Latin translation in PG 6.

The presider simply takes the bread and the cup of wine, and immediately begins the Eucharistic offering of praise and glory to the Father. Justin conveys no sense that this procedure entails anything more than the simple presenting of material for the Eucharistic meal and the offering of blessings to God.¹⁹ Furthermore, Justin refers simply to bread and the chalice, giving them no special designation.²⁰ The Church here does *offer* (ἀναπέμπει), but it accomplishes that offering in the lifting up of praise, glory, and thanks to God and in the people's assent: "Amen." The emphasis goes to acknowledging what God gives to the gathered body—symbolized in the simple, sustaining gifts of bread and wine—rather than any gift offered by the assembly. Thus, the Church offers thanks as a receptive response rather than a beneficent initiative.

Chapter 67 of the *Apology*, however, shows evidence of a more active offering within the context of the Church's weekly remembrance of the Lord's resurrection.

Immediately following a brief description of the Eucharistic liturgy Justin writes,

They who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need.²¹

¹⁹ See Robert Cabié, *The Eucharist. The Church at Prayer*, Volume II, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986), 17. Cabié sees in this passage a solemnization of Christ's taking the bread and the cup. He states, "the material for the Eucharist is not ready at hand for the bishop, but is brought to him in the sight of all." Only in the strict sense of the delivery of the bread and wine to the bishop being done as a public act might the action be understood as a solemn rite.

²⁰ *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)*, 2 Vols, trans. Rev. Francis A. Brunner, C.S.S.R. (New York: Benzinger, 1950). Reprint, Allen TX: Christian Classics, 1986. II, 1. Jungmann argues that the sparseness of the rite owes to "the strict aloofness which the nascent Church in the first two centuries showed towards material matters, preferring to emphasize "the spiritual character of the Christian cult".

²¹ *Apologie*, 310. "Οἱ εὐποροῦντες δὲ καὶ βουλόμενοι κατὰ προαίρεσιν ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ὃ βούλεται δίδωσι, καὶ τὸ συλλεγόμενον παρὰ τῷ προεστῶτι ἀποτίθεται, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπικουρεῖ ὀρφανοῖς τε καὶ

In this passage, which uses the language of and evokes images from Deuteronomy 26:12, again, the people's offering includes both cultic and ethical dimensions. On one hand, it takes place within the communal offering of thanks and praise to the Creator and sharing in the sacrificial meal; on the other, Justin states unambiguously the purpose and proper end of the offering: the care of the poor, widows, the needy, the ill, sojourners, and prisoners. Furthermore, unlike the *Didache*, which *commands* an offering for ministers of the Church and the poor, Justin describes an offering made by the willing—βουλόμενοι—who give freely from their abundance.

In Chapter 13, Justin writes that Christians give thanks and praise to the Creator ἐφ' οἷς προσφερόμεθα πᾶσιν—"in all that we offer."²² He goes on, discussing how Christians offer thanks to with πομπὰς καὶ ὕμνός for creation, health and other good gifts.²³ While the

χήραις, καὶ τοῖς διὰ νόσον ἢ δι' ἄλλην αἰτίαν λειπομένοις, καὶ τοῖς ἐν δεσμοῖς, οὗσι, καὶ τοῖς παρεπιδήμοις οὗσι ξένοις, καὶ ἀπλῶς πᾶσι τοῖς ἐν χρεία οὗσι κηδεμῶν γίνεται." Translation mine with reference to Latin translation in PG 6.

²² Ibid., 158. Migne translates this as "in his omnibus quae offerimus." PG 6: 345-6. The phrase is ambiguous. The Greek verb προσφερόμεθα is in the passive or middle voice. The former translates to "is offered" or "is given"; the latter translates roughly to "is given by us on our behalf." Thomas Falls uses the verb προσφερεθαι (passive?) and points out that some translations read "in all things we offer", and others "for all things we consume." Falls' translation is "for all our nourishment." See *The Fathers of The Church: Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, trans. Thomas B. Falls. (New York: Christian Heritage, 1948), 45, n.1. Some translations read "we give thanks *for* all"; others "we give thanks *in* all." In the former sense thanks is given *for* the sustenance God has given; in the latter, thanks is given *by way of* the material offered. In either case these difficult phrases occur in the context of Justin's discussion of the worship of God, suggesting a Christian notion of material sacrifice. He understands the right attitude toward, and use of, the sustenance God provides for humans as a form of worship and as key to the correct understanding of Christian sacrifice. God gives humans food for their nourishment. In the Eucharist, humans return a portion of that food in gratitude and honor of God; at the same time, they offer portions of their sustenance as provision for those in need. Here, food takes on both cultic and ethical meanings: bread and wine are offered and become the Body and Blood of the Lord—whose passion and death are ritually represented in the Eucharist—and are given as spiritual sustenance. At the same time food is given as charity to the poor in the context of the liturgical *anamnesis* of Christ's loving self-sacrifice.

²³ *Apologie*, 158.

context of these passages is not one of explicit narration of a specific Christian liturgy, Justin does describe the “cult” or the worship practice of the Christian community. The verb Προσφερόμεθα, and the nouns πομπὰς, and ὕμνος—which refer, respectively, to offering, solemnity, and communal singing—clearly imply liturgical forms. In the context of the Eucharistic liturgy, προσφερόμεθα can refer to offering or consumption or, in this passage, to a synthesis of these. Two major points in this passage designate the use of foodstuffs as offering and sustenance. Explaining the Christian attitude toward sacrificial worship of God Justin writes,

As we have been taught that the only honor that is worthy of Him is not to consume by fire what He has brought into being for our sustenance, but to use it for ourselves and those who need, and with gratitude to Him to offer thanks by solemn words and hymns for our creation, and for all the means of health, and for the various qualities of the different kinds of things, and for the changes of the seasons, and presenting before Him petitions that we may live again in incorruption through faith in Him.²⁴

Here, he directly links the charitable use of food provided by God’s goodness to the public offering of thanks and praise to God. For Justin, the Christian sacrifice, in contrast to that of Jews and pagans, does not involve the ritual destruction of what God has created and provided, as in holocausts of the old law; rather it entails their right use and gratitude for them. Food serves, primarily, as nourishment, and humans honor God by that use. Moreover, the right worship of God requires acts of charity on the part of

²⁴ Ibid. “ὥς ἐδιδάχθημεν, λεγοντες, λόγω εὐχῆς καὶ εὐχαριστίας ἐφ’ οἷς προσφερόμεθα πᾶσιν, ὅση δύναμις, αἰνοῦντες μόνην ἀξίαν αὐτοῦ τιμὴν ταύτην παραλαβόντες, τὸ τὰ ὑπ’ ἐκείνου εἰς διατροφήν γενόμενα οὐ πυρὶ δαπανᾶν, ἀλλ’ ἑαυτοῖς καὶ τοῖς δεομένοις προσθέρειν, ἐκείνῳ δὲ εὐχαριστοῦς ὄντας διὰ λόγου πομπὰς καὶ ὕμνους πέμπειν ὑπὲρ τε τοῦ γεγονέναι καὶ τῶν εἰς εὐρωστίαν πόρων πάντων, ποιότητων μὲν γενῶν καὶ μεταβολῶν ὥρων, καὶ τοῦ πάλιν ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ γενέσθαι διὰ πίστιν τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ αἰτήσεις πέμποντες,--τίς σωφρονῶν οὐχ ὁμολογήσει...” Translation mine with reference to Latin translation in PG 6.

worshippers. Thus, some of the food brought to the liturgical gathering for cultic purposes goes as an offering to the poor for their sustenance. Furthermore, God deserves thanks for all God provides. The food presented and consumed in the Eucharistic meal symbolizes God's providential care for humanity and is brought into, lifted up as, and becomes the symbol of, the Church's sacrificial response of praise and honor to the Father of creation.²⁵ Finally, the dual valence of προσφερόμεθα suggests that what the Church prays over and gives thanks for in this passage, it also offers and receives as nourishment in a liturgical setting: that is, both the food given as care for the poor, and the bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Christ and consumed as spiritual sustenance in the Eucharist. Here, at this early stage, Justin conveys, a perhaps oblique understanding of the foods provided for the Eucharist as more than provision, and, in some sense, as an offering of material gifts in praise, honor, and thanks to God.²⁶

While Justin's writings provide clues to an early notion of Christian sacrifice, a more explicit, highly developed, and carefully nuanced, sacrificial interpretation of the food offering came from the teaching of another father of the second century Church.

Irenaeus of Lyons and the Development of a Christian Notion of Sacrifice

Irenaeus, the bishop of Lyons in Gaul, is perhaps most well-known for his treatise *Adversus Haereses*. While he intended this work primarily as a polemic against various Gnostic sects, and while within it he does not describe a specific liturgy, Irenaeus

²⁵ Edward J. Kilmartin, "The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium." *Theological Studies* 55:3 (1996): 446-7.

²⁶ MRR II, 3.

here presents a well-developed, if metaphorical, Christian notion of sacrifice and cult—which includes an offering of the material for the Eucharist. In this work, Irenaeus argues against the general degradation of creation and matter by the Gnostics and their insistence on a wholly spiritualized, disincarnate religion. At the same time, working within the soteriological framework of early orthodox Christianity, Irenaeus rejects the sacrificial systems of both paganism and especially Judaism. The Church of Irenaeus' experience, following the condemnations of the prophets, saw these as crassly materialistic and devoid of true devotion to God and right moral disposition. The Christian cult, as it were, corrected these perceived errors by emphasizing the essentially spiritual character of sacrifice and by denying, with the prophets, God's need or desire for material offerings.²⁷ Nevertheless, Irenaeus upholds against the Gnostics an unambiguously incarnate Christian religion: that is, one that confesses a good God, who created a real and good world, and who had, in Christ—a real, physical, and historical person—revealed himself to, and accomplished the salvation of, human beings in their real, physical, and temporal condition. As this revelation and salvation occurred in and through the materiality of the world and human being, so too should the human response take place in and through matter. Thus, the Christian cult, while primarily concerned with the inner, spiritual condition of humans, proceeds via the mediation of material objects and activities.

²⁷ *Contre les hérésies, Livre IV. Édition critique d'après les versions arménienne et latine*, ed. Adelin Rousseau. Sources chrétiennes, no.100. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1965), 604-6.

Explaining Christ's use of matter in the institution of the Eucharist, Irenaeus writes in the seventeenth chapter of *Adversus Haereses*,

Again, giving directions to His disciples to offer to God the firstfruits of His own created things—not as if He stood in need of them, but that they might be neither unfruitful nor ungrateful—He took from created things, bread, and gave thanks, and said, "This is my body."

And in the same way, the cup, which is from that creation to which we belong, He revealed to be His blood, and taught the new oblation of the new covenant; which the Church receiving from the apostles, offers to God throughout the whole world...²⁸

Here, Irenaeus upholds the positive role of created matter in the redemption of humans and in the Church's cult. Further, he shows Christ not abolishing sacrifice, but referring it to himself, and not denying the material mode of that sacrifice, but designating new and simple media for it: a loaf of bread and a cup of wine.²⁹

To be sure, Irenaeus understands Christian sacrifice first and foremost as spiritual and ethical before material and cultic—even while not denying or downplaying the latter. Above all, sacrifice requires compunction, a humble, penitent attitude before God.

²⁸ Ibid., 590-2. "Sed et suis discipulis dans consilium primitias Deo offerre ex suis creaturis, non quasi indigenti, sed ut ipsi neque infructuosi neque ingrate sint, eum qui ex creatura est panis accepit et gratias egit dicens: **Hoc est meum corpus**. Et calicem similiter, qui est ex ea creatura quae est secundum nos, suum sanguinem confessus est et novi Testamenti novam docuit oblationem; quam Ecclesia ab Apostolis accipiens in universo mundo offert Deo..." (Ch. XVII.5). Translation mine.

²⁹ David Power, "Words That Crack: The Uses of 'Sacrifice' in Eucharistic Discourse." In *Living Bread Saving Cup*, ed. R. Kevin Seasoltz. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1986), 164, 166. Power argues that for Irenaeus and the early Church there was, in fact, "only one *literal* offering, namely, that of bread and wine." [emphasis added] The offering of firstfruits, of which bread and wine are exemplars, "show[s] forth the original creation to which the world is to be restored...[and] the value of this offering depend[s] upon the offering of Christ on the cross." Irenaeus indeed refers to the bread and wine brought forward by the assembly before the consecration of these elements. But while any Christian sacrifice must be understood only in relation to Christ's perfect self-offering, the Church does *offer* the bread and wine that will be transformed into the body and blood of Christ. The *terminus ad quem* of this offering is the return of creation and human work therein to God in gratitude; the end is redemptive if the offering is made with the right interior disposition, and in reference to the sacrifice of Christ.

Quoting Psalm 50 Irenaeus calls true sacrifice “a broken spirit...a contrite and humbled heart.”³⁰ Furthermore, the Christian “cult” centers on works of justice, mercy, and care for the poor and oppressed. Material sacrifices and oblations of themselves bear no propitiatory value, no salvific weight. What justifies and saves the Christian is to cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, “defend the fatherless, plead for the widow...share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless...into your home.” (Isaiah 1:16-17; 58:7 RSV)

In sum, for Irenaeus, “Sacrifices do not sanctify a man, for God stands in no need of sacrifice; but the conscience of him who offers sanctifies the sacrifice when it is pure, and moves God to accept [the sacrifice] as from a friend.”³¹ Here, again, Irenaeus does not deny the reality of sacrifice. He does, however, reverse the sacrificial economy. Sacrifice, once understood as the efficacious *agent* of human sanctification, now serves as the confirmation, or *manifestation* of the reformed interior being of the person offering.

True sacrifice also includes the offering of praise and thanks to God. Quoting the Book of the prophet Malachi, Irenaeus argues that “a pure sacrifice” proclaims the glorification of God’s name by all throughout the cosmos: “from the rising of the sun to its setting, my name is great among the nations”(1:11 RSV). Furthermore, the offering of gifts to God shows love and gratitude toward God and ensures the ongoing gratitude and

³⁰ *Contre les hérésies, livre IV*, 576-7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Ch. XVII.1, 604-6. “...non sacrificia sanctificant hominem, non enim indiget sacrificio Deus, sed conscientia ejus qui offert sanctificat sacrificium, pura existens, et praestat acceptare Deum quasi ab amico.” Translation mine.

“fruitfulness” of the believer who offers.³² Humans *must* offer because the right response to God’s giving requires a return from humans of what God has given in acknowledgement of, and gratitude to, God. Whoever does not offer, withholds what rightfully belongs to God. Thus, in the offering of “firstfruits”, the faithful give back to God the “first and best” of God’s gifts.³³ The giving of these first, basic things constitutes the material sign of the handing over of one’s whole self to God, and the guarantee of the continuation of that self-gift.

So, while Irenaeus denies the salvific value of sacrifice itself without a right interior disposition of mercy, gratitude, and charity, he does not deny the need for Christians to offer sacrifices. In fact, he writes that

...it behoves us to make an oblation to God, and in all things to be found grateful to God our Maker... we...should offer a gift at the altar, frequently and without intermission.³⁴

And the class of oblations in general has not been rejected; for there were both oblations there [among the Jews], and there are oblations here [among the Christians]. There were sacrifices among the people; and there are sacrifices in the Church.³⁵

Irenaeus, then, affirms a Christian sacrifice. Such is the Church’s “duty and salvation.”

Christians *must* offer sacrifice to God out of justice; Christians *need* to offer sacrifice to God lest they remain *curvati in se*. Again, while that sacrifice primarily requires a

³² Ibid., Ch.XVII.5, 590-1.

³³ Bradshaw, “The Offering of the Firstfruits,” 30f.

³⁴ *Contre les hérésies, livre IV*, Ch. XVIII . 4, 6; 606, 612. “Oportet enim nos oblationem Deo facere et in omnibus gratos inveniri fabricatori Deo...nos...offere vult munus ad altare frequenter sine intermissione.” Translation mine.

³⁵ Ibid., Ch. XVIII.5, 590. “Et non genus oblationum reprobatur: oblationes enim et illic [among the Jews], oblationes autem et hic, sacrificia in populo, sacrificia et in Ecclesia.” Translation mine.

particular interior, spiritual disposition, it clearly includes exterior, material media that symbolize and mediate the immaterial offering. The firstfruits of creation, especially the common species of bread and wine, provide the mediating symbol of the faithful's self-offering to God.

Irenaeus identifies the Eucharist proper as the Christian sacrifice. His sacrificial understanding as expressed in this treatise applies as well to the offering by the faithful of bread and wine before the anaphora.³⁶ This basic food and drink, brought forward both as gifts for the poor and the Church and as signs of human gratitude are the "firstfruits of [God's] own created things," symbolizing the whole of creation returned in gratitude and love to the creator and pointing out the total reliance upon God for, and God's absolute ownership of, anything humans might have or offer to God.

Humans, many insist, have nothing to offer God.³⁷ Still, humans experience a call to make offerings to God. Since no amount of human production or possession could possibly stand as an offering to God, the simplest of things stand in their stead: the firstfruits of the harvest, the vintage, and the threshing floor. Even these, while required of the faithful, do not stand on their own as sacrifices pleasing to God. Nor does the Christian stand alone in making offerings to appease God; rather, Christian sacrifice bears a necessarily ecclesial character. For Irenaeus the *Church* offers oblations to God. Nowhere in this section of his polemic does he refer to any wholly individual offering. Only in the Church, the assembly which confesses the name of Jesus Christ throughout

³⁶Power, "Words That Crack," 164.

³⁷ Ibid.

the world, is the name of God glorified “from the rising of the sun to its setting”; only through this same Jesus Christ does the Church in all places and times rightly make offerings to God.³⁸ Not only does the Church exist as the locus of right worship and confession of the name of God, in it dwells a new class of human beings, “freemen,” whose oblations offered in freedom present to the world “the indication of liberty.”³⁹ That is, free persons make offerings to God not from a servile fear of punishment or desire for propitiation, but from a confident liberty and in a spirit of joy.⁴⁰ In freedom, “they set aside all their possessions for the Lord’s purposes, bestowing joyfully and freely not the less valuable portions of their property.”⁴¹ Among these are the firstfruits of the fields and the vineyard, which the Church brings forward in the Eucharistic liturgy. From these, the Church offers to God the most basic, bread and wine, which it receives again as the Church’s sharing in the divine life: the Body and Blood of God’s own Son, Jesus Christ.

The Church, then, does offer material oblations to God, but at all times the initiative in these offerings is God’s: in gratitude, the Church gives back the bounty God has given, which God gives again as the gift of food for eternal life. Thus, the “offertorial” or sacrificial economy in Irenaeus’ view begins with God’s gifts to humanity of creation, sustenance, and redemption. From God’s many gifts the individual takes a share of his personal portion and brings it to the assembly. The items brought by each individual come together into a collective offering of the Church, and the Church blesses

³⁸ *Contre les hérésies, livre IV*, Ch. XVII.6, 594.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Ch. XVIII.2, 598. Translation mine.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.* Translation mine.

and gives thanks for all the offerings. In the anaphora, bread and wine are taken from the many items offered and become united with the Eucharistic memorial of Christ's self-offering. Consecrated as the body and blood of Christ, these elements are given again as sustenance in Holy Communion, which completes the whole process and gives final meaning and efficacy to the material offering of the Church. A necessary unity joins the offering of gifts, the consecration, and communion. No person or group can make an efficacious sacrifice to God that does not refer to and unite with the once for all sacrifice of Christ; the consecration joins the offering of the Church to the offering of its Lord and communion completes the offering.

Furthermore, the Christian understanding of true sacrifice to God involves the reception in gratitude of God's bounty. The Church offers thanks and praise for God's sustaining gifts in and through its material offering. God takes these items of material sustenance, transforms them and gives them again as spiritual sustenance. Nourished by the body and blood of the Lord the Church in its individual members becomes, as Augustine taught, what it receives, the Body of Christ and is conformed to the self-offering pattern of the Head. Thus, Justin's προσφερόμεθα refers at once to reception and offering, offering and reception.

From all of this, it becomes increasingly clear that the Church has a duty and vocation to make offerings to God. While the Church draws a clear distinction between Christian sacrifice and those of the old rites, there remains a more or less ritualized setting aside of items cultivated and crafted by humans from the gifts of nature to be

given over in worship to God. In essence these material offerings signify the self-giving of those offering in thanks and praise owed to God and in care of the poor and the ministers of the Church. In turn, these offerings are united with, and brought to completion by, Christ's own self-offering remembered in the Church's Eucharist.

III. Third Century Sources

The Apostolic Tradition

The *Apostolic Tradition*⁴² contains passages describing offerings with noticeably cultic features. The chapter on bishops, for example, depicts the transfer of the *oblations* by the deacons—*offerant diacones oblationes*—to the bishop, who, in turn, “with all the presbyters laying his hand on the oblation shall say, giving thanks...”⁴³ The opening dialogue and the Eucharistic Prayer follow. Here, prior to the anaphora, The *Apostolic Tradition* designates the material provisions as offerings or *oblations* which the Church *offers* and to which the ministers pay some special attention.⁴⁴ To be sure, the emphasis points to the giving of thanks, but the *AT* also designates the material elements as *oblatio* which the Church *offers*. Furthermore the offering takes place accompanied by the laying of hands upon the oblations, a mediating gesture not noted in earlier textual descriptions

⁴² Although the *AT* historically has been attributed to Hippolytus, in recent scholarship has cast doubt upon Hippolytus' authorship of any of these sources. Therefore, I will not attribute an author to the *AT*. See Alistair Stewart-Sykes, ed. *Hippolytus: On the Apostolic Tradition*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 12-32.

⁴³ Gregory Dix, ed., *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome Bishop and Martyr*, Ridgefield, CT : Morehouse Publishing, 1992), 6. “*imponens manus in eam cum omni praesbyterio dicat gratia[n]s agens ...*” Dix's translation.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 40. In describing the Eucharistic liturgy, *AT* refers to the pre consecrated elements as *oblatio*, which are offered (*offeratur*) by the deacons to the bishop, who gives thanks over that which is *antitypum...corporis Chr(ist)i*.

of the Eucharistic liturgy.⁴⁵ This gesture expresses a connection between the material provided and the giving of thanks—both for the elements offered and for the salvation won by the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ that these commemorate. Where previously the ministers simply deposited the bread, wine, and other foodstuffs on the altar, here an understanding of these as an offering of the Church united with the great offering of thanks and praise to the Father for and through the Son becomes explicit. The worship of the Body of Christ consists not of a spiritual nature alone, but also includes a material component. The laying of hands on the gifts effects and indicates the unity of the material and spiritual aspects of the offering.

The *AT* gives theologically developed instructions for the reception and blessing by the bishop of some of the other foods brought as offerings.⁴⁶ While ambiguity characterizes the relation of these offerings to the Eucharist, clearly the bishop proclaims a prayer over the offerings similar to the Eucharistic prayer:

If anyone offers oil, let him return thanks according to the offering of bread and wine, [but] let him say it not to the word, but to similar virtue: as sanctifying this oil, God, you give health to those using and receiving [it] from there you have anointed [them] kings, priests, and prophets, thus may it grant strengthening to all tasting [it] and health to those using it.

⁴⁵Clark, “The Function of the Offertory Rite,” 335.

⁴⁶ Whether or not such offerings were brought directly to the Eucharistic synaxis is the subject of some debate. In *AT* it appears that the offerings were brought to the bishop's residence where they were blessed and the material for the Eucharist was separated out. While Bradshaw says, “it was no doubt understood that these ‘offerings’ would be made within the Eucharistic rite,” (Bradshaw, et al, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 49.), this is not so clear from much of the literature on this text. Cabrol, for instance, follows Coppens in arguing “dans certains passages, où sont désignées des offrandes pour les agapes, notamment du pain et du vin, ces offrandes sont bénites par l’évêque mais sans relation avec l’eucharistie...” See “Offertoire” *Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, Tome 12.2, (Paris: Librairie LeTouzey et Ané, 1936), 1950.

In the same way, if anyone offers cheese and olives, let him say: Sanctify this milk that has been coagulated, coagulating us in your love. Make also the fruit of this olive not depart from your sweetness, which is a type of your fullness that you have poured out from the tree for the life of those who hope in you.⁴⁷

Here, the provision of food becomes an offering in which the material objects supplied by the laity bear a cultic and spiritual significance. These prayers express the sacramental character of the material gifts: oil signifies the anointing and strengthening of the baptized as “priests, prophets and kings” of the new covenant; cheese indicates their bond in the love of God, and olives reveal their sharing in the richness of the divine life. The provision of and partaking in foodstuffs (“signs perceptible to the senses”) offered by the assembly mediate Grace, charity, and sanctification.⁴⁸ Thus, the provision of food items, an act of simple practicality and *caritas*, takes on a sacramental and salvific import mirroring that of the Eucharistic offering.

The *AT* also clearly describes a food offering in a truly cultic sense, although perhaps separate from the Eucharistic meal⁴⁹: “Let all hasten to offer to the bishop the

⁴⁷ Dix, *Treatise on AT*, 10-11. “Si quis oleum offert, secundum panis oblationem et uini et non ad sermonem dicat, sed simili uirtute, gratias referat dicens: Ut oleum hoc sanctificans das, D[eu]s, san[ct]itatem utentibus et percipientibus, unde uncixsti reges, sacerdotes et profetas, sic et omnibus gustantibus confortationem et sanitatem utentibus illud praebeat.”

“Similiter, si quis caseum et olivas offere, ita dicat: Santifica lac hoc quod coagulatum est, et nos coagulans tuae caritati. Fac a tua dulcitudine non recedere fructum etiam hunc oliuae qui est exemplum[m] tuae pinguitudinis, quam de lingo fluisti in uitam eis qui sperant in te.” Translation mine.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 40. Milk and honey provided by the laity are given in the context of Communion of the newly baptized and serve a similar sacramental function: “Lac et mel[le] mixta simul ad plenitudinem promissionis quae ad patres fuit qua[m] dixit terram fluentem lac et mel, qua[m] et dedit carnem suam Chr[istu]s, per quam sicut paruuli nutriuntur qui credunt, in suauitate uerbi amara cordis dulcia efficiens.”

⁴⁹ Bradshaw, “The Offering of the Firstfruits,” 29. Although Bradshaw argues for a cultic offering in the Church, he draws a clear distinction between the offering of food products in thanks to, and recognition of, God and a literal sacrifice, which involves the “ritual destruction” of some victim.

new fruits as they begin [to bloom]. And also let the bishop offer them and bless them and name the name of the one who brought them.”⁵⁰

While reminiscent of the offering called for in the *Didache*, this earliest textual witness to a liturgical rite of offering of firstfruits⁵¹ exhorts, but apparently does not issue a mandate for oblations. Moreover, rather than designating the gifts as practical support for the clergy and the poor, as the *Didache* does, it clearly orders the offering of the firstfruits to the lifting up of thanks and praise to God for the gifts of the earth.⁵² Again echoing the Eucharistic prayer, the *AT* gives thanks to God for the goods offered while offering them in turn to God:

We give you thanks, God, and we offer to you the firstfruits, which you have given us to receive, nourishing them by your word, commanding the earth to bear all fruits for the joy and nourishment of humans and all animals. Over all this, we praise you, God, and in all you have granted us, providing for us all creation with various fruits through your child Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom all glory be to you forever and ever.⁵³

Where the actual Eucharistic prayer of *AT* proceeds as an anamnesis of and thanksgiving for the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, this offering of the firstfruits remembers and blesses God for the gifts of creation and sustenance. Two factors influence the cultic interpretation of this rite: the quasi-Eucharistic prayer expresses a close connection between giving thanks to God and offering the first of the

⁵⁰Dix, *Treatise on AT*, 53. “Fructus natos primum quam incipiant eos, omnes festinent offerre episcopo qui autem offerit benedicat eos et nomet nomen eum qui optulit...” Translation mine.

⁵¹Bradshaw, *et al.*, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 165.

⁵²MRR II, 2-3, n.5.

⁵³Dix, *Treatise on AT*, 54. “Gratias tibi agimus, d(eu)s et offerimus tibi primitivas fructuum, quos dedisti nobis ad percipiendum, per verbum tuum enutrens ea, iubens terrae omnes fructus adferre ad laetitiam et nutrimentum hominum et omnibus animalibus. Super his omnibus laudamus te, d(eu)s et in omnibus quibus nos iubasti, adornans nobis omnem creaturam uariis fructibus, per puerum tuum Ie(su)m Chr(istu)m dom(inu)m nostrum, per quem tibi gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen.” Translation mine.

harvest; moreover, both the text of the prayer—*iubens terrae omnes fructus adferre*—and the very act of turning over the first part to God acknowledges God’s dominion over and rightful ownership of all things. What God has given, the faithful give back as an oblation in gratitude and a self-relinquishing recognition of their dependence upon God for all life and all goodness.⁵⁴

Didascalia Apostolorum

Throughout the third century an increasingly sacrificial character marks the developing practice and interpretation of the presentation of gifts by the faithful, and the language associated with it. Chapter 9 of the Syrian *Didascalia Apostolorum* explicitly uses the cultic terms—sacrifice, offering(s), or oblation(s); firstfruits, high pries, Levite and altar—though, again, recasting them in the ethical, spiritual, and ecclesial sense. While affirming absolutely the nullification of the sacrifices of the old law, the *Didascalia* nevertheless explains the Christian cult by means of sacrificial imagery.

[I]nstead of the sacrifices of that time, now offer prayers and supplications and thanksgivings. At that time there were firstfruits and tithes and oblations and gifts, but today the offerings which are presented through the bishop to the Lord to the Lord God, for they are your high priest. But the priests and Levites are now deacons and presbyters, and the orphans and widows—but the Levite and high priest is the bishop...[A]nd the orphans and widows shall be reckoned by you in the likeness of the altar. For as it was not lawful for a stranger, that is one who was not a Levite, to approach the altar to offer anything apart from the high priest, so you shall do nothing apart from the bishop.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ These offerings can be rightly referred to as sacrificial in the sense provided by Robert Ledogar: “any food taken with grateful acknowledgement of its source is an offering to God.” “The Eucharistic Prayer and the Gifts Over Which It Is Spoken.” *In Living Bread Saving Cup*, 64.

⁵⁵ *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac* Vol. I, trans. Arthur Vööbus. (Louvain: Secretariat Du Corpus SCO, 1979), 99-100. Vööbus’ translation.

The instruction seems concerned mainly with establishing the primacy and authority of the bishop. Still, the text presupposes an understanding of cultic language and practice, and upholds the relevance of these to Christian life. The Church's cult, such as it is, attends primarily to the now well-established ends of offering praise and gratitude to God, to the care of the poor, widows, and orphans, and to the provision for the needs of the Church deacons, presbyters, and, most especially, the bishops. In the spiritualized, albeit materially mediated, Christian sacrifice, the bishop serves as the High Priest, that is, the mediator of the Church's thanksgiving to God and the curator of its offerings of *caritas*. The bishop receives the offerings of the people, gives thanks for them, blesses them, and distributes them to the needy, especially widows and orphans, who are the *altar*, upon which the divine-human encounter and exchange takes place.

While the offering bears a clearly ethical character, the *Didascalia* portrays this most essential of Christian activities, the imitation of God's gratuitous love and care for those in need, in cultic, sacrificial terms. Although the text of Chapter 9 gives no explicit indication of when or where the gifts are offered, most certainly they are brought into, and distributed as part of, the community's "supper"—that is, its Eucharistic gathering. Here, the material gifts of *caritas* provided by the faithful represent sacrificial "victims" that, along with the liturgical offering of thanks and praise, mediate the true worship of God. Though the gifts offered effect the remission of sins, they do so not through their own propitiatory merit, as in the Jewish and pagan cults, but as signs of gratitude to God and as care for the neighbor in need. Still, the *Didascalia* employs the language of

offering, oblation, priesthood, altar, propitiation, and cult—even while it does so in a clearly *metaphorical* way.⁵⁶

Cyprian of Carthage

Employing a similar weaving of ethical and cultic themes as the *Didascalia*, Cyprian of Carthage, in his *De opere et eleemosynis*, emphasizes in a pointed and personal way the solemn duty of offering as *caritas* and its sacrificial nature. In an often cited rebuke of the wealthy woman who dared come to the *synaxis* without a gift to offer at the altar, feeding instead on the gifts offered by the poor, Cyprian asks: “You rich and wealthy, do you think you celebrate the Eucharist who do not respect the offering, who come to the Eucharist without a sacrifice, who take part in the sacrifice that the poor one offered?”⁵⁷ Cyprian’s rhetorical question draws a clear line connecting the ethical and the cultic: right participation in the Church’s sacrifice requires sacrificial giving from all, rich and poor—especially the former.

IV. Fourth and Fifth Century Sources

The Apostolic Constitutions

Drawing upon the earlier *Didascalia*, the fourth-century Syrian *Apostolic Constitutions* further connects the ethical and cultic dimensions of the offering of

⁵⁶ David Power, “Words That Crack,” *passim*. Power argues throughout this article that the idea and practice of Christian sacrifice has always been metaphorical in nature.

⁵⁷ *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera, Pars II*, ed. M. Simonetti. CCL IIIa. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 64. “Locuples et diues dominicum celebrare te credis quae corban omnino non respicis, quae in dominicum sine sacrificio uenis, quae partem de sacrificio quod pauper obtulit sumus?” Translation mine.

firstfruits. Affirming again the mediating role of the clergy in the offering of gifts and care for widows and orphans as the proper end of the oblation, the AC, Book VII commands:

All the firstfruits of the winepress, the threshing-floor, the oxen, and the sheep, you shall give to the priests, that your storehouses...and the products of your land may be blessed, and you may be strengthened with corn and wine and oil, and the herds of your cattle and the flocks of your sheep may be increased. You shall give the tenth of your increase to the orphan, and to the widow, and to the poor, and to the stranger. All the firstfruits of your hot bread, of your barrels of wine, or oil, or honey, or nuts, or grapes, or the firstfruits of other things, you shall give to the priests; but those of silver, and of garments, and of all sort of possessions, to the orphan and to the widow.⁵⁸

The AC here orders the offering of tithes and firstfruits in terms of a cosmic economy: sacrificial giving ensures the continued fruitfulness of the earth; that is, in giving, life continues. Special attention goes to the most vulnerable of the human family, the widow and orphan. Still, while the AC clearly mandates the duty to offer tithes and firstfruits, Book II of the AC distinguishes between this offering and the sacrifices of the old law:

Now you ought to know, that although the Lord has delivered you from servitude and has brought you out of them to your refreshment, and does not allow you to sacrifice irrational animals for sin-offerings and purification, and scapegoats, and continual washings and sprinklings, but has He nowhere freed you from those oblations which you owe to the priests, nor from doing good to the poor.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Les constitutions apostoliques*, Tome III, ed. and trans. Marcel Metzger. Sources chrétiennes, no. 336. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987), 60-1. “Πᾶσαν ἀπαρχὴν γεννημάτων ληνοῦ, ἄλωνος, βοῶν τε καὶ προβάτων δώσεις τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν, ἵνα εὐλογηθῶσιν αἱ ἀποθῆ καὶ τῶν ταμείων σου καὶ τὰ ἐκφόρια τῆς γῆς σου, καὶ σπηριχθῆς σίτω καὶ οἶνω καὶ ἐλαίῳ, καὶ αὐξηθῇ τὰ βουκόλια τῶν βοῶν σου καὶ τὰ ποίμνια τῶν προβάτων σου. Πᾶσαν δεκάτην δώσεις τῷ ὀρφανῷ καὶ τῇ χήρᾳ, τῷ πτωχῷ καὶ τῷ προσηλύτῳ. Πᾶσαν ἀπαρχὴν ἄρτων θερμῶν, κεραμίου οἶνου ἢ ἐλαίου ἢ μέλιτος ἢ ἀκροδρύων, σταφυλῆς ἢ τῶν ἄλλων τὴν ἀπαρχὴν δώσεις τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν, ἀργυρίου δὲ καὶ ἱματισμοῦ καὶ παντὸς κτήματος τῷ ὀρθανῷ καὶ τῇ χήρᾳ.” Translation mine, with reference to Metzger’s French translation.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Tome I, 256-58. “Χρὴ δὲ ὑμᾶς γινώσκειν ὅτι, εἰ καὶ ἐρρύσατο ὑμᾶς Κύριος τῆς δουλείας τῶν ἐπεισάκτων δεσμῶν καὶ ἐξήγαγεν ὑμᾶς εἰς ἀνάψυξιν, μηκέτι ἐάσας ὑμᾶς θύειν ἄλογα ζῶα περὶ

Although Christians cannot and do not expiate for their sins through material sacrifices, God nevertheless requires them to make offerings to the clergy and for the poor. But then, it seems that the *AC* reverses itself: where it earlier forbade the making of sin-offerings (περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν), later in the same chapter, it refers to the firstfruits precisely as περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν, and calls the priest the mediator between God and those in need of purgation and forgiveness.⁶⁰ So, the offering does expiate for sins, but only in a strictly limited way: quoting Proverbs 16.6 and Psalm 41.1, the *AC* specifies that almsgiving and acts of faith cleanses iniquities, and that the Lord will be merciful to the one who regards the poor and needy.⁶¹ These same offerings taken from the fruits of one's labors for the care of the clergy and those in need are brought to the bishop in his role of high priest of the Church's cult, who receives and offers them as fitting worship of God.⁶²

Testamentum Domini

In its model for the actual liturgical performance of the offering, Chapter 23 of the *Testamentum Domini* from fourth or fifth century Syria includes an early indication of the cultic aspect of the rite of presentation. Here, a strictly ordered hierarchy gathers around the bishop at the presentation of the offerings for the Eucharist and during the anaphora:

ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ καθαρισμοῦ καὶ ἀποπομπαίων καὶ λουτρῶν συνεχῶν καὶ περιπαντηρίων, οὐ δῆπου καὶ τῶν εἰσφορῶν ὑμᾶς ἡλευθερωσεν ὧν ὀφείλετε τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν, καὶ τῶν εἰς τοὺς δεομένους εὐποιῶν.”

Translation mine, with reference to Metzger's French translation.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 258. “μεσίτη θεοῦ καὶ τῶν δεομένων καθάρσεως καὶ παραιτήσεως.”

⁶¹ Ibid., Tome II, 126-128.

⁶² Ibid., Tome I, 262-3.

[L]et him [the bishop] offer together with the presbyters and deacons and the canonical widows, and subdeacons and deaconesses, readers and those who have gifts.⁶³

Let the bishop stand first in the midst of them and the presbyters immediately after him; after them, the widows immediately behind the presbyters on the left side, the deacons behind the presbyters on the right side, then the readers behind them, the subdeacons behind the readers, the deaconesses behind the subdeacons.

Let the bishop place his hand upon the breads which have been placed upon the altar in this way, the presbyters placing their hands on the breads at the same time. Let the rest be standing only.

...Before the bishop or presbyter offers, let the people give the Peace to each other.⁶⁴

The giver of the gifts joins in the liturgical hierarchy culminating with the bishop offering the gifts provided in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The provision of material goods plays a role not other than or merely ancillary to the Eucharistic cult; rather, it takes place directly at the altar of the Church's sacrifice.

Conciliar Decrees

While duty required the making of offerings by all Christians, early conciliar and synodal statements went beyond the obligation to offer and issued legislation emphasizing the *privileged* character of offering.⁶⁵ Placing strictures on who could and

⁶³ In another version, Grant Sperry-White uses the phrase "readers possessing (spiritual) gifts" rather than "readers, and those who have gifts". It is not clear what these "spiritual gifts" might be or what their function might be in the liturgy, especially in this context, which clearly refers to the offering of material gifts. In fact, "spiritual" is an editorial addition made by Mr. Sperry-White, the reason for which is not clear. See *The Testamentum Domini: A Text for Students, with Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Ed. Grant Sperry-White, (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books Limited, 1991), 13-14.

⁶⁴ *The Testament of Our Lord. Translated into English from the Syriac with Introduction and Notes*. Trans. James Cooper. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 70-1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 333.

could not offer and when, Canons 28 and 29 of the Synod of Elvira, for example, in the fourth century decreed, respectively:

The bishop...must not accept the offering from one who does not communicate.

One possessed who is harassed by a wondering spirit must not be named at the altar with a gift, nor permitted to serve as a minister in the Church.⁶⁶

These decrees make clear the necessary connection between offering and reception: those who cannot receive communion cannot offer the material from which the Eucharistic elements are taken. Nor, in the case of demoniacs, can they partake in the intercessory benefits associated with making an offering.⁶⁷

While the offering of material gifts had become an expected feature of the faithful's participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice, evidence exists suggesting that such could be and was overemphasized. Of the many gifts brought by members of the assembly, only bread and wine represented the proper material for the Eucharist. That other elements found their way to the altar and were incorporated into the Eucharistic sacrifice had apparently become so widespread that the Council of Carthage convened in 397 mandated "In the sacraments of the body and blood of the Lord, let nothing be

⁶⁶Joannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum, nova, et amplissima collectio in qua praeter ea quae Phil. Labbeus, et Gabr. Cossartius, S.J., et novissime Nicolaus Coleti in lucem edidere ; ea omnia insuper suis in locis optime disposita exhibentur*. (Florentiae : Expensis Antonii Zatta, 1759-1927), 10. Canon 28: "Episcopus placuit ab eo, qui non communicat, munus accipere non debere." Canon 29: "Energumenus qui ab erratico spiritu exagitur, hujus nomen neque ad altare cum oblatione, recitandum, nec permittendum, ut sua manu ecclesia minister." Translation mine.

⁶⁷The reciting of names mentioned in canon 29—*hujus nomen neque ad altare cum oblatione recitandum*—refers to the reading of the names of, and intercessory prayer on behalf of, persons offering the elements for the Eucharist and other items of *caritas*. This reading and the "diptychs" on which the names were written will be discussed further below.

offered other than that which the Lord handed on, that is, bread and wine mixed with water” (Canon 23).⁶⁸

Two factors might have occasioned this proliferation of items included in the Eucharist. First, Christians in the early centuries held a perduring sense that God deserved not only thanks and praise for the divine bounty, but that God deserved the first and best part of all humans received from creation and produced by their work. Second, is the desire to stake for oneself and those beloved by the offerer a share in the fruits of Christ’s own, perfect offering to the Father. So prevalent was the sense that individual Christians could attain personal association with the sacrifice and appropriation of its fruits that it received liturgical expression in the reading of the names of those who brought gifts to the Eucharistic *synaxis*.

This public recitation of names worthy of recognition either within, or immediately before, the Eucharistic prayer merits an extended discussion. First appearing in liturgies of the third and fourth centuries, the lists of persons named often included those offering material gifts for the Eucharist and charity. In the western Church the names included the pope, the local bishop, clergy,⁶⁹ various saints, the dead of the particular community, persons requesting prayers and, finally, those providing the material for the Eucharistic offering.⁷⁰ This practice, along with the previously mentioned conciliar exclusions from the offering of gifts in the Eucharistic *synaxis*,

⁶⁸ Charles Munier, ed., *Concilia Africae*. CCL 259. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974), 39-40. “in sacramentis corporis et sanguinis Domini nihil amplius offeratur quam ipse Dominus tradidit, hoc est panem et uinam aquae mixtum.” Translation mine. See also Cabìè, *The Eucharist*, 83.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Dix reports that in Rome the only living cleric named was the pope.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 508. This represents the full development of the list of the persons named.

suggests an understanding of such offerings as a *privilege* that surpasses the obligation enforced by conciliar decrees. The reading of names shows the former pole of this duality. At various points in the Eucharistic liturgy, usually either immediately before or after the recitation of the prayers over the offerings, or at the end of the Eucharistic canon,⁷¹ the deacon or some other minister recited the names of persons meriting or needing special recognition. Members of the assembly who made special material offerings and provided the bread and wine for the Eucharist were also named in prayers giving them individual recognition and requesting divine favor on their behalf.⁷² The desired effect concerns the application in an exceptional way of the fruits of the Eucharistic sacrifice. In providing the material for the sacrifice the offerer sought a direct connection between his or her personal offering of material elements to the self-offering of Christ, and, thus, an immediate share in the redemptive power of the passion, death, and resurrection of the Lord.⁷³ Likewise, in publicly proclaiming the name of the one offering, the gathered Church affirmed the specific appropriation by that person of the effects of the Eucharist.

⁷¹ The exact location in the liturgy varied with geographical location.

⁷² For Dix this includes the entire assembly, or at least all members of the assembly who brought forward their share of the bread and wine that would be consecrated in the Eucharistic prayer. Dix sees the recitation of names as a parochial affair, a “roll-call of the faithful” in which all gathered in the local *synaxis* and making offerings are named and acknowledged, and intercessions are offered in their behalf. See *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 499, 504, 505. Jungmann points out that the reading of names was more pronounced and specific in the Gallican liturgies. The recitation of names would be followed by the *oratio post nomina* in which a blessing was asked for the persons offering and then extended to all who partook in the immediate offering—living and dead: “Auditis nominibus offerentum, fraters dilectissimi, Christum Dominum deprecemur...praestante pietate sua, ut haec sacrificia sic uiuentibus proficient ad emendationem, ut defunctis opitulentur ad requiem...” Els Rose, ed. *Missale Gothicum: e codice Vaticano Reginensi latino 317 editum*. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina vol.159D. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 371.

⁷³ Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 80. “[B]y contributing bread and wine, Christians intended to claim a share in the fruits of the Eucharist.”

While the Church understood the offering of gifts as symbolizing the self-offering of each member of the Body of Christ and that all gathered shared in the salvific merits of the Eucharist the provision of the Eucharistic elements constituted another level of offering meriting special mention in the euchology of a particular liturgy. Certainly, all the faithful present were named and prayed for in at least a general sense. Nevertheless, the public proclamation of one's name in the offering served, in effect, as an affirmation that in providing the food that would become the media of the gathered body's thanksgiving to God and the body and blood of Christ, one had procured for oneself a special benefit from the Eucharist.

Nevertheless, the individual's offering did not stand on its own, and depended entirely on its completion in the self-offering of Jesus Christ. Neither did the reading of names serve as congratulations to the offering faithful for their good works. Jerome railed against precisely such an abuse:

But now they publicly recite the names of those offering and the redemption of sinners becomes the praise; they do not remember the widow in the gospel that in putting two copper coins in the treasury exceeded all the wealthy in the offering place.⁷⁴

The deacon publicly recites the names of those offering, placating them to the applause of the people, while their consciences torture them.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Jerome, *In Hieremiam prophetam* II. 108, ed. S. Reiter. CCL 74. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1964), 116. "At nunc publice recitantur offerentium nomina et redemption peccatorum mutatur in laudem nec meminerunt uiduae illius in euangelio, quae in gazophylacium duo aera mittendo omnium diuitum uicit donaria." Translation mine. See also Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 81.

⁷⁵ Jerome, *Commentariorum Hezechielem prophetam* VI.16, *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera*, François Glorie, ed. CCL 75. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1964), 238. "...publiceque diaconus in ecclesia recitet offerentium nomina...placentque sibi ad plausum populi, torquente eos conscientia..." Translation mine. See also Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 81.

Here, Jerome clearly relates the offerings of the individuals to the saving work accomplished in the Eucharistic offering. In Jerome's understanding, the faithful should make the offering humbly and cognizant of their poverty—both material and spiritual. Properly understood, the offering concerns the salvation of sinners, not the glorification of the righteous.

Furthermore, in order to check any implication that the material offering of the faithful constituted a sacrifice of its own separate from the one sacrifice of the Lord made present in the Eucharist, Pope Innocent I in 416 issued a letter in which he insisted that the names of the offerers be proclaimed within the context of the Eucharistic offering—*ut inter sacra mysteria nominentur*.⁷⁶—but not before, as had become the custom in many places. In positive terms, reading the names within the context of the anaphora ensures the inclusion of the material offering of the individual in the greater sacrifice of thanks and praise of the Church to the Father.

While the reading of names emphasizes the privileged character of, and the special benefits derived from, making offerings in the Eucharistic context it does not imply an option not to offer. Christian duty expects and requires the offering of tithes and firstfruits to God. A widespread and willful noncompliance with this obligation eventually led the Council of Maçon (c. 585) to decree in the strongest of terms

⁷⁶ PL 20: 0554a.

that on Sundays [*diebus Dominicis*] an oblation from all men and women should be offered, bread as well as wine, so that through these immolations they be freed from the bonds of their sins and be worthy to be partakers with Abel and others offering rightly.⁷⁷

Beyond an act of simple charity, the offering of gifts by the faithful is mandated, and, in a way reminiscent of the sacrifices of old, bears propitiatory and justifying effects: the offering takes away sins and includes the offerers in the company of Abel, whose sacrifice found favor with the Lord (Gen. 4:4).

Conclusion

In the variety of sources examined above, and in subsequent witnesses the simple acts of providing, presenting and preparing the material elements for the Eucharistic sacrifice and the Church's charitable activities—themselves a necessary concomitant to the Eucharist—became increasingly interpreted in sacrificial terms and embellished and performed as sacred activities. Catechetical, conciliar, and liturgical documents as well as the writings of several major fathers of the Church recast the fulfillment of major ethical requirements of the nascent Church—the care of the Church's ministers and the poor and needy—in the sacrificial and cultic language and imagery of the Hebrew covenant. The sources show an ongoing association the giving of gifts with the offering of the sacrifice

⁷⁷ Carl DeClercq, ed., *Concilia Gallica*, CCL 158a, (Turnout: Brepols, 1963), 240-41. "Resedentibus nobis in sancto concilio cognovimus quosdam Christianos relato fratrum a mandato Dei aliquibus locis deviasse, ita ut nullus eorum legitimo obsecundationis parere uellit offitio Deitatis, dum sacris altaribus nullam admouet hostiam. Propterea decernimus ut omnibus Dominicis diebus aris oblatio ab omnibus uiris vel mulieribus offeratur tam panis quam uini, ut per has immolationes et peccatorum suorum fascibus careant et Abel vel ceteris iuste offerentibus promereantur esse consortes." Translation mine. See also Clark, "The Function of the Offertory," 328.

which often takes on a sacrificial character in itself. In some cases, such as the decree of the Council of Maçon, it even appears that the offering of gifts produces propitiatory effects. At the same time, the Church upholds the once for all atoning sacrifice of its Lord and founder, Jesus Christ. The best interpretations of the offering of gifts—most notably that of Irenaeus, Cyprian, and the author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*—skillfully and subtly weave Christian ethical requirements into preexisting cultic-sacrificial forms. Here the time-honored religious and cultural authority of the latter gives support and shape to the moral requirement of the former. At the same time, the interior renewal and love of neighbor necessitated by the New Covenant, sealed in Christ's obedient self-sacrifice in love to the Father, gives new meaning and life to the Old. The external, cultic practices mandated by God to Israel find their true significance and completion in loving acts of self-offering to God and for others. Thus, the Church, following its founder and through its symbolic activity, fulfills rather than abolishes the Law and confirms the continuity of the New Covenant with the Old, the Church with Israel. In the surrender of their first and best products and possessions in the context of the Eucharistic liturgy, in thanks to God and care for the other, the individual members of the whole Body of Christ join their self-sacrifice to that of the Lord Jesus, which completes and gives meaning and efficacy to all other sacrifices.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OFFERTORY RITE IN THE WEST

This chapter concerns the development in the western church of a set of prayers and ritual gestures with highly sacrificial connotations that adhered to the presentation of the Eucharistic elements and developed into the Offertory of the Roman rite.¹ Writings of western church fathers including Tertullian, Augustine, Caesareus of Arles and others and conciliar statements will provide early indications as well as explicit mentions of liturgical actions and gestures associated with the presentation and preparation of the gifts for the Eucharistic offering. The focus will then turn to Rome and a synopsis of the relatively simple offering rite as practiced there in the eighth century. From there, the study will follow the spread of the Roman Rite across the Alps and throughout the Frankish and Germanic lands where local ritual, textual, and interpretive elements adhered to it over the centuries. An examination of examples of these additions will show how an increasing emphasis on the sacrificial connotations of, and the centrality of the priest-celebrant in, the rite led to duplications of the *Canon Missae* and the obscuring of the role of the *super oblata*. These in turn influenced the development of the rite into the Offertory as it existed from *Ordo Missae* of 1570 until the reform of the Mass following the Second Vatican Council.

¹ It must be stressed here that this study concerns the development of the Offertory in the western, Latin Church. An analogous set of “preanaphoral” actions and prayers developed in the eastern family of churches and has been amply studied by Robert Taft in particular. For example, see Robert F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-anaphoral Rites*, Fourth Edition, (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Orientale, 2004).

I. *Extraliturgical Witnesses*

The liturgy that eventually characterized that of western Christianity first developed not in Rome, as expected, but in North Africa.² Several *libelli* and at least one sacramentary composed and used in Africa in the fourth and fifth centuries were lost long ago; therefore, no textual witnesses to the details of the African liturgy survives.³ Neither do such sources exist from Gaul, Spain, Milan and Rome of the first five centuries. Therefore, knowledge about the primitive western offertory must come from sources external to actual liturgies.

Tertullian

Tertullian's second-century treatise *De Corona* includes an early reference to an offering in North Africa. In the third chapter, Tertullian defends the development of extra-scriptural traditions in the church, including offerings made for the dead on the anniversary of their passing.⁴ Here, Tertullian refers to *oblationes*, but does not clarify whether this usage denotes the offering of the Eucharist, prayers, or material gifts. The plural suggests the gifts. In Chapter 11 of his *De Exhortatione castitatis* Tertullian clearly, if unfavorably, mentions a husband presenting gifts for his wives, one current,

² Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*. Trans., William G. Storey and Niles Krogh Rasmussen (Washington: The Pastoral Press, 1986), 34.

³ Ibid., 35.

⁴ PL 3:0079B. "[O]blationes pro defunctis, pro natalitiis annua die facimus."

one deceased, as *oblaciones* which a priest offers.⁵ Neither text provides a detailed description of the offering.

Augustine of Hippo

Also in North Africa, two centuries after Tertullian, Augustine, disputing with “a certain Hilary,” mentions a procession of offerings to the altar by the faithful accompanied by the chanting of psalms.⁶ He shows symmetry between the offertory and communion processions: from the offerings brought to the altar, the bread and wine is consecrated and returned to the faithful as a share in the dying and rising of Christ:

In the passion He was made a sacrifice; in the resurrection He renewed that which was slain, and offered it as His firstfruits to God, and says to you, all that is yours is now consecrated; since such firstfruits have been offered to God from you; hope therefore that that will take place in yourself which went before in your firstfruits.⁷

Augustine also sees in the poles of offering and reception an intimation of the divine-human exchange accomplished in the incarnation:

⁵ PL 2:0926c-0927a.

⁶ Augustine, *Retractiones*, ed. Almut Mutzenbecher. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 57. Turnhout: Brepols, 1984. “Inter haec Hilarus quidam vir tribunitius, laicus catholicus, nescio unde adversus Dei ministros, ut fieri assolet, irritatus, morem qui tunc esse apud Carthaginem coeperat ut hymni ad altare dicerentur de Psalmorum libro, sive ante oblationem, sive cum distribueretur populo quod fuisset oblatum, maledica reprehensione, ubicumque poterat, lacerabat, asserens fieri non oportere.” Translation mine. See also Cabié, *The Eucharist. The Church at Prayer*, Volume II. Trans. Matthew J. O’Connell, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986), 78.

⁷ *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 2nd Edition, eds. Eligius Dekkers and Johannes Fraipont. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina vol. 40. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 1895. “In passione sacrificium factus est; in resurrectione innouavit illud quod occisum est, et tamquam primitias tuas dedit Deo, et ait tibi: Consecrata sunt iam omnia tua, quando tales primitiae de te datae sunt Deo; spera ergo et in te futurum quod praecessit in primitiis tuis.” Translation mine. See also Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 78.

He received from you what He would offer for you; just as the priest receives from you what he offers for you when you wish to atone to God for your sins. It is done already, so it is done now. Our priest receives from us what He would offer for us. For He received flesh from us; in the flesh itself He has been made a victim, He has been made a holocaust, He has been made a sacrifice.⁸

Thus, the offertory procession communally enacts Christ's own offering, realized in the here and now self-offering of the faithful.

The Council of Carthage

A decree of the Council of Carthage in 397 witnesses to offerings of firstfruits being made for the newly baptized and clearly delineates the blessing of these oblations from that of the bread and wine provided for the Eucharistic offering:

Certainly, the firstfruits, either of milk or honey, that are usually offered on the one most solemn day in the mystery for the infants, although they are offered on the altar, they should have their own benediction so that they are distinguished from the sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord...⁹

The text shows that offerings other than the Eucharist proper were made *at the altar* and that the two offerings were sometimes confused.

⁸ Ibid. "Accepit abs te, quod offerret pro te; quomodo accipit sacerdos a te, quod pro te offerat, quando vis placere Deum pro peccatis tuis. Jam factus est, ita factum est. Sacerdos noster a nobis accepit quod pro nobis offerret. Accepit enim a nobis carnem; in ipsa carne victima factus est, holocaustum factus est, sacrificium factus est." Translation mine.

⁹ C. Munier, ed., *Concilia Africae*, CCL 149. 39-40. "Primitiae uero seu lac et mel, quod uno die sollemnissimo pro infantum mysterio solet offerri, quamvis in altari offerantur, suam tamen habent propriam benedictionem, ut a sacramento dominici corporis et sanguinis distinguantur." Translation mine.

Gallican Witnesses

A sixth-century homily by Caesarius of Arles provides an early witness of the offering in Gaul. He describes a good Christian as one “who does not enjoy any of his fruits unless he first offers something from them to God...and who, when he comes to church, presents an oblation that is placed on the altar.”¹⁰ The offerer does not personally deliver the gift directly to the altar. Rather, the offering *is placed* on the altar—probably by some minister and with other offerings from the assembly. Here, in a procession Robert Cabié sees as similar to the Byzantine Great Entrance, the ministers carried the gifts of bread enclosed in an ornate tower “inspired by the structure that covered the burial place of Christ in the basilica of the Anastasis in Jerusalem.”¹¹ Also in the sixth century, Pseudo-Germanus wrote of the procession of the gifts:

Truly the Body of the Lord is brought in the towers because the tower is the likeness of the tomb of the Lord cut into the rock...where the dominical Body rested, or from where arose the King of glory. Likewise, the Blood of Christ truly is offered, in particular in the chalice.¹²

¹⁰ *Sermo XIII. Caesarii Arelatensis Opera, Pars I*, ed. Germanus Morin, CCL 103.65. “...qui de fructibus suis non gustat nisi prius ex ipsis deo aliquid offerat...qui quando ad ecclesiam venit et oblationem quae in altario mittatur exhibet.” Translation mine. See also, Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 77-8.

¹¹ Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 78.

¹² E.C. Ratcliff, ed., *Expositio Antiquae Liturgiae Gallicanae*, HBS 98, (London: The Henry Bradshaw Society, 1971), 10. “Corpus vero domini ideo deferitur in turribus. quia monumentum domini in similitudinem turris fuit scissum in petra. et intus lectum ubi pausuit corpus dominicum. Vel unde surrexit rex gloriae in triumphum. Sanguis vero Christi ideo specialiter offertur in calice...” Translation mine. See also Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 79. Some recent scholarship casts doubt on the sixth century dating of the *Expositio*, which might have been composed as late as the eighth century. See Philippe Bernard, *Transitions liturgiques en Gaule carolingienne: Une traduction commentée des deux lettres fausement attribuées à l’évêque Germain de Paris*. (Paris: Hora Decima, 2008)

Here, in the offering rite preceding the anaphora, the elements to be used in the Eucharist are treated as Christ's body and blood, and, thus, as sacrificial offerings. This proleptical veneration of the material elements reminds the modern observer of the later medieval procession of the reserved Blessed Sacrament. In understanding and ritual practice, the Gallican offering rite evinces the anticipatory character of the Offertory later to develop in that same region.

II. *The Liturgical Witness*

The above sources were external to actual liturgies and described the presentation rites from a distance. The *Sacramentarium Veronense* containing Mass formularies from the fifth and sixth centuries—the misnamed Leonine Sacramentary¹³—provides the earliest internal textual witness to a regulated feature of the offering in the western church. While the copying and compiling of the recensions of the *Veronense* occurred outside of Rome, their source material comes from the papal Mass of the churches in Rome.¹⁴ The *Veronense* lacks a description of the *ordo missae* and, thus, of the offering, but it does contain “the earliest prayer forms of the Roman liturgy.”¹⁵ These include a set of prayers with no title, but that elsewhere were called *secreta* and *super oblata*—that is, orations over the gifts deposited upon the altar. These were the sole “offertory” prayers of the Roman rite until it crossed the Alps into Gaul and Germany

¹³ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 39. “[T]he Leonine Sacramentary...is neither a sacramentary properly speaking nor the work of Leo I.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

where it underwent expansion in the eighth to thirteenth centuries. These formulae convey a concise theological interpretation of the offering of gifts; several articulate the divine and human origin of the gifts, their role in the Eucharistic celebration, and their earthly and eternal fulfillment.

A small sample of the genre found in the *Veronense*, provides a view into the offering rite and its meaning both in the liturgy and the Church's life. Several of the prayers depict the faithful carrying their gifts to the altar(s):

Altaribus tuis, domine,
munera nostrae seruitutis inferimus,
quae placatus accipiens,
et acceptum tibi nostrum,
quaesumus, famulatum, et sacramentum
nostrae redemptionis efficias.¹⁶

Ad altaria, domine, ueneranda
cum hostiis laudis accedimus.
Fac, quaesumus,
ut et indulgentiam tuam
nobis concilient et fauorem.¹⁷

Exultantes, domine,
cum muneribus ad altaria
ueneranda concurrimus: quia et
omnium nobis hodie
summa uotorum et causa
nostrae redemptionis exhorta est.¹⁸

The first person plural verbs *inferimus*, *accedimus* and *concurrimus* indicate collective, ecclesial actions: respectively, the assembly *bringing in* their gifts, and *approaching*

¹⁶ Leo Cunibert Mohlberg, ed., *Sacramentarium Veronense* (Cod. Bibl. Capit. Veron. LXXXV [80]). (Roma: Herder, 1966), 511.

¹⁷ Ibid., 928.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1261.

and *gathering at* the altar. The prayers call the material brought to the altar *munera*—gifts, offerings, worship, or service—or *hostia*—gift, offering, or, more commonly, sacrificial victim. They often ask that the gifts be favorable to and accepted by God and they usually seek some benefit—spiritual or material—from the oblation. These themes would be duplicated in, and obscured by, the additional offertory prayers.

Examples like that for the feast of Saints John and Paul indicate the placing of the gifts on the altar:

Hostias altaribus tuis, domine,
placationis inponimus, potentiam
tuam in sanctorum tuorum
passionibus honorando,
et per eos nobis implorando
ueniam peccatorum.¹⁹

This prayer associates the embodied action of the assembly depositing its sacrificial gifts on the Church's altars and the spiritual acts of recalling Christ's passion and imploring God's power and mercy. As in many of the *super oblata*, this prayer conveys a salvific economy: the giving of gifts to God seeks completion in God's giving to humans. Thus, the offering is made not for its own sake, but expecting a return from God: in this particular prayer, the forgiveness of sinners. The oration also makes an ecclesiological statement: the plural *altars* extends the offering of the local church to the Catholic Church.

A more vivid verb of presentation characterizes the proceedings for the feast of the birth of John the Baptist:

¹⁹ Ibid., 270.

Tua, domine, muneribus
 altaria comulamus, illius
 natiuitatem honore debito
 celebrantes, qui saluatorem mundi
 et cecinit adfuturum et adesse monstruit.²⁰

Here, the Church “piles up” or “heaps”—*comulamus*—its offerings upon the altar as debt of honor offered for the herald of salvation and in proleptic celebration of the presence of the savior. Other sources depict the altar piled high with loaves of bread, jugs of wine, oil and honey, baskets of fruit, blocks of cheese, and other fruits of creation and human craft. The Church places these symbols of the bounty given by God for human sustenance and enjoyment on its many altars throughout the world as an offering in grateful return to God for what God has given. There, under the signs of bread and wine, God receives the offerings and gives them again, now blessed and transformed as food for the spiritual health and eternal fulfillment of those receiving them. Three *super oblata* in particular convey this economy of giving between God, the earth and humanity:

Exercemus, domine,
 gloriosa commercia:
 offerimus quae dedisti,
 ut te ipsum mereamur accipere.²¹

Altaribus tuis, domine,
 munera terrena, gratanter
 offerimus, ut caelestia consequamur;
 damus temporalia, ut sumamus aeterna.²²

²⁰ Ibid., 238.

²¹ Ibid., 89.

²² Ibid., 91.

Offerimus tibi, domine,
 quae dedisti, ut et creationis tuae
 circa mortalitatem nostrum
 testificentur auxilium,
 et remedium nobis
 immortalitatis operentur.²³

At the time these prayers were composed, the Roman procession of the gifts by the faithful did not go directly to the altar, as in Africa, Milan and elsewhere. Still, the *oblatio* represented a true liturgical offering by the faithful, with each bringing a personal gift forward. Again, while the *Veronense* contains no details of the oblation, other witnesses and the prayers themselves show the gathering of articles of personal production or treasure with the offerings of the greater community. The bread and wine taken from the array of gifts were joined to the Eucharistic sacrifice of thanks and praise to the Father and the *anamnesis* of Christ's paschal mystery. Thus, again, the first person plural *offerimus*: the oblation, the sacrifice, and the communion comprised the corporate, priestly acts of the gathered Church. The *oratio super oblata* verbally marked the ritual boundary between the individual offerings and the communal sacrifice. The former reaches its completion in the latter, which is ordered to the communion, and, finally, to eschatological fulfillment—*remedium immortalitatis*.

Detailed descriptions of, and rubrics for, the *oblatio* begin to appear in the seventh-century Gregorian and Gelasian Sacramentaries and *Ordines Romani*. The *Sacramentarium Tridentinum* (GrT), the earliest extant source of an *ordo missae*,

²³ Ibid., 560.

mentions an *oratio super oblata*.²⁴ The *Ordines Romani*, books describing the performative details of the liturgy,²⁵ began circulating in the late seventh and early eighth century at the end of a fertile period of liturgical improvisation.²⁶ While the compilation of the *ordines* that developed in the eighth to eleventh century occurred in Frankish and Germanic regions, they contain Roman material adapted to “native or local usages”.²⁷ Where sacramentaries such as the *Veronense* and *Tridentinum* include the earliest witness of Roman liturgical prayers, the *ordines* show the Roman liturgy as it was conducted.

Some of the *ordines* probably entered Gaul by way of pilgrims returning from Rome who had witnessed the papal liturgy and sought its use in their home dioceses.²⁸ They brought not complete books of the *ordines*, but single sheets that eventually were gathered into collections. These spread rapidly through northern Europe, first under the initiatives of pious individuals, then by mandates of the Carolingian monarchs seeking to unify their empire under one ruler, the Emperor, and one faith, that of the Apostolic See of Rome.²⁹ Wherever the *ordines* were adopted, the Roman papal liturgy underwent alteration for local and episcopal uses.³⁰

²⁴ F. Dell’Oro and H. Rogger, eds. *Monumenta liturgica ecclesiae Tridentinae saeculo XIII antiquiora* Vol. II, *Fontes Liturgici. Libri Sacramentorum*. (Trent: Società Studi Trentini di Scienze Storiche, 1983-85), 2b.

²⁵ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 135.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 147-51.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

One of the earliest and most clearly Roman of the *ordines*, the *Ordo Romanus Primus*, describes an offering ritual.³¹ The rite begins with the acolytes arranging the candelabras behind the altar. An acolyte takes the corporal and chalice and hands the former to the deacon, who, with a second deacon, spreads the corporal over the altar. Meanwhile, a procession of dignitaries and ministers approaches the pontiff's chair, led by the archdeacon followed by the subdeacon bearing the empty chalice.

The pope goes down to the *senatorium* to receive the oblations of the male dignitaries. The archdeacon takes the container of wine and pours the wine into the larger chalice. Next, the subdeacon takes the oblations of bread and wraps them in the *sindon*. The hebdomadary bishop³² takes the other oblations, also wrapped in *sindones*.

The pope then descends to receive the oblations from the female dignitaries on their side of the assembly. After this, he returns to the chair and washes his hands, as does the archdeacon, standing at the altar. Also at the altar, the gifts pass among the ranks of subdeacons, ending with the archdeacon, who, finally, places the offerings on the altar. Then, taking the *amula* containing the pontiff's oblation of wine, the archdeacon pours the wine through a colander into the chalice. Lastly, he receives the offerings of the deacons.

³¹ The description of the rite that follows is drawn from *Ordo Romanus Primus*, 66-87 in Michel Andrieu, ed. *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age* Vol. II, *Les Textes* (Ordines I-XIII). (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1971), 90-5. Andrieu here constructed an authoritative version of *Ordo I* from numerous sources.

³² That is, the one in assigned master of the ceremonies for a given week.

A subdeacon descends to the *schola* and receives the *fons* of water, which he carries to the archdeacon, who, in one of the few ritual gestures in the *ordo*, pours the water in the sign of the cross into the chalice. The deacons go to the pontiff's chair, while all other ministers and dignitaries take their places. The pontiff goes to the altar and kisses it, then receives the offerings of the presbyters and deacons. The archdeacon receives the pope's gifts from the *oblacionario* and hands them to the pontiff, who places them on the altar. The archdeacon then takes the chalice from a subdeacon, places it on the altar to the right of the pope's oblation, and takes his place behind the pontiff.

The pope signals the *schola* to cease singing. The bishops and descending orders of ministers gather behind the pope at the altar, with the subdeacons waiting to respond to the pontiff's salutations in the preface dialogue. The text mentions no prayer form here, but goes directly to the doxological phrase *per omnia secula*, which is, in fact, the summation of the *super oblata*. This might suggest that the *super oblata* constituted part of the euchology of *OR I*. Chavasse argues, however, that the preparatory actions themselves and the offertory chant represent the prayer of the gathered assembly. The doxology serves as the summation of the ritual action rather than of any spoken prayer form. In this case, the *super oblata* would be a redundant, sacerdotal oration.³³

³³ See Antoine Chavasse, *La liturgie de la ville de Rome du V^e au VIII^e siècle: Une liturgie conditionnée par l'organisation de la vie in urbe et extra muros*. Studia Anselmiana 112. (Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 1993), 37.

While this offering rite involves many participants and much activity, in fact, simplicity and practicality characterize it. The rather detailed presentation and reception of the oblations described results not from an exaggerated emphasis on the rite and its importance, but more likely from the cultural, social, and ecclesial realities shaping this rite. First, the liturgy involves a larger assembly than in earlier times. Furthermore, a hierarchical order characteristic of medieval society shapes the proceedings. At the same time, the liturgy allows for a degree of equality: everyone offers gifts, from the pope to the lowest resident of the Eternal City. This entails an extended conveyance and arrangement of the oblations. The variety of ministers involved in a papal Mass also occasions a heightened degree of ceremony and solemnity.

Ultimately, however, the brevity and sobriety typical of the Roman rite prevails in *OR I*. Gestures are few and simple; the presider recites no silent or private prayers.³⁴ The chanting of the *offertorium* ceases with a nod from the pope; and the rite culminates with the doxology, which most commentators, except Chavasse, believe to be the conclusion of the *super oblata* or *secreta* found in all the Roman sacramentaries of the period. Even if Chavasse is correct about *OR I*, the unanimous witness of the sacramentaries points to this single prayer form as the conclusion to the action of the gathering and placement of the gifts upon the altar.³⁵

³⁴ Paul Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*. Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia 34. (Rome: C.L.V. Edizioni Liturgiche, 1985), 13-14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

Beginning in the eighth century, this Roman offering rite crossed the Alps into Frankish and Germanic lands. Liturgical history shows that as the Roman rite spread throughout northern Europe its simplicity underwent increasing embellishment. Additional local prayers, gestures, and interpretations adhered to the rite, which returned to Rome in the form that would constitute the Offertory in the *ordo missae* promulgated in 1570 by Pius V—the so-called Tridentine Mass.

The earlier *Ordines Romani* clearly did not include most of the actions and prayers eventually included in the 1570 Offertory. The early Roman *offerenda* had no sacerdotal “offering” of the bread and chalice, but simply involved the bringing forward and collection of the gifts from the assembly and a preparation of the altar and gifts for the Eucharistic sacrifice. Neither did it include an incensation of the gifts, altar, and ministers. The washing of hands occurs in a different point of the preparation, and with no accompanying prayer. Finally, the celebrant recited no inclined prayers; in fact, any bowing took place silently between ministers. The *secreta*, or *oratio super oblata*, provided the sole offering prayer in the Roman *offerenda*;³⁶ and it became the concluding prayer of the fully developed collection of Offertory prayers in the *Ordo Missae* of Pius V.³⁷

³⁶ The same is true of GrT, the earliest textual witness to a complete Roman *Ordo Missae*. Throughout this sacramentary the prayer is titled both *super oblata* and *secreta*. See F. Dell’Oro and H. Rogger, eds. *Monumenta liturgica ecclesiae Tridentinae*.

³⁷ Actually, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, the *super oblata* is more properly understood as a preliminary to the Eucharistic Prayer rather than a conclusion of the Offertory. This view, however, is a later development; in the era under discussion, the *super oblata* was understood as a conclusion.

III. *The Development of the Offertory*

The following exposition of the development of the Offertory is divided into two parts: the first will analyze the growth of particular elements of the rite—which conventional liturgical scholarship shows occurring in the eighth to sixteenth centuries in the Frankish and Germanic regions—and their regulation of the Offertory in the Mass of Pius V.³⁸ The second part will inquire into the origins of the Offertory prayers and how they adhered to the actions they accompany.³⁹ This will involve a more detailed examination.

As the Mass developed in Europe from the eighth to the sixteenth century, the Offertory went through reductions and expansions. Both the liturgical actions and the language of the accompanying orations indicate a decreased involvement of the laity, while that of the ordained ministers, especially the priest-celebrant increased. Thus, the public, ecclesial character of the rite tended to give way to the private and sacerdotal. Furthermore, a growing trend of sacral and symbolic interpretations of the elements of the rite overshadowed their simplicity and practicality.

Two specific diminutions of the offering rite involved the decline of the offertory procession and the silent recitation of the *oratio super oblata*. The former corresponded to the waning practice of the faithful providing the bread and wine for consecration in the

³⁸ Since this development has been thoroughly studied by Jungmann and others, the comments here will be brief. In fact, this part will draw from Jungmann's classic study of the Roman Mass.

³⁹ This part will draw upon Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*.

Eucharist⁴⁰ and with the rise of money offerings as early as the ninth and tenth centuries.⁴¹ These factors coincided with the decline in communion by the faithful and displacement of common, leavened bread by the unleavened type, a product made in monasteries and other religious houses rather than in the kitchens of the laity.

The rise of private Masses as early as the eighth century,⁴² and concomitant Mass stipends also contributed to the decline of the procession throughout the Middle Ages.⁴³ The *missa privata*, while not technically “private”, often was offered in the absence of a congregation and included the personal intentions of a benefactor.⁴⁴ The latter was guaranteed by the payment of a stipend to the priest-celebrant. Since the stipend went directly to the priest⁴⁵ and the Mass took place outside of a communal celebration, no offering procession occurred. Instead, a minister or the priest brought the offerings of bread and wine from a side table and placed them upon the altar.

Such was the practice at many ordinary Masses with a congregation. In time, the procession was reserved to feast days: particularly, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and All Saints became the *quatuor offertoria*, the established days for the offertory procession.⁴⁶ Where one *super oblata* of the *Sacramentarium Veronense* depicted the Church’s gifts

⁴⁰ Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 132, places this in the eleventh century. Jungmann, MRR II, 9, n. 48, cites the tenth century OR VI as evidence that the bread and wine provided for the faithful were no longer used for the consecration.

⁴¹ MRR II, 15.

⁴² MRR I, 215.

⁴³ MRR II, 24, 42.

⁴⁴ Actually the name refers simply to a Mass celebrated without a congregation, and, perhaps, without servers.

⁴⁵ MRR II, 24.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

“piled high” upon its altars, there were now only the hosts and a single chalice for the celebrant. As the procession faded into near disuse, the event that clearly and publicly expressed the laity’s share in the sacrifice offered at the altar became a vestige of a once essential feature of the Church’s Eucharist.

While not directly related to the waning of the offertory procession, the *oratio super oblata* became the *secreta* said silently over the gifts. Most likely, this coincided with the practice of saying the *Canon Missae* and the growing array of Offertory prayers in silence. The latter diminished the *super oblata* by absorbing or duplicating some their themes. As this prayer fell into silence, so too did another indicator of the communal character of the offering and preparation of the gifts for the Eucharist. Where the *super oblata* was spoken in first person plural verb forms and employed personal pronouns denoting collective acts—*inferimus*, *offerimus*, *quaesumus*; *nobis*, *nos*, *nostrae*, and so on—the textual witnesses to Offertory orations that developed beginning in the eighth century employed the first person singular and personal pronouns of the celebrant: *offero*, *ego*, *me* and so on.⁴⁷

Regarding the ritual elements of the Offertory, these increased in two basic ways: elaboration of existing forms and development of new ones.⁴⁸ In the former case, the heightened solemnity associated with the mixing of wine and water in the chalice, the washing of the celebrant’s hands, and the incensing and blessing of the gifts are notable.

⁴⁷ See, for example, the *Suscipe clementissime Pater* discussed on pp. 63-4 below.

⁴⁸ The prayer formulae accompanying these actions will be discussed below on p.60f. See Appendix I for the prayer texts and rubrics of the Offertory for the 1570 *Ordo Missae*.

The mixing of water and wine in the chalice predates the Eucharist itself. At the Last Supper, and perhaps at all meals Jesus shared with others, the host likely mixed wine with water in the common cultural practice of the time. This served a strictly practical purpose: the strong common wine required dilution before being drunk. In mixing wine and water, the Church followed Jesus' example; and it did so with minimal solemnity. In *OR I*, for example, the deacon poured the water into the chalice in the sign of the cross,⁴⁹ but not at the altar and with no accompanying prayer. By the ninth century, however, prayer forms joined to the simple action,⁵⁰ increasing its importance and joining to it certain spiritual interpretations. In three enduring explanations the mixing of water and wine in the chalice variously represents the union of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus Christ, signifies the sharing of humanity in the divinity of Christ in the Eucharist, or recalls the blood and water flowing from the side of Christ pierced by the soldier's lance.⁵¹ In either case, by the eleventh century the preparation of the chalice became solemnly performed at the altar with an accompanying prayer.⁵²

The washing of hands was another simple element of the Roman offering that took on greater significance in Gaul. Actually, hand washing before the Eucharist has a long history.⁵³ In his fourth-century *Mystagogical Catechesis* Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of the

⁴⁹ Andrieu, ed. *Les Ordines Romani II*, *Ordo I*.80. Cabié, *The Eucharist* 162, sees this as more practical than ceremonial: "a gesture probably intended to secure a better mingling of the water with the wine."

⁵⁰ See pp.68-9 below for a discussion of the forms *Ex latere...* and *Deus qui humanae substantiae...*

⁵¹ MRR II, 63-4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵³ In some locations hand washing was also a part of the vesting ritual before Mass. See, e.g., *Missa Illyrica*, Edmund Martène, *De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus Libri* v. I. 1736. Facsimile reprint. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 492.

presbyters at the Eucharistic altar washing their hands.⁵⁴ Even here the action was symbolic and concerned the washing away of the ministers' sins.⁵⁵ Of course, in some locations there may also have been a practical aspect to the washing. As shown in Chapter One of this study, the offerings of early Christians included articles of produce, livestock, personal property and money, some of which the celebrant handled. In this case, his hands naturally would need cleansing before touching the bread and wine taken from the offerings to be eaten as communion in the body and blood of Christ.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, even after the laity generally ceased bringing their gifts to the altar in the tenth to thirteenth centuries, the washing of hands by the celebrant continued. Indeed, as early a witness as *OR I* gives no indication of the celebrant handling any offerings other than bread and wine. The reduction of the hand washing to a rinsing of the fingertips shows the action as primarily, if not solely, symbolic.⁵⁷

The orations that eventually accompanied the ablution further indicate a sacral understanding of the act. The verse from Psalm 25, *Lavabo inter innocentes* expresses “a longing for purity and worthy service at the altar.”⁵⁸ Likewise, an ablution prayer from the Abbey of Monte Cassino asks: “Grant me, Almighty God, to wash my hands thus,

⁵⁴ PG 33. 325.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Amalarius, in *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, PL 105.1130B, explains the hand washing in similar terms: “Lavato sacerdos manus suas more priorum sacerdotum, ut extersae sint a tactu communium manuum, atque terreno pane.”

⁵⁷ MRR II. 76.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 80.

that with pure heart and body I can touch worthily the Body and Blood of the Lord.”⁵⁹

Thus, perhaps a more sacral than practical concern for purity animates the washing of hands before the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Finally, the Offertory underwent elaboration with a blessing of the gifts and accompanying prayer forms that duplicated those of the *Canon Missae*. These forms included a simple Christological blessing, *In nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi* or a Trinitarian invocation, *In nomine patris, et filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen*.⁶⁰ A formula from the ninth-century Stowe Missal reads *Veni domine sanctificator omnipotens et benedic hoc sacrificium praeparatum tibi, amen*.⁶¹ Though this blessing resembles an epiclesis, it does not clearly invoke the Holy Spirit.⁶² In fact, most of this genre includes no explicitly pneumatological references. Moreover, unlike an epiclesis, which often seeks the transformation of the gifts, the *Veni sanctificator* simply invokes God’s blessing upon the offerings. Here, the Offertory duplicates the Canon: namely, the *Te igitur* and the *Quam oblationem*.

Although *OR I* mentions incense⁶³, the incensing of the gifts and altar did not take place in the early Roman liturgy. This practice first entered the western Mass in

⁵⁹ AER I, 651. “Concede mihi, omnipotens Deus, ita manus meas lavare, ut puro corde et corpore possim Dominicum Corpus et Sanguinem digne tractare.” Translation mine. See also MRR II, 81.

⁶⁰ MRR II, 66-7.

⁶¹ Sir George Warner, ed., *The Stowe Missal*, HBS 32 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1915), 7. Editorial emphases in original.

⁶² See MRR II, 70, n. 155.

⁶³ Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani II*, *Ordo I*. 46, 59.

ninth-century Gaul⁶⁴ and found wide acceptance in the eleventh century.⁶⁵ While these early forms include no accompanying orations, by the tenth century such begin to appear. A formula following prayers for the dead in the offering rite of the eleventh-century Sacramentary of St. Denis, conveys an explicitly sacrificial connotation of incensing:

Dominus Deus noster, qui suscepisti munera pueri tui Abel, Noë, Aaron, Samuel, Zachariae, [et] omnium sanctorum tuorum qui tibi placuerunt, sic & de manibus meis indigni peccatoris suscipere digneris incensum istud, ut fiat tibi in odorem suavitatis, [et] nobis propitiatio pro peccatis.⁶⁶

Here, the offering of incense relates to the sacrifices of five exemplary figures of faith and asks that God might likewise accept the present offering as a propitiation for the sins of those gathered.

Jungmann argued that while common in Gallican sources of the ninth to eleventh centuries,⁶⁷ the sacrificial sense of incensing did not prevail elsewhere in the west.⁶⁸ The Eucharist alone was the essential, divinely ordained sacrifice of the New Testament and incense only complemented it.⁶⁹ Incensing prayers of the type eventually included in the 1570 Offertory, however, are at least evocative of sacrifice.⁷⁰ In the formula for blessing the incense *Per intercessionem beati Michaelis Archangeli* the request, echoing Exodus 29:41, that God accept the incense as a “sweet savor” clearly suggests a sacrificial act. The quotation of Psalm 141:2 said at the censing of the altar is more

⁶⁴ An early witness to it appears in Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani* II, *Ordo* V. 55.

⁶⁵ MRR II, 71.

⁶⁶ AER I, 525.

⁶⁷ MRR II. 73-4, n. 23.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 73-4.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See Appendix I.

explicit: *Dirigatur, Domine, oratio mea, sicut incensum, in conspectu tuo: elevatio manuum mearum sacrificium vespertinum*. Thus, even if considered a preparation for, and adjunct to, the Eucharistic sacrifice, the incensing of the gifts at the Offertory nevertheless bears sacrificial connotations in itself. It goes beyond preparing the gifts and the liturgical environment—material and spiritual, ministers, and laity—for the sacred action about to take place, and constitutes an element of the sacrificial offering.

IV. *The Offertory Prayers*

For the most part the development of the Offertory involved an increase of accompanying prayers—some of which have been mentioned. Paul Tirot identifies the *apologiae*, *Suscipe Pater*, *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas*, and *In spiritu humilitatis* as the earliest offertorial forms originating in the Frankish lands in the eighth and ninth centuries. Eventually these forms entered into the Germanic regions where, particularly in the Rhineland and Mainz, they were developed into new forms and variations—both textual and ritual.⁷¹ From there they spread throughout Europe and the British Isles.⁷² Tirot's extensive exposition of the history of the Offertory prayers will inform the following synopsis of the origins and growth of these forms, their association over time with particular elements of the Offertory, and their eventual codification in the *MR*

⁷¹ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 124, hypothesizes that the *Ordo Missae* 1570 descended from a fusion of the Rhenish and Mainz types of sacramentaries and missals. See pp. 67-79 of Tirot's text for an exposition of the development of the individual types.

⁷² *Ibid.*, passim.

1570.⁷³ While numerous types and variations of offertory prayers developed, the focus here will be, with a few exceptions, on those that eventually comprised the Offertory of the 1570 *ordo missae* of Pius V.

Apologiae

The first Offertory prayers to develop were a genre called *apologiae*. In these *accusationes sacerdotis*, the priest confesses his sin and personal unworthiness to enter the sacred mysteries. Initially appearing in various eighth century missals, they exhibit a thoroughly Frankish spirit.⁷⁴ Although these apologies originally were not true offertory prayers, they provided several themes that would be incorporated in the latter. Furthermore, they were often located not before the *offerenda*, but at various points of the Mass—sometimes immediately before the Canon.⁷⁵ Beginning with the ninth-century Gregorian Sacramentaries, the apology widely served as a prelude to the offering prayers.⁷⁶ While the apology eventually separated again from the offering, the Offertory prayers retained confessions of the personal unworthiness of the celebrant of the Mass and other elements of the type.⁷⁷

⁷³ While Tirot's study is not without its weaknesses—e.g., sometimes incomplete and inaccurate use of source material—it provides a thorough treatment of the development of the Offertory prayers that is useful for the scope and aim of this chapter.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 16-17. Tirot—among others—characterizes them thus, even while pointing out that the apology genre probably entered into the Gallican liturgy via its eastern sources, and that the Roman liturgy certainly included expressions of personal sinfulness.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 17. Tirot cites Sacramentaries from Corbie (IX C.), le Mans (IX C.), S. Gatien of Tours (IX C.), and S. Thierry in Reims (IX-X C.). Missals of Troyes and S. Denys each contain six apologies.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

The earliest apologies appear in the eighth-century Stowe⁷⁸ and Bobbio⁷⁹ missals of Celtic or Gallican origin.⁸⁰ The Stowe form following the *Memento* and a litany of the saints reads:

Ante conspectum diuinae Maiestatis tuae *deus* adsisto qui inuocare nomen *sanctum* tuum *presumo* misserere mihi *domine*, homini peccatori luto feccis immunde inherenti ignosce indigno sacerdoti, per cuius manus haec oblation uidetur offeri parce *domine* pollute peccatorum labe *pre* caeteris capitalium et *non* intres in iudicio *cum* seruo tuo, quia *non* justificabitur in conspectu tuo omnis uiuens scilicet uitis ac uoluntatibus carnis gravati sumus recordare *domine* quod caro sumus et *non est* alius tibi conparandas in tuo conspectu etiam caeli *non* sunt mundi quanto magis nos homines terreni quorum ut dixit.⁸¹

The phrase *ante conspectum divinae maiestatis tuae* or its variant is among the oldest elements of the apology. It later appeared in the ninth-century St. Gall Sacramentary formula for offering the chalice, *Offerimus tibi*,⁸² which eventually entered the 1570 Offertory. The confession of sin and the personal unworthiness of the priest to offer the sacrifice of the altar that characterize the *apologiae* entered into a variety of later Offertory forms, particularly the *Suscipe Sancte Pater* used in the 1570 *ordo*.

Suscipe...Pater

In the same period in which the *apologiae* developed, so too did other formulae that would comprise the Offertory prayers.⁸³ Among these was the type with the incipit

⁷⁸ See Warner, *Stowe Missal*, 14-15.

⁷⁹ See E.A. Lowe, ed., *The Bobbio Missal: A Gallican Mass-Book* (MS. Paris Lat. 13246), HBS 52 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1920), 147.

⁸⁰ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 17-18.

⁸¹ Warner, *Stowe Missal*, 14-15. Editorial emphases in original.

⁸² L. Cunibert Mohlberg, ed., *Das fränkische Sacramentarium Gelasianum in alamannischer Überlieferung* (Codex Sangall. no. 348), St. Galler Sakramentar-Forschungen I.. (Münster: Aschendorff, 1939), 247.

⁸³ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 20.

Suscipe, Pater. An early version, a *super oblata* for a votive Mass, appears in the early ninth-century Sacramentary of St. Remy of Reims:

Suscipe clementissime Pater,
 hostias placationis et laudis
 quas ego peccator indignus
 famulus tuus tibi offerre
 praesumo ad honorem et
 gloriam nominis tui et
 pro incolumitate famuli tui illi,
 ut omnium delictorum suorum
 veniam consequi mereatur.⁸⁴

The incipit *Suscipe clementissime Pater, hostias placationis et laudis quas tibi offerimus* first appears in the *secreta* for the Nativity of Mary in the early Gelasian sacramentary.⁸⁵ The phrase also appears in various other prayer types.⁸⁶ Some versions change the wording to *suscipe Domine Pater* or *suscipe Domine* and *sacrificium* rather than *hostia*. All versions also include the confession of the priest's unworthiness, as in the *apologiae*;⁸⁷ several beg the forgiveness of the sins of those gathered and of the whole Church.⁸⁸ An example from several Gelasian sacramentaries, such as the tenth-century Sacramentary of Saint-Aubin of Angers includes these themes and adds an extended intercession for all the people:

⁸⁴ Ulysse Chevallier, *Sacramentaire et Martyrologie de l'abbaye S. Rémy de Reims* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1900), 357.

⁸⁵ Leo Cunibert Mohlberg, ed., *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae AEcclesiae Ordinis Anni Circuli* (Cod. Vat. Reg. Lat. 216/Paris Bibl. nat. 7193, 41/56) (*Sacramentarium Gelasianum*) (Rome: Herder, 1960), 1017.

⁸⁶ E.g., in prayers for priests and for the king. Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 21.

⁸⁷ E.g., S. Rémy: *ego peccator indignus famulus tuus*. Victor Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France*, vol. I (Paris: Macon, Protat frères, imprimeurs 1924), 69; S. Méen: *ego miser et infelix et indignus*, Ibid., 110; *Missa Illyrica* AER I, 509: *non sum dignus hostiam offerre*

⁸⁸ E.g., S. Méen: *pro omni populo catholico sancto Dei*. Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels* I, 110;

Suscipe, clementissime Pater, hanc oblationem quam tibi offero, ego indignus famulus tuus pro me misero peccatori et pro cuncto populo christiano, pro fratribus quoque et sororibus nostris et pro his qui nostril memoriam in suis continuis habent orationibus, ut in praesenti saeculo remissionem peccatorum recipiamus et in futuro praemia consequamur aeterna.⁸⁹

While the prayer begins in the first person singular, the pleas for the forgiveness of sin and eternal benefit extend to all Christian people and are spoken in the plural: *remissionem peccatorum recipiamus et in futuro praemia consequamur aeterna*.

In the various contexts and locations of its appearance, the *Suscipe...Pater* type generally includes six themes common to the form of the prayer as it appears in the *RM* 1570. First, the verb *suscipe* pleads for God to receive or accept the offering. Second, the prayer names God as *Pater*, with the adjective *clementissime* or *Sancte*, and sometimes *omnipotens* and *aeterne*. Third, the celebrant confesses personal sin, unworthiness, or both. Fourth, the prayer speaks in the first person singular of the celebrant. Fifth, the prayer intercedes on behalf of those gathered for the offering or the whole Church. Sixth, the prayer pleads for the eternal fulfillment of the present offering. Each of these themes anticipates and duplicates themes expressed in the Canon of the Mass.

⁸⁹ Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels* I, 71.

Suscipe Sancta Trinitas

In the 1570 *Ordo Missae*, the *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* immediately precedes the *Orate Fratres* as an offering prayer memorializing the Paschal Mystery, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. The earliest offering formula containing similar memorial elements appears in the Stowe Missal in a prayer preceding the Preface dialogue:

Grata sit tibi *haec* oblatio plebis tuae quam tibi offerimus in honorem domini nostri iesu christi et in commemorationem beatorum apostolorum tuorum ac martirum tuorum et confessorum quorum hic reliquias spicialiter recolimus ·n· et eorum quorum festiuitas hodie celebratur et pro animamus omnium episcoporum nostrorum et sacerdotum nostrorum et diaconorum nostrorum et carorum nostrorum et cararum nostrarum et puerum nostrorum et puellarum nostrorum et penitentium nostrorum cunctis proficiant ad salutem.⁹⁰

This form does not employ the Trinitarian invocation, which appeared first in this prayer type in the ninth century.⁹¹ For Tirot, this addition reveals the Gallican character of the form as it mentions the Trinity in rebuttal of German Arianism and Spanish adoptionism.⁹² Furthermore, he points out that the Trinity was not invoked in Rome until the entry of Alcuin's Mass of the Holy Trinity into Roman usage.⁹³

The type with the incipit *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* first appears in the Franco-Germanic empire in a ninth-century sacramentary of the Abbey of Saint Amand under the title "*Memoria Imperatoris*."⁹⁴ The *Imperator* is Charles the Bald, the great benefactor of the abbey. The prayer then names other benefactors and the faithful

⁹⁰ Warner *Stowe Missal*, 9. Editorial emphases in original.

⁹¹ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 25.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 23-4.

present, for all of whom the sacrifice is offered. Some examples of the type memorialize, variously, the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints, the priests of the Church, and the dead.⁹⁵

Tirot shows the form spreading through France in the ninth to eleventh centuries, joining with regional variants.⁹⁶ By the thirteenth century many adaptations emphasized Christ and the Paschal Mystery, Mary, and the saints. The *RM* 1570 included this type, which derives from the thirteenth-century Curial Missal, in turn descended from the eleventh century *Micrologue* of Bernold of Constance.⁹⁷ The latter includes the phrase *et in honorem sanctae Dei Genitricis Mariae, sancti Petri et sancti Pauli* rather than *et in honorem beatae Mariae semper Virignis, et Beati Joannis Baptistae, et Sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli* as in the Curial⁹⁸ and 1570 Offertories.

As the type evolved so too did its theological content. In later iterations, such as that of the *RM* 1570, Tirot sees a “theological precision” designating the gifts as an offering to the Holy Trinity, “the sole object of our cult in the strict sense.”⁹⁹ This concisely worded prayer eventually includes memorials of the Lord’s Passion, Mary and the Saints, a thanksgiving for God’s grace, and a petition for the eschatological

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ PL 151: 993A.

⁹⁸ *The Ordinal of the Papal Court from Innocent III to Boniface VIII and Related Documents*. Text in Latin, eds. Stephen J. P. van Dijk and Joan Hazelden Walker. (Fribourg: University Press, 1975 (Fribourg : University Press, 1975.), 505.

⁹⁹ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d’offertoire*, 29. “le seul objet de notre culte au sens strict.”

fulfillment of the sacrifice offered.¹⁰⁰ Where the whole Offertory received the soubriquet “*petite canon*” for its proleptic duplication of the *Canon Missae*, the *Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas* previews the Canon in miniature and includes a compact Eucharistic theology. In sum, the various forms of the prayer encompassed the major elements of Eucharistic worship: the joining of individual self-offerings to the Church’s sacrifice to God of praise, thanksgiving, and the Church’s commemoration of Christ, his Paschal Mystery, Mary and the saints and the Christian faithful living and dead.

In Spiritu humilitatis

The formula *In Spiritu humilitatis* first appears in the ninth-century Sacramentary of Amiens as the second part of a formula said by the priest at the placing of the bread and wine upon the altar:

Hanc oblationem, quaesumus, Omnipotens Deus, placatus accipe et omnium offerentium et eorum pro quibus offertur peccata indulge. Et in spiritu humilitatis et in animo contrito suscipiamur, Domine, a te et sic fiat sacrificium nostrum ut a te suscipiatur hodie et placeat tibi, Domine Deus.¹⁰¹

Quoting the Prayer of Azariah (Dan. 3:39), *in spiritu humilitatis* originally served, Tirot argues, not as an offertory prayer, but as an apology preceding the Eucharistic sacrifice.¹⁰² Furthermore, it begs God’s acceptance of the “objective” sacrifice of the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Victor Leroquais, “L’Ordo Missae du sacramentaire d’Amiens BN. Lat. 9432,” *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 41 (1927): 441.

¹⁰² Tirot, *Histoire des prières d’offertoire*, 31. “Ce n’est plus une prière d’offrande, mais une brève apologie sacerdotale avant l’offrande du sacrifice eucharistique...”

Church, rather than the individual, interior offering of the priest and faithful.¹⁰³ In an eleventh-century Pontifical of Mainz, however, the form does seem to be an offering prayer, said at the beginning of the offering rite with the priest [*t*]enens calicem cum hostia.¹⁰⁴ This prayer survives in the 1570 *ordo* following the offering of the chalice, where the priest says it while bowing before the altar. Tirot locates the development of this usage in eleventh- to thirteenth-century French sources.¹⁰⁵

The Frankish forms *Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas*, the *Suscipe...Pater, In spiritu humilitatis* and elements of the *apologia* constitute the early textual foundations of the complete Offertory prayers of the *Ordo Missae* of Pius V. In the centuries preceding this *ordo* the Offertory—in both action and prayer—evolved, first in Germanic locations, then in various European locales. The following section will summarize some major points in this evolution. The examination of the prayers will follow the sequence of the Offertory in the 1570 *ordo missae*.¹⁰⁶

Deus qui humanae substantiae

The earliest textual witness of this type is the eighth-century manuscript of the *Gelasianum Vetus* where it appears as a collect for Matins and Vespers on Christmas Day. The original, which is traditionally attributed to Pope Leo I, reads

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ AER I, 599.

¹⁰⁵ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 32.

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix I.

Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti et mirabilius reformasti: da, quaesumus, ut eius efficiamur in diuina consortes, qui nostrae humanitatis fieri dignatus est particeps, Christus filius tuus...¹⁰⁷

By the eleventh century in the Germanic regions the formula was adapted, with the addition of the phrase *per hujus aquae et vini mysteria*,¹⁰⁸ as a prayer said at the mixing of the water and wine in the chalice. More commonly used, however, was some form of the Frankish prayer first appearing in a Mass order of Saint Gatien of Tours:

Ex latere Christi sanguis et aqua exisse perhibetur et ideo pariter commiscemus, ut misericors Deus utrumque ad medelem animarum nostrarum sanctificare dignetur.¹⁰⁹

Recalling the two major medieval interpretations of the mixing, the first evoked the actions of Christ at the Last Supper; the second, saw the mixing as symbolizing the union of the offering of the faithful with that of Christ. The two accompanying prayer forms bore further theological associations: one—*Ex latere Christi*—refers to the healing effects of the blood and water flowing from the side of Christ made present in the ritual mixing of water and wine. This form prevailed widely in France.¹¹⁰ The other—*Deus qui humanae substantiae*—recalls the union of the human and divine that occurred in the Incarnation and always anew in the liturgical memorial. Here, the mixing of water and wine also signifies the union of dissimilar realities: the two mixed become a new thing, just as humanity is created anew in its redemption and its divinization in Christ. In the mixing along with the prayer, the church liturgically

¹⁰⁷ Mohlberg, *Sacramentarium Gelasianum*, 10.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example *Missa Illyrica*, AER I. 510-1.

¹⁰⁹ AER I: 537.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

performs the redemption and divinization effected in the Eucharistic offering. This form, though apparently less widespread than *Ex latere Christi*, most commonly appears in German sources, from where it entered into the thirteenth-century Curial Mass¹¹¹ and, later, the Roman Missals of 1474¹¹² and 1570.

Offerimus tibi

Tirot locates the earliest witness to this form in St. Gall ms. 348, where it provides a “new formula”¹¹³ for the offering of the chalice. The St. Gall form reads *Offerimus tibi domine calicem salutaris et deprecamur clementiam tuam, ut in conspectus diuin[a]e maiestatis tuae cum odore suauitatis ascendat*.¹¹⁴ The 1570 Offertory uses this same basic form with the addition of the phrase *pro nostra et totius mundi salute*.¹¹⁵ A number of eleventh-century Rhenish sources include an early version of this expression—*pro redemptione nostra etiam totius mundi*—in prayers added to, and usually following, the *Offerimus tibi*.¹¹⁶ In the thirteenth-century Curial Mass the *Offerimus tibi* provides the sole formula for the offering of the chalice and includes *pro nostra et totius mundi salute*.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Van Dijk, *The Ordinal of the Papal Court*, 503.

¹¹² Robert Lippe, ed. *Missale Romanum Mediolani, 1474*, HBS I, vol. I Text (London: Harrison and Sons, 1899), 200.

¹¹³ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d’offertoire*, 67.

¹¹⁴ Mohlberg, *Das fränkische Sacramentarium Gelasianum*, 247.

¹¹⁵ See Appendix I.

¹¹⁶ See for example the oration *Domine Iesu Christi, qui in cruce* in the Missal of Murbach in Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels* I. 131 and *Missa Illyrica* in AER I. 511.

¹¹⁷ Van Dijk, *The Ordinal of the Papal Court*, 503.

Tirot points out the proleptic character of this prayer, which in the St. Gall version bears the “curious title” of *offertorium calicis*.¹¹⁸ In the 1570 Missal the rubric for the formula reads *Accipiens calicem offert dicens*.¹¹⁹ In both these cases, and in the verb *offerimus*, the prayer anticipates the offering of the chalice made in the *Unde et memores* of the *Canon Missae*.

Veni Sanctificator

The addition of the *Veni Sanctificator* at the blessing of the gifts was discussed previously. Regarding the sources of the prayer, the earliest include two distinct blessings of the gifts. The first, preceding the *Orate Fratres* and the *secreta*,¹²⁰ originally appears in the Stowe Missal: *Veni Sanctificator Omnipotens aeterne Deus: benedicit oblata prosequendo: et benedixit hoc sacrificium, tuo sancto nomini praeparatum*.¹²¹ A later, Germanic adaptation includes a Trinitarian incipit and also a chant repeated three times at the unveiling of the chalice: *Veni, Domine, Sanctificator omnipotens, et benedic hoc sacrificium praeparatum tibi*...¹²² This form next appears in the tenth-century *OR X* as the sole offering prayer.¹²³ This is also the case of another tenth-century form appearing in the Romano-Germanic Pontifical, which spread

¹¹⁸ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 67: “le titre curieux”.

¹¹⁹ Appendix I.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 46.

¹²¹ Warner, *Stowe Missal*, 7.

¹²² Frederick Edward Warren, ed. *The Leofric Missal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883.), 10.

¹²³ Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani*, II, *Ordo X*. 46.

throughout Europe and into Italy¹²⁴: *Veni sanctificator omnipotens, aeterne Deus, benedic hoc sacrificium tibi praeparatum, qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum.*¹²⁵

In the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, the *Veni sanctificator* entered the abbeys of France, which located the formula in various places in the liturgy along with diverse petitions. Here it became a popular hymn as well.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, other blessings of the gifts for the Eucharist with incipits such as *Domine Deus*¹²⁷ and *Veni Creator*¹²⁸ as well as with Trinitarian invocations among others developed.¹²⁹ All beg the blessing or the acceptance of the gifts by God. These features, along with the prevalent invocation *Veni Sanctificator*, became the blessing prayer of the 1570 Offertory, which anticipates the *Quam oblationem* of the Canon.

Incensing Formulae

Another practice of Frankish origin included in the 1570 Mass was the incensing of the gifts. Early sources mention incensing, but include no accompanying prayer.¹³⁰

The ninth century Sacramentary of Amiens includes an early blessing formula

¹²⁴ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 46.

¹²⁵ Cyrille Vogel and Reinhard Elze, eds. *Le Pontifical romano-germanique du dixième siècle* Le Texte I. Studi e Testi, 226 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1983), 354.

¹²⁶ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 49-50.

¹²⁷ Thirteenth-century Missal of Fécamp, AER I, 637-8: *Domine Deus omnipotens, bene✠dic, & santi✠fica hanc oblationem ad laudem & gloriam nominis tui praeparatam, & parce peccatis populi tui, & aufer a me iniquitates meas, & exaudi orationem meam.*

¹²⁸ Tenth-Century ms. of a missal of Jumieges, AER I, 644. *Veni creator Spiritus mentes &c.* is said after the celebrant makes a sign of the cross over the chalice and paten with host.

¹²⁹ As in a blessing following the *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* and preceding the *Orate Fratres* in an eleventh-century sacramentary from the Abbey of Limousine, Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels* I. 155. *In nomine sancte et individuae Trinitatis descendat hic sanctus angelus benedic✠tionis et consecr✠ationis super hoc munus et pacis.*

¹³⁰ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 45. For example, *Ordo Romanus* V.55, Adrieu, *Ordines Romani*, 220, mentions that *ponitur incensum super altare*, but includes no accompanying oration.

accompanying the incensing of the Gospel that was later adapted to the Offertory of Ratold of Corbie¹³¹, the Abbeys of Saint Denis¹³² and in Missals of Soisson¹³³ and Troyes¹³⁴:

Domine Deus omnipotens, sicut suscepisti munera Abel, Noe et Aaron, Zacharie et Samuel et omnium sanctorum tuorum, sic et de manu mea peccatrice suscipere digneris incensum istud in odorem suavitatis, in remissionem peccatorum meorum et populi. In nomine Jesu Christi.¹³⁵

Other than the phrases *incensum istud* and *in odorem suavitatis* this prayer was not widely used and did not enter into the Offertory 1570 *Missale Romanum* or its direct ancestors.

An incensing oration that would be found in these sources first appears in the sacramentary of Amiens at the incensing of the Gospel. Following the formula for blessing the incense *Domine Deus omnipotens...*, the celebrant says a verse from Psalm 140: *Dirigatur, Domine, oratio mea sicut incensum in conspectu tuo.*¹³⁶ This single phrase appears also in the ninth-century in Rémi d'Auxerre's *Liber de divinis officiis*.¹³⁷

More developed forms begin to appear in later sources. The eleventh-century Sacramentary of Arras includes the beginning of the formula for blessing the incense:

¹³¹ AER I. 565-6.

¹³² AER I. 525. Mentioned above, p. 25.

¹³³ Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels* I. 161. The formula is mentioned, but incense is not.

¹³⁴ AER I. 532. Here it follows another blessing formula.

¹³⁵ Leroquais, EL 41, 441.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ PL 101: 1252.

*Per intercessionem sancti Gabrielis archangeli stantis a dextris*¹³⁸ [*altaris incense, et omnium electorum suorum, incensum istud dignetur Dominus benedire, et in odorem sauvitatis accipere*]. This prayer also appears in the *Missa Illyrica*, also of the eleventh century, followed by an oration not included in the 1570 *ordo*, *Memores sumus aeternae Deus...*,¹³⁹ after which the celebrant incenses the altar and says the oration *Incensum istud a te benedictum, ascendat ad te Domine and descendat super nos misericordia tua*.¹⁴⁰ Next is the *Dirigatur Domine*, then another new form, *Accendat in nobis Dominus ignem sui amoris & flammam aeternae charitatis*.¹⁴¹

For Tirot, these basic formulae became, with some expansion and variations, the ordinary prayers for the incensing at the Offertory throughout Europe in the Middle Ages.¹⁴² Most notably different was the change in *per intercessionem sancti Gabrielis archangeli* to *sancti Michaelis*, an early witness of which can be found in the twelfth-century Missal of Cologne.¹⁴³ In the following century it appears in the Papal Mass.¹⁴⁴ The *Missale Romanum* 1474¹⁴⁵ refers to Michael, as does the 1570. Jungmann suggests that Gabriel may have been deliberately replaced by Michael because of the latter's role

¹³⁸ Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels* I. 164. This source provides only the incipit and the editorial remark "*Même texte qu'aujourd'hui*". The remainder of the prayer in brackets is quoted from *Missale Romanum* 1570.

¹³⁹ AER I. 511.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 68ff. Several times he uses the phrase "les prières [or formules] habituelles" when he mentions incensing rites in various locales and textual sources. See, for example, pp. 72, 78, 116.

¹⁴³ Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels* I. 215.

¹⁴⁴ Van Dijk, *The Ordinal of the Papal Court*, 504. See also Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 117.

¹⁴⁵ Lippe, *Missale Romanum Mediolani, 1474*. 200-1.

as “defender of the Church” or an identification of him with the unnamed angel at the heavenly altar in Rev. 8:3-4.¹⁴⁶ In any case, the incensing rite of the 1570 Offertory and its immediate predecessors pray for the intercession of Saint Michael in the blessing of the incense and follow with three enduring forms: *Incensum istud* for the incensing of the gifts, the quotation of Psalm 141: 2-4 in the *Dirigatur, Domine* at the incensing of the altar, and *Accendat in nobis* as the priest hands the thurible to the deacon.

Lavabo

In *OR I*, immediately after the reception of the gifts the celebrant washed his hands. With some local variations, this order prevailed until the twelfth century at Cîteaux, where, according to Tirot, the hand washing moved to after the incensing.¹⁴⁷ This practice took root among the Carthusians, Dominicans and Carmelites in the thirteenth century and became widespread by the fourteenth century.¹⁴⁸

Tirot finds the earliest formula accompanying the washing in the Sacramentary of Amiens¹⁴⁹ where it is a vesting prayer quoting verse six of Psalm 26: *Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas.*¹⁵⁰ Also in the tenth century, the church of St. Gatiens in Tours added a phrase from Psalm 51: *Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor; lavabis me, et*

¹⁴⁶ MRR II, 72, n.11.

¹⁴⁷ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 36.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 36-37.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵⁰ Leroquais, EL 41: 439.

super nivem dealbabor.¹⁵¹ Beginning with twelfth-century sources such as the missal of the Abbey of Jumièges this extended formula becomes an Offertory prayer.¹⁵²

Another ablution formula developed beginning in the eleventh century:

Largire sensibus nostris, omnipotens Pater, ut sic abluuntur iniquimenta manuum, sic a te mudentur interius pollutiones mentium et crescat in nobis sanctorum augmentum virtutem.¹⁵³

Tirot locates this prayer first in a Sacramentary of Arras, where it follows the reading of the Gospel and precedes the spreading of the corporal on the altar.¹⁵⁴ He tentatively posits its Germanic origin in the *Missae Illyrica*¹⁵⁵ and traces its circulation throughout France in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.¹⁵⁶ It also entered into Italy in the twelfth century¹⁵⁷ and was used in the thirteenth-century Curial Mass.¹⁵⁸ Another source from the same century, however, *Mysteriorum Evangelicae Legis et Sacramenti Eucharistiae Libri Sex* of Innocent III¹⁵⁹ contains an *ordo missae* with the same formula for the washing of hands as the 1570 Offertory, except that the former makes no mention of an incensing of the gifts and altar before the handwashing. Both sources extend the quotation of Psalm 25 to include verses eight to twelve.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵¹ AER I.534.

¹⁵² AER I. 644. Here a *Gloria Patris*, *Kyrie Eleison* and *Pater Noster* follow.

¹⁵³ Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels* I, 163.

¹⁵⁴ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d'offertoire*, 37.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁵⁸ Van Dijk, *The Ordinal of the Papal Court*, 502. Here the ablution takes place at the beginning of the Offertory.

¹⁵⁹ PL 217: 768B/C.

¹⁶⁰ Lippe, *Missale Romanum Mediolani*, 1474. 201 includes the incensing, but for the hand washing gives only “*Lauabo inter innocentes manus meas usque in finem cum gloria patri*”.

Orate Fratres

Among the prayers that eventually comprised the Offertory, the *Orate Fratres* is an enduring one. After the completion of the preparation of the gifts, the celebrant asks the assembly to pray that God will accept his sacrifice and theirs. Tirot locates the first mention of the *Orate Fratres* in the eighth-century French *OR XVII*¹⁶¹ where it precedes the *secreta*, or *super oblata*. This *ordo* contains no prayer text, but only instructs that the celebrant *postulat pro se orare*.¹⁶² Amalarius wrote of the prayer: “[the priest] asks that they pray for him that the oblation of the whole people be made an offering to God.”¹⁶³ Tirot cites the Sacramentary of Amiens¹⁶⁴ as the first witness to a complete form:

V. Orate Fratres ut vestrum pariter nostrum sacrificium acceptabile fiat Deo.

R. Sit Dominus in corde tuo et in labiis tuis, recipiat sacrificium sibi acceptum de ore et de manibus tuis pro nostrorum omnium salute.¹⁶⁵

A version in the eleventh-century Sacramentary of Moissac approaches that of the 1570 *Ordo Missae*:

V. Obsecro vos, fratres, orate pro me, ut meum sacrificium et vestrum acceptabile fiat Domino.

R. Suscipiat omnipotens Deus sacrificium de manibus tuis et dimittat tibi omnia peccata tua.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d’offertoire*, 54.

¹⁶² Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani* III, *Ordo XVII*. 45.

¹⁶³ *De ecclesiasticis officiis* PL 105:990. “et precatur ut orent pro illo quatenus gignus sit universae plebis oblationem offerre Deo.”

¹⁶⁴ Tirot, *Histoire des prières d’offertoire*, 54.

¹⁶⁵ Leroquais, EL 41, 442.

¹⁶⁶ AER I.539.

While spoken between the priest and laity, this version of the *Orate Fratres* remains essentially a private prayer of the celebrant. The plea *obsecro* emphasizes the necessary humility of the celebrant, and the response begs the forgiveness of his sins rather than a corporate benefit from the offering as in other variants of the *Orate*. The eleventh-century Sacramentary of Besançon provides an example of the latter:

V. Orate, fratres [c]arissimi, pro me peccatore, ut meum ac vestrum sacrificium acceptabile sit apud omnipotentem Deum.

R. Suscipiat Dominus sacrificium de manibus tuis to[t]iusque Ecclesi[a]e su[a]e.¹⁶⁷

This form concerns the acceptance of the whole Church's offering —*meum ac vestrum sacrificium; totiusque Ecclesiae*—rather than the priest's personal sin.

The Besançon formula is quite similar to that of the thirteenth-century Curial Mass. The latter form excludes *carissimi, pro me peccatore* in the verse and in the response adds *ad laudem et gloriam nominis sui, ad utilitatem quoque nostram*. The 1570 *Orate* follows this form but with one further addition: *Patrem to Deum onnipotentem* in the verse.

Conclusion

The Offertory of the *Ordo Missae* of Pius V represents the collation and regularization of actions, gestures, and texts that developed over centuries of the western Church's history. Both the liturgical and extraliturgical sources from the

¹⁶⁷ Leroquais, *Sacramentaires et Missels* I, 139.

second to the sixteenth century show an increasingly elaborate rite of presenting and preparing the gifts offered for the Eucharistic celebration. To the diminution of the communal character of the rite and expansion of the role of the celebrant and ministers, some elements underwent reduction or complete dissolution: the offertory procession became an occasional feature used in a few locations, and the audible proclamation of prayers and their responses said by the assembly fell into silence.

Still, throughout the middle ages, expansion rather than reduction guided the development of the Offertory. While even the earliest sources show some enlargement of the simple acts of depositing gifts on the altar, as the Roman liturgy spread throughout the monasteries and episcopal sees of continental Europe and the British Isles a whole complex of gestures, actions, and words developed that constituted a virtual second *Canon Missae*—the so-called *petite canon*. This duplicative character especially applies to the formulae *Suscipe, Sancte Pater, Offerimus tibi, Veni, Sanctificator*, and *Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas* and their accompanying ritual actions, which anticipate, respectively, the *Hanc igitur, Unde et memores, Te igitur*, and *Communicantes* as well as many themes of the *oratio super oblata*.

In the Offertory forms as they evolved and became regularized in the *Ordo Missae* 1570, the Church, in effect, offers a redundant sacrifice of the bread and wine for the Eucharistic sacrifice. Beneath the layers of the later additions, however, the nucleus and the elements proper to the offering rite remained. Even the earlier forms of the ritual included a more or less solemn collection, deposition, preparation and

blessing of the gifts, all of which served as an orientation of the community and its offering toward the Eucharistic prayer and communion. These elements and the prayers that accompany them prepare for, but do not duplicate, the Eucharistic sacrifice. The *oratio super oblata*, which concludes the Offertory, especially summarizes these core themes and could serve as the sole offertory prayer, as it did in the early Roman preparation rite.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM OFFERTORY TO PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS AND ALTAR

The rites, texts, and interpretation of the Offertory as they developed from the eighth to the sixteenth century acquired three main characteristics. First, the rite steadily became more a private ritual of the priest-celebrant and other ministers at the altar than a communal preparation for the Eucharistic offering. Next, as they became the “little canon” the Offertory prayers anticipated and even duplicated the *Canon Missae* to the point that the boundary between the preparation for and the proclamation of the Canon became obscured. Finally, the increase of prayer formulae and the silencing of the *oratio super oblata* led to the diminishment of the prayer’s concise summary of the preparatory actions and orientation of the material offering to its spiritual fulfillment in the consecration and communion and as food for eternal life. With the promulgation of the *Ordo Missae* of 1570, these factors became codified in a unified Roman Rite mandated by Pius V.¹ With some revisions over the years, this form of the Mass remained in place until the period of liturgical reform following the Second Vatican Council.

This section will trace the revision and reform of the Offertory and its eventual renaming in the years preceding and following Vatican II and its call for an overall reform of the Church’s liturgy. From among the far-reaching reforms of the liturgy following the Council, the concern of this chapter will be those aspects effecting or

¹ This excluded rites of at least two hundred years usage at the time of the Bull *Quo primum tempore* promulgated in July 1570.

directly dealing with the Offertory and the *oratio super oblata*. Specifically, this includes the renewed prominence given to the *super oblata* as the original and proper prayer designating the gifts of the gathered Church to be offered in the Eucharistic prayer.²

On January 25, 1959 Pope John XXIII called for the Second Vatican Council. Within the Council's aim of an overall evaluation and revitalization of the state of the Church in the modern world, attention would be given to the Church's liturgical life, the importance of which had received much interest in the years preceding the Council. On Pentecost, May 17, 1959 an antepreparatory commission comprised of various dicastery members began a year-long series of meetings to study the needs and problems facing the Church in the world.³ They contacted bishops from around the world as well as members of theological and canonical faculties seeking their suggestions for the general topics to be treated by the Council.⁴

Antepreparatory Phase

In February 1960 suggestions from the bishops and scholars consulted were summarized in a series of *Propositiones* and sent to the various Congregations involved

² The Eucharistic Prayer is understood here as encompassing the ecclesial actions of thanksgiving, acclamation, epiclesis, institution, consecration, anamnesis, offering, intercession and doxology as enumerated in Article 79 of the current *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 2003). 30-1.

³ Maurizio Barba, *La riforma conciliare dell'«Ordo Missae». Il percorso storico-redazionale dei riti d'ingresso, di offertorio e di comunione*. Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia 120. (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 2002), 6.

⁴ Ibid., 5.

in establishing the work of the Council.⁵ Regarding the *Ordo Missae*, a study presented by the Congregation of Rites entitled *De Sacrosancta Missae Sacrificio* investigated the general character and particular elements of the Mass.⁶ The chapter *De Missae ritibus et caeremoniis in genere* included a paragraph establishing two basic and important guidelines for the general revision of the Mass. First, it called for freeing the celebration the private character that commission asserted the Mass had acquired over time.⁷ Then it ordered a revision and simplification of the rites towards increasing communal participation in the Mass and clarifying the doctrinal and spiritual senses of the Church's central act of worship.⁸ As a model celebration the consultants suggested the retrieval of an ancient, simpler form of the rite—specifically that of the *Ordo Romanus Primus*—while taking care to avoid the “archeologism” warned against by Pius XII in *Mediator Dei*.⁹ Moreover, a single rite of Mass was recommended to ensure the liturgical uniformity of the whole Church.¹⁰

Towards meeting the twin goals of simplifying the Mass and increasing lay participation in it¹¹, the section titled *De quibusdam rubricis immutandis* included, among several proposals, the following:

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷ Ibid. “...le celebrazioni dovevano essere liberati sia dal carattere privato di cui si erano rivestite nel corso della storia, sia da tutti gli strati rituali sedimentali nel tempo che arrivarono a rendere difficilmente comprensibile la celebrazione.”

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 7.

- In the *Missa lecta* everything should be spoken in a clear voice [by the celebrant]
- Some prayers and ceremonies of the Mass should be reduced to their simple and authentic form
- Let ancient forms be recovered, yet without fear of innovation and without “archeologism”
- The rite should better express the senses of adoration, oblation, and thanksgiving
- Alien rites or those lacking a deeper sense—such as the washing of hands during Mass—should be abolished
- The disproportion between the prayers recited (the Psalm «Lavabo») and the act of washing the hands should be noted
- The rites of the Mass should be accommodated to the understanding and experience of the people
- The rites, texts and chants should be reformed; more room for the vernacular tongues should be generously provided, with the Canon untouched, that the didactic efficacy of the Mass should be restored
- What should be understood by the people should be said *versus populum*
- ...the diverse structures of the Mass should be clearly manifested at the diverse places where the liturgy of the word is celebrated (at the chair) and the sacrifice is offered (at the altar).¹²

¹² *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*, Series I, (Antepreparatoria), 4 vols. (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1960-1961), 2: 250-257. Hereafter AD I. All translations are mine except where otherwise noted. The list below includes only the pertinent articles. The numbers assigned in the list below correspond to those in the original.

3. In *Missa lecta* omnia clara voce dicantur
14. Aliquae *Missae* preces et caeremoniae ad simplicem et authenticam formam redigantur
21. Antiquae formae resumantur, attamen sine innovandi timore et sine «archeologismo»
22. Ritus melius exprimat sensum adorationis, oblationis, et gratiarum actionis
25. Ritus exiles vel sensu profundiore carentes, ut lavatio manuum inter *Missam* facienda, aboleantur
26. Disproportio notatur inter preces recitandas (Ps. «Lavabo») et actum lavandi manus
28. Ritus *Missae* accomodatus sit modo cogitandi et sentiendi populi
29. Reformentur et ritus et textus et cantus; largitur detur locus vernaculae linguae, intacto Canone, ut *Missae* restituantur illae efficitates didacticae quas habuit.
53. Quae populus intelligere debet versus populum dicantur
60. Optatur ut diversa structura *Missae* clare manifestetur a diverso loco (cathedra) ubi cultus Verbi celebrator et a diverso loco ubi *Missa* litatur (altare).

The task of, and the authority for, implementing the reforms envisioned in these proposals would be assigned to the *Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de sacra liturgia* established by Pope Paul VI in the *motu proprio Sacram Liturgiam* of 25 January 1962. For a discussion of the *Consilium*, the tensions between it and the Congregation of Rites, and its eventual absorption into the Congregation for Divine Worship in May 1969 see Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 69-95.

Another set of proposals further aimed at correcting the overly private character of the Mass called for the celebrant not to read those parts sung by the choir and ministers and not to repeat prayers said by the ministers.¹³ Finally, the proposal *De loco Missae celebrandae*, seeking to enhance the communitarian sense of the Mass, provides an early recommendation for the celebration *versus populum*—facing the people.¹⁴

While these recommendations applied to the whole Mass, they presented clear implications for the Offertory part of the Mass. The proposal *De Offertorio* called for a number of revisions of the rite. The first two recommendations were of a general nature: “let the faithful actively participate in the ceremony of the Offertory” and “let the prayers of the Offertory be simplified.”¹⁵

Of the more specific proposals some attended to the clarification of the structure, performance, and meaning of elements of the Offertory that had become obscured and/or overemphasized over time:

- Let the prayers of the offering of bread and wine indicate the material for the sacrifice prepared, but not the victim as if already present.
- Let “*Oremus*” be removed from the Offertory
- Let the beginning of the liturgy of the sacrifice be clearly indicated and its symbolic significance be expressly affirmed by, for example, placing the “Lavabo” before the Offertory.
- Let the host itself have the likeness of ordinary bread.
- Let the prayers said silently by the priest at “the oblation of the host and

¹³ AD I, 258-9. 1. “In Missis sollmenibus ne legat celebrans quae cantantur a choro et ministries.” 5. “Quae dicunt ministry, celebrans ne repetat.” Numbered as in original.

¹⁴ Ibid, 261. 6. “Missa versus populum celebretur.”

¹⁵ Ibid., 270. 1 “In caeremonia Offertorii active participant fideles.” 2. “Orationes Offertorii simplificentur.”

chalice” be examined in respect to the literal sense lest they require ambiguous interpretations.

Let the drops of water in consecrating the chalice be suppressed to avoid scruples over adding too much [water].

- Let the Secret prayer be said or sung aloud because it is the prayer over the gifts and completes the offertory procession.¹⁶

The first two and the last establish clear structural boundaries of the Offertory, both bringing it into relief as an individual element of the Mass and emphasizing the distinction between it and the Canon. The fourth suggestion reaffirms the fact that one of the elements offered in the Eucharistic sacrifice actually is *bread*, a common, basic item of food that will become nourishment to eternal life. The fifth suggestion—number 19—seeks to avoid a sense of the preparation rite as a proleptical completion of the whole Eucharistic action. Returning to the final proposal, it recommends the restoration of the public proclamation of the ancient, original, and once sole offertory prayer—the *Secreta*, or *oratio super oblata*. The renewed focus on this oration shows not only the terminus of Offertory rite, but also succinctly summarizes the entire set of preceding actions.

¹⁶ Ibid. 270-3. Translations mine. Numbered as in original.

4. Preces panis oblationis indicent materiam ad sacrificium praeparatam non autem victimam quasi iam praesentem
8. «Oremus» Offertorii tollatur
9. Initium sacrificii liturgici clarius indicetur eiusque symbolica significatio expressius affirmetur, v.g., collocando «Lavabo» ante Offertorium
12. Ipsa hostia melius habeat panis ordinarii figuram
18. Preces a sacerdote in «oblatione hostiae et calicis» sub silentio dicendae examinentur quoad veritatem in sensu litterali, ne ambagibus interpretationis indigeant.
19. Supprimatur guttulae aquae in calice consecrando ad scrupulos vitandos in pluribus adiunctis.
24. Oratio secreta elata voce sive dicatur sive cantetur, quia est oratio super oblata et processionem offertorii complens.

Another proposal from this set attends to increasing the active participation of the laity in the celebration of the Mass and to making the Mass more comprehensible and spiritually efficacious for them. Since the reduction or omission of the Offertory prayers had not yet been suggested, the first recommendation sought to lessen their private sense and to give them a more communal character: “The prayers «*Suscipe Sancte Pater*» «*Deus qui humanae substantiae* » and «*Offerimus tibi Domine*» are to be said aloud and let the people respond«*Amen*».”¹⁷

Another suggestion for increasing the communal sense of the Offertory and giving the faithful a more active role in the celebration involved the retrieval of the ancient Prayers of the Faithful, which would precede or begin the Offertory:

Perhaps it would be good, either after the Gospel or after the «*Oremus*» before the Offertory, to insert «*Orationem fidelium*» for all the needs of the people and also of the country and Church in the manner of the East and of antiquity.¹⁸

Finally, a proposal that would locate the prayers after the Offertory chant also provided an early suggestion for the use of the vernacular in the liturgy: “Let the prayers of the faithful be instituted for the diverse vicissitudes of life and certainly in the vernacular, again, after the Offertory verse.”¹⁹ This is clearly intended to bring the local and

¹⁷ Ibid. 270. 3. “Orationes «*Suscipe Sancte Pater*» «*Deus qui humanae substantiae* » «*Offerimus tibi Domine*» magna voce recitandae sunt et populus respondeat «*Amen*».” Translation mine.

¹⁸ Ibid., 271. 11. “Forsitan bonum esset, post Evangelium vel post «*Oremus*» ante Offertorium, inserere «*Orationem fidelium*», pro omnibus necessitatibus populi et etiam patriae et ecclesiae, more Orientalium et antiquorum.”

¹⁹ Ibid. 10. “Preces fidelium pro diversis vicissitudinibus vitae, et quidem lingua vernacula, post versum Offertorii denuo instituantur.”

quotidian experience and concerns of the people directly into the universal and eternal purview of the Mass.

The proposed recovery of the Offertory procession would also re-establish an active role of the laity in the celebration. Four recommendations regarding the procession were proposed by the bishops consulted:

Let the Offertory procession of the faithful with the gifts to the chancel be established, so that a close union with Christ in the sacrifice is expressed.

The procession of the faithful bringing the gifts for the offering to the altar is commended.

Likewise, in the spoken Mass let the offerings of bread (also for the communion of the faithful) and wine be brought forward by kinds in procession by those ministering at the altar

It should be permitted also for the faithful to offer the oblations of bread to the celebrant holding the paten.²⁰

The call for the laity to bring their gifts to the altar reaffirms the notion that these are symbolized in bread and wine offered in the Eucharist. While the material elements for the sacrifice may no longer actually come directly from the laity, it remains true, as the first proposal confirms, that the procession of the gifts by the faithful to the altar shows the union of the self-offering of each with the perfect self-sacrifice of Christ. Thus, the

²⁰ Ibid., 272. 14. "Instituatur fidelium processio ad offertorium, cum oblationibus usque ad cancellos, ut arcta cum Christo unio exprimatur in Sacrificio."

15. "Processio fidelium ad altare oblata deferentium commendetur."

16. "Etiam in Missa lecta oblata panis (etiam pro communione fidelium) et vini a ministrantibus generatim processionaliter ad altare proferantur."

17. "Liceat etiam fidelibus oblata panis Celebranti patenam tenenti offerre."

ancient understanding of the priestly role of the faithful in the Eucharistic sacrifice again receives its due expression.

Preparatory Phase

With the work of the antepreparatory commission completed, on June 5, 1960 Pope John issued the *motu proprio Superno Dei natu*, which established a preparatory commission that sharpened the range of issues concerning the liturgy to be debated at the Council.²¹ The commission on the liturgy, led by Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani and Father Annibale Bugnini, prepared for the preparatory commission's first plenary session in November 1960 by drawing up a list of questions to be discussed. These included an inquiry into the *Ordo Missae* in terms of texts, ceremonies, and chant.²²

At a second session held from April 12-22 1961, the subcommittee *De Missa* called for a simplification of the Mass in order to clarify its structure, nature, and meaning. To this end, the subcommittee made two particularly important general recommendations:

1. Let the rite itself be established such that it speaks for itself without needing a wordy explication.
2. Let the structure of the Mass, in parts as well as whole, be reformed "to the pristine norm and rite of the Holy Fathers" (as Saint Pius V said), that additions might be suppressed, and genuine and fundamental elements suitable to our times be developed.²³

²¹ Maurizio Barba, *La riforma conciliare*, 16.

²² Ibid., 16-17

²³ Carlo Braga, "La «Sacrosanctum Concilium» nei lavori della Commissione Praeparatoria", in *Costituzione Liturgica «Sacrosanctum Concilium» Studi*. 25-68. Congregation for Divine Worship, ed. Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia 38. (Rome: C.L.V.-Edizione Liturgiche, 1986), 53.

1. "...ritus in se ita instauretur, ut per se ipse loquatur nec multiloquia indigeat explicatione."

The intentions of both proposals figured prominently in the revisions of the *Ordo Missae* following Vatican II. The first sought an increased accessibility of the Mass for the faithful, while the second aimed to complete the reform of the Mass begun following the Council of Trent.

Regarding the Offertory, the preparatory commission suggested two major points for revision. The first called again for the restoration of the Offertory procession.²⁴ The second, seeking clarification of the Offertory prayers so as to communicate a proper understanding of their character and purpose ordered that "...the orations by which the oblations are committed be so reviewed that they better correspond to the sense of the offering of gifts to be consecrated afterwards."²⁵

Although the proposal does not state such, it implies problems with the prayers as they existed—namely, an anticipation or duplication of the Canon—that required correction. At the same time it affirms that the Offertory truly involves an offering of gifts: a reality best indicated by the procession of the laity with the gifts and by the themes expressed in many of the *orationes super oblata*. The importance of this prayer received confirmation in a sentence added to the proposal at the third plenary session of

2. "Structura tam partium quam totius Missae ita «ad pristinam Sanctorum Patrum normam ac ritum» (ut ait S. Pius V) reformatur, ut additiones supprimantur, elementa genuina ac fundamentalia ac tempori nostro convenientia excolantur."

²⁴ Barba, *La riforma conciliare*, 19.

²⁵ Braga, "La «Sacrosanctum Concilium»", 61. "Item orationes quae oblationem comitantur ita recognoscantur, ut magis respondeant sensui oblationis donorum postea consecrandorum."

the Preparatory Commission in February 1962: “Let the Prayers Over the Gifts be restored to their importance, by speaking them in a clear voice.”²⁶

In addition to the revaluation of the *super oblata*, the subcommittee recommended the reduction of centuries of enlargement of the rite: “Let only one or two from the prayers of the Offertory be retained, for example, «*In spiritu humilitatis*». Let the rite be simplified.”²⁷ Here, the array of prayers added to the presentation and preparation of the gifts from the eighth to thirteenth centuries would be trimmed to one or two essential forms. The prayer *In spiritu humilitatis* offered as a possibility simply looks forward to the sacrifice about to be offered and asks that it be acceptable to God. It accomplishes this without any confusion with the consecration accomplished in the Canon to follow. Beyond this specific suggestion, the statement calls for a general simplification of the whole rite.

The commission’s work towards the composition and redaction of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* included much debate over and voting on both the general and specific proposals made by the subcommittee. The lengthy discussion process involved deliberations and many “interventions” by the bishops gathered from around the world. While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine all of these in detail, some of the questions and recommendations posed by the bishops raise important liturgical and theological points, particularly concerning the

²⁶ Braga, “La «Sacrosanctum Concilium»”, 66. “Orationi super oblata suum momentum restituatur, clara voce eam proferendo.”

²⁷ Ibid., 55. “Offertorium unam vel alteram tantum ex orationibus retinet, v.gr. «*In spiritu humilitatis*». Ritus simplificetur.”

Offertory. For example, Bishop Paul Rusch of Innsbruck Austria arguing for the importance of active participation of the faithful insisted:

This active participation can now be broadened. We know from the witness of history [that] the rite of offering in the Mass has flourished through many ages: the faithful offered bread and fruits, etc. at the altar at the beginning the Offertory of the Mass. Indeed, why are these or similar words recited in the Secret prayer: “We gather our offerings upon your altar...”? In like places in the Canon are said, for example [the words], “Therefore this offering of our service and of your whole family”...Where today...is this oblation “of your whole family”, that is, of the faithful? Therefore, the restoration of these offerings of the faithful is desired greatly, both that the full sense be returned to the prayers, even to the Canon itself, and that the intimate union of the faithful with the priest in offering the sacrifice be plainly shown.²⁸

An offering made by the faithful would, thus, correct a discrepancy between the euchology of the Mass and the ritual action, while giving expression to a more communal sense of the Church as a priestly people gathered in offering worship to God.

Other bishops offered more detailed proposals for the revision of the Offertory, with perhaps the most radical coming in the first of three schemata suggested by Bishop Cesar Gerardus Vielmo of Chile:

Let only the most ancient and adequate prayer be preserved, that one accustomed to be called “Secret” by the Roman Rite, by the Ambrosians, the “Prayer Over the Gifts.” Nevertheless, certain *Secrets* less well redacted may have to be substituted or established under the light of ancient sacramentaries

²⁸ AD I, Pars I/II (Rome: Typis Polyglottis vaticanis, 1970-1980), pars II, p.35. “Haec actiosa participatio etiam nunc dilatare posset. Historia teste, scimus per multa saecula viguisse ordinem faciendae oblationem in Missa, i.e., fideles offerabant panes et fructus, etc. ad altare, incipiente Missae Offertorio. Unde etiam in oratione Secreta haec vel similia verba leguntur: «Oblationibus nostris, altaria tua cumulamus»...Loci similes in Canone habentur, ex. gr: «Hanc igitur oblationem, servitutis nostrae, sed et cunctae familiae tuae»...Ubi est hodie, quaeso, haec oblatio «cunctae familiae tuae», i.e., fidelium? Restauratio ergo huius oblationis fidelium valde optanda esset, tum quia ita orationibus vel ipsi Canoni plenus sensu reddatur tum quia intima coniunctio fidelium cum sacerdote in sacrificio litando aperte ostenderetur.”

or by consideration of doctrinal or pastoral reasoning. According to this first, simplest schema, therefore, the oblation of bread and wine completed by the elevation of the host and chalice together, particularly carries along the recitation of the prayers called the “Secret,” which precisely expresses the offering of their elements to God and requests he deign to accept and then consecrate their gifts offered to all spiritual, corporal, temporal and eternal good.²⁹

With a single, simple gesture and prayer, this plan would serve the same role as the several Offertory actions and prayers, that is, a preparation of the gifts and the gathered Church for the offering of the Eucharistic prayer. In doing so it would restore the *Secreta*, or *Oratio Super Oblata* to its original role, which was obscured by the later addition of prayers and actions. Although Vielmo’s proposal does not explicitly or adequately address the proleptical aspect of the Offertory, a correction of the problem could be inferred from his succinct statement at the end of the schema on the character and function of the *Oratio Super Oblata*.

Some members of the Commission, however, opposed such a radical reordering of the Offertory, and even more restrained proposals regarding it and other elements of the *Ordo Missae*. Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani warned:

Now, does anyone want a revolution in the whole Mass? Because if the order of Mass is to be reformed, first in its general arrangement, then in its single parts, what will remain? The Mass is the center of the whole liturgical cult, a most holy thing, well-known by each of the faithful who know, now particularly from the pastoral liturgical work,

²⁹ Ibid., 281. “Servetur tantummodo antiquissima ac sufficiens oratio, quae apud ritum romanum «secreta» vocari consuevit, apud ambrosianos vero «Oratio super oblata». Nihilominus instaurandae vel substituendae essent quaedam secreta minus bene redacta, sub luce antiquorum Sacramentarium atque ex consideratione rationum doctrinalium vel pastoralium. Iuxta hunc primum simplicissimum schema, ergo, panis et vini oblatio, per elevationem hostiae et calicis simul peragenda, secumferret unice recitationem orationis sic dictae «secretae», qua precise exprimitur oblatio illorum elementorum Deo, ac petitur ut dona ipsi oblata acceptare dignetur, ac dein consecrare, ad omnium spirituale simul et corporale temporale atque aeternum bonum.”

they know well the single parts, and there is a danger lest some surprise, if not a scandal, results from excessive alteration. It is considered a most holy thing, that it cannot be changed freely in single generations: a most holy thing that must be treated as holy and venerated, and touched only reluctantly. The words of God to Moses approaching the burning bush come to mind now: "Take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Therefore, we should be careful in proposing reforms of the Mass.³⁰

Objections such as Ottaviani's notwithstanding, the Council fathers voted to decide that parts of the Mass needed revision and that modifications, if carefully and properly carried out could bring new vigor to the ancient order. Eventually, Article 50 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* established the guidelines for the reform of the Mass:

The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts, as also the connection between them, may be more clearly manifested, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved.

For this purpose the rites are to be simplified, due care being taken to preserve their substance; elements which, with the passage of time, came to be duplicated, or were added with but little advantage, are now to be discarded; other elements which have suffered injury through accidents of history are now to be restored to

³⁰ *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*. Vol II, Pars II (Rome: Typis Polyglottis vaticanis, 1970), 18. "Nunc, num revolutione quaedam fieri vult de tota Missa? Quia si ordo Missae reformandus est tum in sua dispositione generali, tum in suis singulis partibus, quid manebit?...Missa est centrum totius cultus liturgici; res sanctissima, bene cognita a singulis fidelibus qui cognoscunt, nunc praesertim ob pastorem laborem liturgicum, bene cognoscunt singulas partes, et periculum est ne aliqua admiratio, si non scandalum, habeatur ex nimia immutatione. Agitur de re sanctissima, quae non ad libitum potest in singulis generationibus mutari: res sanctissima quae tractanda est sancte et venerande, et non nisi difficulter tangenda. Veniunt nunc in mentem verba Dei facta ad Moysen, appropinquantem rubo ardenti: «Solve calceamentum de pedibus tuis, nam locus in quo stas terra sancta est». Igitur simus cauti in proponendis reformationibus Missae."

the vigor which they had in the days of the holy Fathers, as may seem useful or necessary.³¹

An appendix to the Article, while affirming the retention of the *Ordo Missae* as it existed at the time of the Council, called for emendations that would clarify the nature and meaning of the parts of the Mass and facilitate the active participation of the faithful.³²

The appendix officially mandated the revision of the Offertory as follows:

Let the Offertory rite be described and adapted so that the participation of the people is evident in the procession of the oblations, which can be made at least on solemn days, either by the people themselves or by representatives (as now done in the Ambrosian liturgy). Moreover, let the prayers by which the oblations are committed be thus revised that they better correspond to the sense of the offerings of gifts before consecration. Let the Prayers Over the Gifts be restored to their importance by proclaiming them aloud.³³

The second direction implies the correction of any confusion between the offering of the gifts of bread and wine and their consecration, and the third, again, reestablishes the significance of the *Oratio super oblata* as the proper offertorial prayer.

³¹ “Ordo Missae ita recognoscatur ut singularum partium propria ratio necnon connexio clarius pateant, atque pia et actiosa fidelium participatio faciliorem reddatur.”

“Quemobrem ritus probe servata eorum substantia, simpliciores fiant; ea omittantur quae temporum decursu duplicate fuerent vel minus utiliter addita; restituantur vero ad pristinam sanctorum patrum normam nonnulla quae temporum iniuria deciderunt opportune vel necessaria videantur.” Translation: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html

³² Maurizio Barba, *La riforma conciliare*, 53.

³³ *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*, Series II. III, pars II (AD II) (Praeparatoria) (Rome: Typis Polyglottis vaticanis, 1969) 30. “Ritus Offertorii ita describatur et aptetur, ut populi participatio appareat processione oblationis, quae fieri posset saltem diebus solemnioribus, vel ab ipso populo vel ab ipsius representantibus (ut adhuc fit in Liturgia Ambrosiana). Item orationes quae oblationem comitantur ita recognoscatur, ut magis respondeant sensui oblationis donorum postea consecrandorum. Orationi super oblata suum momentum restituatur, clara voce eam proferendo.”

The correction of the problem elements that adhered to the Offertory in the course of its development could now be addressed; the *lacunae* could be filled and the excesses trimmed. The revision of the Offertory would fall under the purview of *Coetus X*, the commission formed to study, experiment with, and, possibly, revise the *Ordo Missae* according to the guidelines in Article 50 and other pertinent articles of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Coetus X met in sessions beginning on 17 April 1964 and concluding on 24 May 1968.³⁴ At their first meeting the members issued schema 16, which treated a series of questions examining the Roman Missal as it existed at the time and made preliminary proposals for its revision. This schema also established a *missa normativa*, or an ordinary form of Mass to serve as the foundation for the revised *Ordo Missae*. The *Coetus* agreed that the parish Mass should be normative. A statement on the Mass identified two parts of the *Ordo Missae*, each performed in their respective place: “The proper place of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is the altar; the proper place of the Liturgy of the Word is the presider’s chair and at the ambo.”³⁵

In a new addition to the Liturgy of the Word the *Oratio fidelium* was restored, leading directly to the beginning of the Offertory. The schema included proposals for several revisions to the Offertory, both structural and textual. First, when appropriate, a procession of the faithful would bring the bread and wine to the altar. The bread would

³⁴ Barba, *La riforma conciliare*, passim.

³⁵ Schema 16.10 in Barba, *La riforma conciliare*, 274. “Locus proprius liturgiae eucharistiae est altare, locus proprius liturgiae verbi est ad sedem praesidentialem et ad abonem.”

include the celebrant's host as well as those of the faithful. The Offertory chant would correspond thematically to the season or day celebrated. The prayers and actions of the rite were to express clearly the sense of the Offertory so that the faithful could easily understand it. All elements that anticipated the *Canon Missae* and the oblation of the body and blood of Christ would be changed or removed. The *Orate Fratres* with the response *Suscipiat*, seen by the *Coetus* as a late introduction in a diversity of forms into the Roman rite, would be omitted. Finally, the whole Offertory would be reduced to a brief, simple, and clarified form ending with the *oratio super oblata* said or sung aloud.³⁶

In Schema 39 of September 1964, *Coetus X* refined the language of Schema 16, but called for the same basic revisions.³⁷ In Schema 44 of October, *Coetus X* suggested more specific and radical revisions to the Offertory. The new formulae for the preparation of the chalice and paten, or pyx, with the hosts stand out:

Then the celebrant prepares the chalice with wine and water, saying:
VINUM EX AQUA FACTUM EST, IUBENTE DOMINO; AQUA VINO ADMIXTA IN
NUPTIALE FIAT CONVIVIUM.
And he makes no sign [of the cross] over the water.³⁸

The formula's scriptural and nuptial imagery refers to the miracle at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11), then to the Eucharist feast in which Christ and the Church are united. While still employing symbolism, the notably restrained formula replaces the more complex *Deus qui humanae substantiae* that formerly accompanied the mixing.

³⁶ Schema 16.36-44 in *Ibid.*, 278-9.

³⁷ See *Ibid.*, 295.

³⁸ Schema 44. 19 in *Ibid.*, 300.

Moreover, any gestures made regarding the elements are omitted, thus avoiding any repetition or anticipation of the consecration or sacrificial connotations.

At the presentation of the bread, the celebrant also lifts the chalice recites a formula derived from the *Didache*:

Then the celebrant takes the chalice in his right hand and in his left the pyx or paten with the hosts to be consecrated, to which he joins his own, and standing before the center of the altar, holding (or touching?) both vessels reverently, he says:

SICUT HIC PANIS DISPERSUS ERAT SUPER MONTES, ET COLLECTA FACTUS EST UNUS, ET VINUM IN UNUM EX MULTIS ACINIS CONFLUIT, ITA COLLIGATUR ECCLESIA TUA A FINIBUS TERRAE IN REGNUM TUUM. GLORIA TIBI IN SAECULA.

And at once he honorificly places the vessel on the corporal and covers the chalice. The celebrant's host always remains on the paten.³⁹

The formula articulates ecclesiological and eschatological themes, but includes no sacrificial references. The restrained gestures avoid giving undue attention to the elements being prepared, while showing an appropriately reverential attitude toward them.

Prominently absent from this schema are the formulae *Suscipe Sancte Pater, Deus qui humanae substantiae*, and *Offerimus tibi Domine*. These later Gallican additions to the Offertory improperly anticipated the consecration and emphasized the private role of the celebrant and ministers in the rite. The schema retains, however, the formula *In spiritu humilitatis*⁴⁰ from the earlier rite: *In spiritu humilitatis et in animo contrito suscipiamur a te, domine. et sic fiat sacrificium nostrum in conspectu tuo hodie, ut placeat tibi, domine deus*. In a later annotation the *Coetus* cited the prayer's longevity,

³⁹ Schema 44. 20, 20 bis. in Ibid.

⁴⁰ Schema 44. 21, in Ibid.

scriptural basis, and liturgical suitability as grounds for its retention. Specifically, in a *relatio* of 9 October 1965 concerning Schema 113. 27, the *Coetus* asserted that the formula aptly expressed the human desire to offer sacrifice to God.⁴¹

In the optional incensing rite that follows, the petition to Saint Michael is suppressed and the verses of Psalm 140—*Incensum istud ascendat ad te, Domine, et dirigatur oratio nostra sicut incensum in conspectus tuo*—said at the incensing of the gifts and altar in the 1570 Offertory becomes the formula for the blessing of the incense.⁴²

A greatly reduced text for the washing of the celebrant's hands omits Psalm 25: 6-12 and replaces it with the simple *Ne accedamus ad orationem in conscientia mala, effundat Dominus super nos aquam mundam...*⁴³ This simpler form gives clear, though restrained, symbolic expression to the interior purity sought before entering rightly into divine worship. Finally, the schema omits the *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas*; and directs the celebrant to say or sing the *Super Oblata* and the concluding doxology *per omnia saecula saeculorum*, to which the people respond *Amen*.⁴⁴

On 9 October 1965 *Coetus X* submitted to the Council Fathers Schema 113, an *Ordo Missae* that included an even sparser version of the Offertory. The rite begins with washing of hands in which the priest remains seated while a minister pours water over his

⁴¹ Ibid., 352. "Textus iam a longissimo tempore ex 'oratione Azariae in fornace' desumptus, et ad usum liturgicum aptatus, coetui nostro retinendus videbatur, qui optime exprimit animum eorum, qui in actione eucharistica semetipsos cum Sacrificio laudis offerre cupiunt."

⁴² Schema 44.22 in Ibid., 301.

⁴³ Schema 44.23 in Ibid.

⁴⁴ Schema 44.24 in Ibid.

hands. No prayer accompanies the action.⁴⁵ The faithful bring the paten or pyx with bread and the vessels of wine and water to the altar. The schema also mentions other gifts that may be presented by the people, which a minister collects and puts in a proper place.⁴⁶ For the reception of the bread, the schema instructs

The priest, taking from the deacon (if present) the paten with the bread with both hands and elevates it a little above the altar, says:

SICUT HIC PANIS ERAT DISPERSUS ET COLLECTUS FACTUS EST UNUS,
ITA COLLIGATUR ECCLESIA TUA IN REGNUM TUUM. GLORIA TIBI,
DEUS IN SAECULA.

Then he places the paten with the bread on the corporal.⁴⁷

The phrase *super montes* has been removed because, as explained in the *relatio* on Schema 113.24, wheat does not grow on mountains, but on the plains.⁴⁸

Regarding the chalice:

The deacon, if present, otherwise the priest, pours wine and a little water into the chalice.

The priest, taking the chalice from the hand of deacon, if present, and with the deacon helping, elevates it with both hands, holding it a little above the altar, he says:

SAPIENTIA AEDIFICAT SIBI DOMINUM MISCUIT VINEM
ET POSUIT MENSAM GLORIA TIBI, DEUS, IN SAECULA.

Then he places the chalice on the corporal.⁴⁹

The *relatio* cites a parallelism with the doxology in the proposed formula for the bread as the reason for this new text, which refers to Proverbs 9:1-2.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Schema 113. 21 in Ibid., 324.

⁴⁶ Schema 113. 23 in Ibid.

⁴⁷ Schema 113. 24 in Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 351.

⁴⁹ Schema 113. 26 in Ibid., 325.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 352. "Parallelismi causa formulam propositam eadem doxologia concludimus ac illam ad depositionem panis."

The prayer *In spiritu humilitatis* follows, which the priest says while bowing at the altar. Then, in an important simplification, the schema proposes incensing *pro opportunitate*, and with no accompanying prayer(s). Finally, the *oratio super oblata* and response *Amen* concludes the rite.⁵¹

Over the following two years a series of experimentations, deliberations and voting on the revised *Ordo Missae* took place. At one point *Coetus X* investigated, in keeping with *pristinam sanctorum Patrum normam*, the possible removal of all the prayers accompanying the offertory actions.⁵² However, the *Coetus* found this proposition inadvisable as the prayers prevented an “indecorous haste”, and ensured a certain *gravitas* or solemnity in the proceedings.⁵³ Since other prayers would be difficult to find, the *Coetus* decided for the retention of those proposed in earlier schemata.⁵⁴

The next major development in the revision of the Offertory came in Schema 266 of 21 December 1967. Here, while making no explicit mention of an offertory procession, the schema proposes that the bringing of the gifts by the faithful to the altar become a regular practice rather than one reserved for solemn occasions.⁵⁵ Next, the Schema relocates the washing of hands to just after the incensing, which is now *pro opportunitate*⁵⁶. Certain *periti* had suggested this change two years earlier in the *relatio* on Schema 113.21, arguing that the *end*, not the beginning, of the Offertory provided one

⁵¹ Schema 113.29 in *Ibid.*, 325.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 402.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 406.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 553. *Sicubi vero mos est ut fideles dona ad altare deferant, sacerdos, antequam ad altare accedat, ea recipit...*

⁵⁶ Schema 266.28, in *Ibid.*, 554.

of the three traditional *loci* of ablutions in the Mass. Since the washing of hands should always precede a sacred action, the experts reasoned that if the Mass included only one ablution, it should be at the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer.⁵⁷ The three prayers *Sicut hic panis*, *Sapientia aedificavit*, and *In spiritu humilitatis* remain as in earlier schemata.

An addendum to Schema 266 proposed four further possibilities for Offertory prayers:

At the oblation of the bread:

SUSCIPE, SANCTE PATER, HUNC PANEM, QUEM DE OPERE MANUUM NOstrarum
OFFERIMUS, UT FIAT UNIGENITI TUI CORPUS.

At the oblation of the chalice:

OFFERIMUS TIBI, DOMINE, CALICEM, VINUM AQUA MIXTUM, UT SANGUIS FIAT
DOMINI NOSTRI IESU CHRISTI.

After the oblation of both:

IN SPIRITU HUMILITATIS, etc.

At the washing of hands:

COR MUNDUM CREA IN ME, DEUS, ET SPIRITUM RECTUM
INNOVA IN VISCERIBUS MEIS.

Before beginning the Prayer Over the Gifts, the priest says:
OREMUS.⁵⁸

These proposals entail the retention, at least in part, of three traditional prayer forms: *Suscipe Sancte Pater*, *Offerimus tibi*, and *Oremus* preceding a presidential prayer. In a recovery of an ancient concept, the formula for the bread recalls that the gift offered comes from human labor and points out its sacred destiny. In any case, a move away

⁵⁷ Ibid., 350.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 562.

from the formulae *Sicut hic panis* and *Sapientia aedificavit* and the silent washing of hands recommended in previous schemata begins.

A clarity and simplicity of action and text mark the schemata proposed up to this point. This character changed, however, with Schema 271 issued on 10 February 1968. Comments from bishops and, especially, Pope Paul VI led to the retention of at least part of older forms and to the creation of new ones. The Holy Father expressed particular concern that the faithful played an explicit and active part in the offering of gifts, and that those gifts be clearly understood as gifts of God and the fruits of creation and human labor.⁵⁹ The instruction concerning the presentation of the gifts by the faithful more explicitly states the goal of the rite—that is, active participation of the faithful.⁶⁰ In addition to the bread and wine to be offered in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the rubric allows for the offering of gifts for the needs of the church and the poor, as in the earliest practice.⁶¹

The texts initially scheduled for omission include one added to the formula for the bread, *Sicut hic panis*. The schema offers *Suscipe Sancte Pater* as an option along with a new composition which adapts the introductory phrase of a classic Jewish table blessing: *Benedictus dominus deus universi, educens panem de terra, e quo nobis fit cibus vitae*.⁶² This new prayer, along with the revised *Suscipe Sancte Pater* mark the early development

⁵⁹ Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*. Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegville MN: 1990), 269.

⁶⁰ Barba, *La riforma conciliare*, 568.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

of the twin themes of creation and human work that characterized later redactions of the offering prayers.

Where earlier schemata had the mixing of water and wine performed without a prayer formula, Schema 271.24 provides two orations for the mixing, each conveying a symbolic sense of the rite as affecting the divine-human union:

SICUT AQUA CUM VINO IN CALICE MISCETUR, CREDENTIUM PLEBS CHRISTO IUNGATUR.

Vel: PER HUIUS AQUAE ET VINI MYSTERIUM EIUS EFFICIAMUR DIVINITATIS CONSORTES, QUI HUMANITATIS NOSTRAE FIERI DIGNATUS EST PARTICEPS.⁶³

The first is a new composition, while the second option selects the middle phrase from the Carolingian form *Deus qui humanae substantiae* of the earlier rite.

One of the three prayers offered as options to accompany the preparation of the chalice also retrieves and quotes a Gallican form added to the Roman Rite. Again, the formula emphasizes the symbolism of the action: *Offerimus tibi, domine, calicem in quo unitatis nostrae mysterium exprimitur, ut sanguis fiat Domini Iesu Christi*.⁶⁴

The two new orations employ cosmic and eschatological themes:

BENEDICTUS DOMINUS DEUS UNIVERSI, CREANS FRUCTUM VITIS, E QUO NOBIS FIT POTUS REGNI.

Vel:

TU, DOMINE, CREAMUS OMNIA POTUMQUE DEDISTI HOMINIBUS AD GUSTANDUM, NOBIS AUTEM LARGITUS ES SPIRITUALEM POTUM ET VITAM AETERNAM: GLORIA TIBI IN SAECULA.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 569.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 568.

The two forms proposed as options for accompanying the hand washing are included—*Lava me Domine* and *Cor Mundum*—but the suggested *Oremus* preceding the *Oratio Super Oblata* is not.

On 21 March 1968 *Coetus X* issued Schema 281. The additional redactions of the offertory prayers included in this schema represent the early form of the rite approved and promulgated on 3 April 1969 by Paul VI and which is now extant.⁶⁶

Conclusion

The Preparation of the Gifts and Altar of the *Ordo Missae* 1970 is a revision of the complex Offertory into a clearer, simpler rite of presenting the gifts for the Eucharist. The restoration of the offering procession recovers the liturgical expression of the gathered faithful's share in Christ's self-offering to the Father. The reduction of ritual gestures and prayer forms clarifies the significance of the preparation rite relative to the Eucharistic prayer. The revised prayers correct the overly private features of the Offertory and retrieve the essentially communal character of the presentation of the gifts. They also greatly reduce, if not completely eliminate, the sense of the rite as proleptical offering of the Eucharistic elements. Although the *Benedictus* forms accompanying the taking of the bread and wine are quite beautiful and give clear expression to the gifts as the fruits of creation and human work, it could be argued that they continue to anticipate and duplicate the offering themes proper to the Eucharistic prayer. This being the case, it

⁶⁶ See Appendix II for complete text with rubrics.

is perhaps for the better that the rubrics include the option of saying these formulae silently.

A similar argument can be made against the *oratio super oblata*. Many examples of this form contain the language of offering and sacrifice that, strictly speaking, belongs in the Eucharistic prayer. Precisely, however, most of the orations are preparatory and refer to the offering *about to be made*. Moreover they show the relationship between the giving of gifts by the faithful, the Eucharistic offering, and the salvific effects of both.⁶⁷ The retention of the *super oblata* and the recovery of its audible recitation allow for a clear, public proclamation of the nature, purpose and goal of the Church's offering of gifts. At the same time the prayers make larger theological statements in the context of that offering.

⁶⁷ These points will be discussed fully in the exposition of the Prayers Over the Gifts in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITIQUES OF THE CURRENT PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS AND PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR

Some critics of the revised Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar assert that the rite that developed from the liturgical reforms following the Second Vatican Council retained some of the elements that led to its revision. In general, it is argued that the rite, both in ritual action and text, remains overly complex and continues to contain elements that anticipate and duplicate the sacrificial and benedictional features that rightly belong in and are expressed by the Eucharistic prayer. This chapter will examine the critiques of and recommendations for the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar proposed by two scholars. Frederick McManus provides insight from a member, or *consultor*, of Coetus X, a group belonging to the Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy that was responsible for the revision of the *Ordo Missae* after Vatican II. Michael Marchal, provides new and helpful perspectives on the *oratio super oblata* and the *Orate Fratres*. While both critiques have their own strengths and weakness, Marchal's will be shown to offer the more constructive and practically applicable for the purpose of the present study.¹

¹ Frederick McManus' work is a central resource because as a member of Coetus X he had first-hand experience of and insight into the work on the revision of the Offertory and the original direction of that work. Michael Marchal's work presents a unique approach to the *super oblata* and its role as a preliminary to the Eucharistic Prayer. While some methodological problems limit the strength of Marchal's work, his basic insights about the *super oblata* are quite instructive. These two works stand out in a rather limited field of possible sources. For other article-length critiques see: Thomas Krosnicki, "Preparing the Gifts: Clarifying the Rite" *Worship* 65 (1991), 149-159 and Ralph Keifer, "Preparation of the Altar and Gifts Or Offertory?" *Worship* 48 (1974), 595-600. Among the sources that contain indispensable historical insight into the revision of the *ordo missae* and especially the Presentation rites are Mauricio Barba's and Annibal Bugnini's works cited above. Several other sources present helpful analyses of and commentaries on the current Presentation of the Gifts, see Robert Cabié, *The Eucharist. The Church at Prayer*, Volume II.

Frederick McManus: Reform Reversed

In August 1963, a redaction of the second chapter of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) by the Preparatory Commission on the Liturgy included a *declaratio* stating,

[a]mong the individual parts of the Mass, it seems that those at the beginning, at the Offertory, at the Communion, and at the end are in the greatest need of revision especially because the Roman rite was received in Gaul and redacted according to a Gallic-German genius in a new form which the Roman Church later adopted.²

As noted in the previous chapter, in two concise paragraphs of Article 50 of SC promulgated on 4 December 1963 the basic guidelines for the reform of the *Ordo Missae* were established:

The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts, as also the connection between them, may be more clearly manifested, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved.

Trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1986), 203-7; Johannes H. Emminghaus, *The Eucharist: Essence, Form, Celebration*. Trans., Matthew J. O'Connell, (Collegeville, MN, 1978), 158-68. Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman liturgy: Its Problems and Background*. Trans. Klaus D. Grimm. (San Juan Capistrano, CA: Una Voce Press, 1993), 41-61; Niels K. Rasmussen "Les Rites de Présentation du Pain et du Vin" *Le Maison-Dieu* 100(1969), 51-58; Michael Witczak, "The Sacramentary of Paul VI" in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies III: The Eucharist*. Ed. Anscar J. Chupungco, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 133-175; especially 151-5..

² Carlo Braga, "La «Sacrosanctum Concilium» nei lavori della Commissione Praeparatoria", in *Costituzione Liturgica «Sacrosanctum Concilium» Studi*. 25-68. Congregation for Divine Worship, ed. Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia 38. (Roma: C.L.V.-Edizione Liturgiche, 1986), 61. "Inter singulas partes vero ordinis Missae, illae potissimum recognoscendae videntur quae in initio, ad Offertorium, ad Communionem, in fine accesserunt, praesertim cum ritus romanus in Gallia assumptus est ex indole gallico-germanica in formam novam redactus est, quam Ecclesia Romana postea adoptavit." Translation mine.

For this purpose the rites are to be simplified, due care being taken to preserve their substance; elements which, with the passage of time, came to be duplicated, or were added with but little advantage, are now to be discarded; other elements which have suffered injury through accidents of history are now to be restored to the vigor which they had in the days of the holy Fathers, as may seem useful or necessary.³

In an article composed in 1990, Frederick McManus describes these statements as “euphemistic references to the root-and-branch defects of the medieval and modern Roman liturgy.”⁴ In fact, the Fathers of the Council approved a thorough revision entire *ordo missae*, and specifically, the Offertory towards the goals of “clarity and comprehensibility for the assembly, popular involvement and participation, and potential adaptability of a revised rite.”⁵ McManus argues that exactly such a revision was initiated in the earliest schema of the revised *ordo*, the *specimen provisorium* proposed by Coetus X in Schema 44 on 22 October of 1964. He further asserts that by the time of the promulgation of the *Ordo Missae* of Paul VI on 6 April 1969, however, the comprehensive modification of the Offertory had been short-circuited.⁶ While McManus by no means envisions the 1964 *specimen* as a somehow pristine model of the perfect form of the Offertory, he does state that “the initial plan while imperfect might have been a better point of departure for possible elaboration in actual celebrations and for cultural

³ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html. Accessed 3/4/10.

⁴ “The Roman Order of Mass From 1964-1969: The Preparation of the Gifts. *Shaping English Liturgy: Studies in Honor of Archbishop Denis Hurley*. Eds. Peter C. Finn and James M. Schellman (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1990), 113.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 130. “...there was an overall falling off from 1964 to 1969, a dilution of an original project that was in closer harmony with the conciliar mandate.”

adaptation.”⁷ Precisely, McManus would have preferred a minimal Roman rite that could, over time, absorb local forms and practices. He faults a series of compromises and the reintroduction of problematic elements of the old Offertory that led to the “dilution of [the] original project.”⁸ This, for McManus left the Church with a preparation rite that remained too complicated and still contained prayers suggestive of a presbyteral offering of bread and wine—namely, the formulae for the bread and cup.⁹

While McManus discusses several important points about the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar as it is now codified and practiced, he does not attend to the many processes, influences, and tensions at work throughout the course of the reform. Such, however, is not the purpose of his critique. In the following section, the specifics of McManus’ analysis of the Preparation rite as established in the 1970 *Ordo Missae* will be examined. In addition, some of the issues McManus did not include in his study will be discussed and his comments will be placed within the larger context of the dynamics involved in the reform.

The Offertory of the *specimen provisorium* differed greatly from both the earlier and later forms.¹⁰ First, it allowed the priest to omit all private prayers and, according to

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 128, 130-1.

¹⁰ See *supra*, Ch.3, pp. 92-4 for a discussion of the specifics of Schema 44. See also Maurizio Barba, *La riforma conciliare dell’«Ordo Missae». Il percorso storico-redazionale dei riti d’ingresso, di offertorio e di comunione*. Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia 120. (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 2002), 299-303 for entire text of Schema 44.

McManus, to join the assembly in singing during the preparation.¹¹ Presumably, this would lessen the exclusively clerical and heighten the communal aspects of the Offertory.

The new form of the reception and blessing of the bread and wine instructed that the priest take paten and the chalice without making any gestures of offering.¹² The strength of this change is obvious: one of the mandates of the reform was to remove anything that anticipates what properly belongs to the Canon.¹³

Regarding the prayer at the mixing of water and wine in the chalice—*Vinum ex aqua factum est, iubente Domino, aqua vino admixta in nuptiale fiat convivium*—McManus points out that

[t]he symbolism of wine and water in reference to the human and divine natures of Christ and to the *admirabile commercium* is replaced...by the reference to the wedding at Cana—as a sign of the eschatological, messianic banquet, the supper of the Lamb.¹⁴

Thus the new formula more clearly refers to the Eucharist and its ecclesiological and eschatological character.

A newly composed prayer for the blessing of the bread and wine, employing images from the Eucharistic prayer of the *Didache* speaks nowhere of offering or sacrifice: *Sicut panis dispersus erat super montes, et collectus factus est unus, et vinum in unam ex multis acinis confluit, ita colligatur ecclesia tua a finibus terrae in regnum tuum*. A more explicitly sacrificial prayer, *In spiritu humilitatis*, remains from the earlier rite. A

¹¹ McManus, “The Roman Order of Mass,” 121. See also Schema 44. 3 in Barba, *La riforma conciliare dell’«Ordo Missae»*, 299.

¹² Schema 44. 20 in Barba, *La riforma conciliare dell’«Ordo Missae»*, 300.

¹³ Schema 16.41 in *Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁴ “The Roman Order of Mass,” 121, n. 41.

prayer blessing the incense—*incensum istud*—asks simply that the incense might rise before the sight of the Lord as a sign of the Church’s prayers. The washing of hands follows, with a new formula: *Ne accedamus ad orationem in conscientia mala, effundet Dominus super nos aquam mundam*. Where the old prayer attended to the personal sinfulness of the priest, this first person plural formula refers to the whole assembly, and to the conscience rather than the objective state of sin.

The omission of two prayers that followed lessened the proleptically sacrificial sense of the rite. The *Suscipe Sancta Trinitas*, which pleaded for the acceptance of the sacrifice, was omitted entirely and the *Orate Fratres* and its response were replaced with the simple exhortation *Oremus* replaced. The *super oblata* followed, returned to its ancient and proper status as a preparatory prayer that directly attends to the gifts to be offered.

While McManus admits that the preparation rite in the *specimen provisorium* was an imperfect and provisional outline, he identifies its important successes: it “carefully avoid[s] any ‘little canon’ anticipating the eucharistic prayer and...any language of offering” while it “respected the conciliar decree faithfully and offered important insights” into the correct practice and theology of the rite.¹⁵

Schema 106 of September 1965 contained the proposed *Missa normativa*, which included refinements of the preparation rite. The prayers for the reception of the bread and wine were revised and the incensing was made optional and included no accompanying formula. For McManus this schema provides “the simplest form of the rite

¹⁵ McManus, “The Roman Order of Mass”, 122.

in its several recensions from 1964 to 1969.”¹⁶ He points out the “careful” distinction of three ritual elements: the “sacerdotal” action of taking and placing of the gifts on the altar; the people’s role of bringing the bread, wine, and other gifts to the altar; and the minister’s role of preparing the altar, receiving and handing the gifts to the priest. The prayers that might accompany these reordered and minimized actions had to avoid any anticipation of the *super oblata*, and certainly the Eucharistic prayer.¹⁷

McManus argues that the move away from the simplicity of the 1965 form began with Schema 266 of December 1967.¹⁸ The washing of hands was returned to its place following the incensing, and an accompanying formula was suggested. A renewed formula for the mixing of the water with wine was also proposed, as were alternative prayers for the bread and wine from the 1965 schema. Psalm 51:12 would complement the washing of hands. The priest said all private prayers, including *in spiritu humilitatis*, inaudibly. The gifts and altar would be incensed, but not the people. No invitation preceded the *super oblata*. In these changes, both enacted and proposed, McManus detects “progress—or *regression*—toward the 1969 Order of Mass.”¹⁹

In 1968 the *Concilium* proposed three schemata for a revised *ordo missae*. Schema 271 of February 1968 paid special attention to the bringing of gifts to the altar. Following the mandate of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* for “active participation of the faithful,” the schema prescribes that the laity, by way of representative members, should bring forward

¹⁶ Ibid., 124.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 125-6. See Barba *La riforma Conciliare*, 553-4 for Offertory schema.

¹⁹ McManus, “The Roman Order of Mass,” 125, emphasis added.

the gifts the Eucharist and for support of the Church and the poor.²⁰ Silent recitation of the celebrant's private prayers remained the recommended practice, but intense dissatisfaction with the orations continued.²¹ McManus recalls that the *Concilium* searched rites including the Ambrosian and Dominican as well as old Sacramentaries in hope of "finding a poetic and symbolic manner of referring to the gifts without an explicit 'offertory.'"²² Many specialists preferred two options: the outright suppression of these prayers, or, at least, making them *pro opportunitate*, or optional.²³

The schema of March 1968 includes public and audible prayers for the bread and wine. These were composed, McManus writes,

to include several elements: the bounty of God, from whom all good things come; the work of the earth, which gives fruit in good season; the industry and labor of humankind; the eucharist for the preparation of which the gifts are brought forward by the faithful.²⁴

These were basically the same as the current blessing prayers—*Benedictus es, Domine*—with the exception of *quem tibi offerimus*.²⁵ By May of the same year this small phrase and the great impact it exerts upon the performance and interpretation of the preparation rite would find its way into the blessing prayers.²⁶ While the English translation of the clause is nuanced, as McManus points out, saying "to offer" instead of the more direct

²⁰ Barba, *La Riforma Conciliare*, 568. "Ad actuosam fidelium participationem fovendam eandemque manifestandam, convenit, ut, quantum fieri potest, ipsi fideles oblationem suam, saltem per aliquos ex ipsis, sacersoti praesentent, tum ea afferendo quae necessaria sunt ad Eucharistiae celebrationem, tum alia quoque portando dona, quibus necessitatibus ecclesiae et pauperum subveniatur."

²¹ Ibid.

²² McManus, "The Roman Order of Mass", 126-7. See also Schema 113.63 in Ibid. 351.

²³ Ibid., 127. See also Schema 170.c3 Ibid., 406.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See Barba, *La Riforma Conciliare*, 621.

²⁶ McManus, "The Roman Order of Mass", 127.

“that we offer to you,” the prayers that would enter to *editio typica* of the *Missale Romanum* were *de facto* offering prayers. Restraint was shown, however, in the instruction that the prayers normally be said silently even where no song accompanies the presentation.²⁷

For McManus, the promulgation of the *Ordo Missae* of Paul VI in 1969 represented the culmination of the movement from a complex Offertory to a greatly simplified rite and finally to a compromise between the two. The restored greeting *Orate Fratres* and its response preceding the *super oblata* represents the one major change from the preceding schemata.²⁸ McManus criticizes the *Orate Fratres* for its “problems of content and...the formal, lengthy response” which “only serves...to obscure the desirable relationship of the invitation to the prayer over the gifts.”²⁹

Overall, McManus assesses the process of the reform of the liturgy from 1964 to 1969 as a “falling off... [from] an original project that was in closer harmony with the conciliar mandate” of clarity, simplification and appropriate restoration.³⁰ In general, McManus believes that the reform as it was implemented allowed the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar to assume “a very disproportionate emphasis.”³¹ He specifies several weaknesses in the 1969 preparation rite. First, the retention of private prayers said both silently and audibly by the priest led to an “increase of verbalization

²⁷ Ibid., 128. In the absence of music the formulae “*may be said aloud* (without response). Emphasis in original.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 136.

³⁰ Ibid. 130.

³¹ Ibid.

and the diminution of the prayer over the gifts.”³² Second, the restoration of elements from the 1570 rite initially excluded from the revised form represented not a retrieval of valuable elements from the tradition, but a compromise that reversed the trend towards a simplified and clarified rite. These elements include the retention of the *Orate Fratres* and its response, a complex and duplicative incensation rite, and the insertion of the blessing prayers for the bread and wine, which while not intentionally proleptic, result, McManus asserts, in a “curious ‘little canon.’”³³ McManus does not elaborate, but he seems to refer here to the offering language in the blessing prayers.

McManus does see some positive results in the revised preparation rite. It promotes “an active if modest participation of the assembly in bringing forward the gift[s] for the Eucharist ... [and] Christian charity.”³⁴ The prayers over the gifts were enhanced, even while McManus sees persistent problems with their texts. Many “minor and almost meaningless ceremonial gestures by the priest” were reduced or eliminated, as were “the formal offering gestures [suggesting] the bread and wine were the Lord’s body and blood.”³⁵ These improvements aside, McManus faults the reform of the rite for yielding “to needless complexity,” a further refinement of which he sees as currently “unlikely.”³⁶ Nevertheless, he does offer some suggestions for possible improvements.

First, he proposes the option of the priest joining the congregation in singing a psalm or hymn during the preparation. The music may also be instrumental. Another

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. 131

option calls for silence by all during the procession of the gifts, the preparation of the cup, and the placing of the gifts on the altar. This silence would continue until the *super oblata*—thus reestablishing this prayer as *the* prayer over the gifts for the offering. These options require at least a silent recitation of the blessing prayers for the bread and wine as well the celebrant's private prayers. At most, these as well as the *Orate Fratres*, would be eliminated.³⁷ McManus prefers the latter, asserting that the prayers inevitably would be “said aloud by some priests and on some occasions” and that “[t]hey already have achieved an emphasis all out of proportion to their significance—and have complicated and weakened a fairly simple rite.”³⁸

Second, McManus calls for relocating the washing of the hands from after the incensing to the beginning of the liturgy of the Eucharist. He views the current ablution as “a rite of small meaning, a needless cleansing” after the completion of the preparation.³⁹ Relocating the rite, McManus argues, would retrieve its proper character “as a symbol of ritual cleansing and preparation before the presiding minister enters upon the holy work of the Eucharistic liturgy.” Failing this recovery of meaning, the rite should be suppressed.⁴⁰

Third, while McManus acknowledges that the procession of the gifts has successfully fostered the active participation of the laity in the Eucharistic liturgy, he sees a continuing need for clarification of the rite and its significance. McManus is confident

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 132.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

that, generally, the rite is not understood as “an autonomous sacrifice, a Eucharist distinct from that of Christ” nor as a “congregational rite that wrongly serves to exclude the lay faithful from the ‘clerical’ Eucharist that follows.”⁴¹ While he admits that an overemphasis of word and gesture by presiders and misunderstanding by the laity often lead to erroneous interpretations of the procession, he affirms the success of the restoration of the rite, with two important provisions:

that...the bread and wine and water are indeed those to be used in the celebration and, after the eucharistic prayer, shared in communion of the body and blood of Christ and...the other gifts of money and in kind are closely associated with, directed to, but distinct from the eucharist of the Lord.⁴²

Fourth, McManus questions why the simple preparation of the cup by the deacon or, in his absence, the priest, or even an acolyte or server needs to be performed at the altar. He suggests it be done at a side table, perhaps by the members of the assembly, who would bring the prepared cup to the altar along with the other gifts.⁴³ Furthermore, the allegorical interpretation of the mingling of water and wine retained from the 1570 rite should be eliminated. Instead, it should be presented and understood in scriptural terms and as a wholly practical imitation of the Christ’s actions at the Last Supper: *taking* a cup mixed with wine and water. For McManus, however, a complete omission of the formula represents “a better instinct.”⁴⁴

Fifth, McManus prefers the silent and optional recitation, or even a complete suppression, of all private prayers. These he regards as a “still unsatisfactory selection”

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 132-3.

⁴³ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

even after their revision and simplification, and “a needless complication” of the simple presenting and receiving of the gifts by the assembly and ministers.⁴⁵ Again, McManus upholds the option of the priest joining the congregation singing at this point. Certainly, this sung prayer of the celebrant and people together would, while eschewing “archeologism”, recover the sense of the presentation as a single oblation of the gathered Body of Christ in union with the perfect self-offering of the Head.

Sixth, McManus seeks a clear distinction between the presentation and preparation of the gifts and their solemn *depositio* on the altar by the priest. He argues that the common practice has become the placing of the plates, ciboria and cups on the altar by the deacon, followed by the priest lifting them up “sometimes in a confusing offertory elevation.”⁴⁶ McManus does not, however, simply insist that the bread and wine be deposited in separate actions. Certainly, the single-act practice raises problems as “it...weakens the distinction of the separate elements and the sign value evident both in the institutional narrative of the eucharistic prayer...and in the giving of communion under both (separate) kinds.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, it perpetuates referring to the Eucharist in terms of a single species as the body and blood of Christ. McManus calls this an “excess of the doctrine of concomitance, obscuring the very signs chosen in the Lord’s institution.”⁴⁸ These problems aside, placing the bread and wine on the altar in a single act “might help to keep this area of the Eucharistic rite in proper, subordinate, and

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

preliminary proportions” while eliminating “the anomalous placing of the gifts on the altar...before the ritual *deposition*.”⁴⁹ Here, McManus accepts a theoretically imperfect practice if it serves the pragmatic goals of simplicity and clarity.

Seventh, McManus tentatively argues for eliminating the blessing prayers for the bread and cup. While preferring their exclusion he offers two compelling reasons for their retention: they are “inspired...well composed ...and well translated into English” and “[t]heir thought and language enrich the Roman rite.”⁵⁰ Still, he finds significant problems with the prayers as they impose “a new structure” and “a different style” into the *Ordo Missae*.⁵¹ Since they are spoken rather than sung, they add another prayer form to an already complex and overburdened portion of the rite. Stylistically, as an element of the *berakah* genre, the prayers more properly correspond to the Eucharistic prayer. The interjection of this form into a different ritual context followed by yet another genre—the *super oblata*, a Roman collect—complicates and confuses the preparatory nature of the rite. Ideally, for McManus, the *berakhoth* would be excluded and their thematic richness would be incorporated into newly composed Eucharistic prayers and variable prayers over the gifts.⁵²

Eighth, McManus would retain the incensing on the grounds both of its venerable tradition and its correspondence with secular uses of incense, perfumes, flowers, and

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 135.

⁵² Ibid.

“even so mundane an example as room fresheners.”⁵³ He affirms the near universality of the practice and notion of incensing as “an...element of enhancement and solemnization.”⁵⁴ McManus upholds the 1965 schema as a model of a proper and effective use of incense. Here, the priest begins the liturgy by kissing the altar, then he incenses of the altar and assembly. At the preparation the gifts alone are incensed, which “avoids repetition or duplication and provides a simpler sign, drawing attention to the gifts and honoring, even hallowing them.”⁵⁵ This form also shortens and simplifies a rite that overshadows the prayer over the gifts and even the Eucharistic prayer.

Ninth, McManus recommends that the invitation *Oremus* precede the *super oblata*, which is structurally and functionally similar to the other presidential prayers of the Mass—the opening *Collecta* and the *Postcommunio*.⁵⁶ As mentioned previously, he also questions the use of the *Orate Fratres*. While McManus does not specify the problematic content of the *Orate Fratres*, he likely sees the clause *ut meum ac vestrum sacrificium acceptibile fiat* as referring to the bread and wine on the altar in the present liturgical moment and action. This is especially problematic when the priest makes offertory-like gestures towards the gifts while saying this prayer. Moreover, the *Orate Fratres* is concerned with the acceptance by God of the gifts and praises of the faithful, a theme also found in the *super oblata*—a much simpler prayer than the *Orate Fratres* and part of an enduring genre of the Roman rite, the collect. In McManus’s view, the greeting

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Oremus should precede the *super oblata*, followed by a moment of silence before the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer.

Tenth, McManus considers the correct performance of the *super oblata*. Here, he leaves open the question of whether the prayer should be spoken solemnly or sung.⁵⁷ Since the *super oblata* corresponds to the *Collecta* and *Postcommunio*, the performance of these prayers might provide an answer: when any constituent of the genre is spoken or sung, the others should be as well. McManus takes a clearer position on the correct posture for the *super oblata*: “The structural parallels [with the other collects] dictate that the assembly stands (at the invitation to prayer) so that the character of the presidential prayer will be evident.”⁵⁸

Eleventh, McManus calls for a moment of silence between the *super oblata* and the greeting of the preface dialogue, *Dominus vobiscum*. While neither the rubrics of the *ordo missae* nor the current *GIRM* make provision for such, McManus argues for “a long enough of a pause...to separate the first and the second part of the liturgy of the Eucharist clearly and effectively.”⁵⁹ Again, he points to the 1964 *specimen*, which included the possibility for a break in the liturgical action that, if incorporated into the current rite, would provide “an opportunity for recollection, and a separation of the rite of preparing the gifts from the more important anaphora that follows.”⁶⁰ Certainly, an interlude between these closely related, but particular elements of the liturgy of the Eucharist

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 136-7.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 137.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

would mark a clear boundary between the preparation and the Eucharistic prayer, thus alleviating an ambiguity in the rite that has endured even after its revision.

In McManus's analysis, the additions to the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar between 1964 and 1969 strayed from the initially proper response to the conciliar call for clarity, simplicity, and comprehensibility. Anticipatory sacrificial language and gestures continue, as does uncertainty as to the relation between the self-offering of the people in the presentation of gifts and of Christ in the anaphora. For McManus these problems can be corrected by retrieving the original simplicity—in spirit if not letter—of the 1964 *specimen provisorium*.⁶¹ This would entail additional refinement of some elements of the rite and the complete suppression of others.

In general, McManus' criticism of the reformed Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar is extensive, but certainly not exhaustive. While his analysis of the rite is instructive, in the end, it is helpful to read his critique with further reference to the contextual issues and dynamics that guided the process of the revision of the rite—for better or worse. The following comments will serve to provide some additional insight into the reform. These will be offered not as a critique of McManus' work, but as a complement to it.

First, it is helpful to keep in mind that the revision of the Offertory had to fit within the larger project of the reform of the whole *Missale Romanum*. The proposals of the various study groups that worked on the revision of the different sections of the Missal had to agree in tenor in order to ensure an organic composition of the liturgical book.

⁶¹ Ibid., 130.

This meant that the whole process was under the supervision of a relator general for the whole Missal.⁶² So while Coetus X—indeed all the study groups—enjoyed a certain amount of freedom in both method and initiative, such was not without constraints. Even if a proposal made its way through the *coetus* and past the relator, everything had to be approved by the whole *Consilium* in order for it to pass on to the next stage.⁶³ In the case of the Offertory this meant that a greatly minimized rite might not have harmonized with the other elements of the reformed *Missale Romanum* and would not have been approved.

Second, certain ideological and ecclesiological dynamics influenced the development of the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar. Tensions existed between the exigencies of a thorough and pastorally fruitful revision of the *Ordo Missae* and the preservation of traditional forms. Barba writes that “the operative line of the reform had to join together the creativity of liturgical form with the whole patrimony coming from the tradition.”⁶⁴ This patrimony included elements of the 1570 *Ordo Missae* that more progressive members of Coetus X wanted to be omitted. A further tension existed between the desire for increased participation of the faithful and the hierarchical nature of the Mass. The movement towards the former had begun near the beginning of the twentieth century and was given clear expression in Pope Pius XII’s *Mediator Dei*. Some Council Fathers and critics of the reform, however, believed that the hierarchical character of the Mass, as they understood it, was being diminished.

⁶² Barba, *La riforma Conciliare*, 63.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 89. “Le linee operative della riforma dovevano coniugare insieme la creatività delle forme liturgiche con tutto il patrimonio proveniente dalla tradizione...” Translation mine.

Particularly, some worried that the role of priest was devalued in the reformed *Ordo Missae* and the role of the laity was overemphasized.⁶⁵ Finally, a tension existed between the move towards a brief and minimal rite and a concern for appropriate solemnity. This opposition was keenly apparent in the reform of the Offertory, in which some argued for the retention of some manner of prayer formulae during the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar in order to avoid an “indecorous haste” and ensure a sense of “gravity and solemnity” to the proceedings.⁶⁶ While these desiderata greatly influenced the development of the preparation rite towards its final form, for McManus, the exigencies of solemnity were secondary to the conciliar mandate for clarity, simplicity, and sound liturgical practice.⁶⁷

Third, the complex relations between the *Consilium* and the Congregation of Rites, and, later, of those between the Congregation for Divine Worship and the larger Curia should be considered.⁶⁸ From outset of the reform process, the Congregation for Rites wanted the Consilium to be in a subordinate position, with the latter having consultative authority only and the former retaining having the final say in liturgical matters. At times when the Consilium asserted its prerogatives, the Congregation of Rites resisted, often by

⁶⁵ See for example Antonio Cardinal Bacci and Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, *The Critical Study of the New Order of Mass*, 5:1, 2. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1969ottaviani>. Accessed 12/01/09. Although this critique came after the promulgation of the new Order of Mass, it reflected concerns long simmering among critics of the rite.

⁶⁶ Schema 170.c3 in Barba, *La Riforma Conciliare*, 406. “...le preghiere di accompagnamento della ‘depositio’ dei doni preverrebbero da un’eventuale fretta poco decorosa, garantendo nel contempo anche l’auspicata ‘gravitas’ e ‘sollemnitas’.

⁶⁷ McManus, “The Roman Order of Mass”, 130.

⁶⁸ See Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948-1975*. Trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 69-95 for a detailed history of the often contentious relations between these blocs.

behind-the-scenes maneuvering.⁶⁹ Even after the Congregation of Rites and the Consilium were consolidated and absorbed into the newly created Congregation for Divine Worship, the culture and methods of this new body were starkly at odds with those of the larger Roman Curia.⁷⁰ In brief, the freedom with which the Consilium had been established to work as well as its impulse towards a thorough revision of the *Ordo Missae* where both hemmed in by these tensions. Bugnini recalls that the initial enthusiasm at the 1967 Synod of Bishops for realizing the implementation of the revised *Ordo Missae* was quelled by the “massive intervention of persons opposed to any reform and not from the periphery of the Church but for the most part from the Roman Curia.”⁷¹ This led many within the Synod to see the reform of the liturgy as “the source of some worrisome kinds of arbitrary action ... [and] of excessively bold agitation for renewal in still other areas of religious and ecclesiastical life.”⁷² The firm resistance launched by the Curia against the radical reform of the Mass—and certainly the Offertory—sought by members of the Coetus X represents a decisive factor in the final form of the revised *Ordo Missae*.

Fourth, in addition to the resistance of the Curia, various other groups of clerics and laypeople launched sometimes virulent opposition to the reform of the Mass. Their charges of, at the least, the demolition of the Church’s liturgical patrimony and, at worst, of heresy and a Judeo-Masonic-Communist conspiracy against the Church went all the

⁶⁹ See Ibid., 70, 76-8.

⁷⁰ See Ibid., 80-95 for details of these divergences.

⁷¹ Ibid., 349, n.14.

⁷² Ibid. 349.

way to the top of the hierarchy.⁷³ Even Pope Paul VI, or at least the Missal promulgated by him, was eventually condemned as heretical.⁷⁴ In terms of liturgical changes, the dissenting parties argued that the new *Ordo Missae* was the product of a committee and the work of a small group of experts rather than a living, organic renewal of the Mass.⁷⁵ A critique launched by Cardinals Bacci and Ottaviani on the eve of the promulgation of the reformed *Ordo Missae* gave voice to concerns that the “novus ordo,” among other things, suppressed the sacrificial sense of the Mass—especially in the Offertory—denied the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic sacrifice, and, generally, represented a “protestantization” of the Mass.⁷⁶ While it might be easy to dismiss these groups and their concerns as fringe and fanatical elements within the Church, it cannot be denied that their dissenting voices were heard and responded to by the Council Fathers. As Bugnini recalls, “Their influence among the Fathers of the Synod was decisive, causing them to change their view of the reform, at least to some extent, and to trouble their study of what was set before them.”⁷⁷ In October 1969 Pope Paul VI went as far as to halt the process so that the criticisms raised by Cardinals Bacci and Ottaviani could be carefully examined and, if need be, corrections could be made.⁷⁸ Thus, it is important to consider this major, if questionable, opposition and the influence it exerted over no less a figure

⁷³ Ibid., 281, n. 9.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 284.

⁷⁵ Barba, *La Riforma Conciliare*, 67. “I membri del gruppo, illustri professori, dovettero difendersi dall’accusa di proporre una liturgia ‘tecnica’, elaborata a tavolino.”

⁷⁶ See *The Critical Study of the New Order of Mass*, *passim*.

⁷⁷ Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 280.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 287.

than the pope and, consequently, what impact it had on the final form of the *Ordo Missae*.

The actions of the pope lead to the fifth, and perhaps most significant factor in the process of reform: the decisive influence exercised by Paul VI in the process of the reform of the *Ordo Missae*. In addition to attending to dissenting opinions—even if too seriously—the pope was especially influential in the final redaction of the revised *Ordo Missae*. In particular he insisted, against the wishes of the Consilium, on the insertion of the blessing prayers for the bread and wine and the retention of the *Orate Fratres*. The pope lamented the possible loss of the latter formula, calling it “a pearl... a beautiful, ancient and appropriate dialogue between celebrant and congregation.”⁷⁹ He further ordered the composition and addition of the blessing prayers in order to “express the idea of an offering of human toil in union with the sacrifice of Christ.”⁸⁰ In addition, the pontiff also instructed that the phrase *quem/quod offerimus tibi* be included in the formula⁸¹—an addition that risked reinserting a problematic offering theme into the preparation rite. While McManus does mention these factors, he does not delve into the degree to which the final form of the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar was, in fact, the result of the intervention of Paul VI.

In the final analysis, McManus’ critique provides some compelling insights from a person intimately involved with the reform of the *Ordo Missae* and, specifically, the Offertory. His analysis clearly points out the real strengths and weaknesses with the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 379.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 369.

⁸¹ Ibid., 371.

current Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar, both in form and practice. While McManus' purpose was to critique the final *product* and not the *process* of the reform, insight into the latter illuminates the former. It is hoped that the forgoing comments have provided some additional perspective into how the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar came to be in its present form. The revised rite is the result of a delicate balancing of the vision of reform present in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the divergent forces and voices within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The end product is one that, while not perfect, does illuminate the liturgical and spiritual significance of this part of the Eucharistic liturgy.

Michael Marchal

In his study of the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar, Michael Marchal offers a more practically helpful critique of the rite as it now exists—though one not free of its own shortcomings. Marchal identifies faults in the structure, gestures and actions of the rite, and proposes that an analysis of prayer forms can help correct these. He states the basic problem thus: the preparation rite, including the *Orate Fratres* and *super oblata*, should focus precisely on the *action of preparing* for the Eucharistic offering of praise and thanksgiving and the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of the Christ, but instead it focuses on the *material elements* to be used in the sacramental *actio*. Furthermore, even after the revision of the proleptically sacrificial Offertory and its replacement with the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the

Altar, inappropriate gestures as well as ambiguously worded and interpreted prayers remain. Attention to the objects, rather than the subjects and actions of the rite perpetuates a sense that a sacrifice of bread and wine occurs in the preparation rite.

Marchal characterizes the suppression of the Offertory prayers of the earlier *Ordo Missae* as “a radical verbal alteration...ordered to the removal of sacrificial language” that was frustrated by “the redactors...retaining the former rite’s visible gestures and dramatic structure.”⁸² Furthermore, he argues that the basic features of the Offertory that remain in the revised preparation rite—the preparation of the elements at the altar, the visible elevations of the elements, and the accompanying prayers and responses, the *lavabo*, *Orate Fratres*, and the *super oblata*—all suggest that “the presider has solemnly offered something to God.”⁸³ Furthermore, “the rite’s visible gestures seem clearly to assert that its *raison d’être* is the public presbyteral offering of bread and wine to God.”⁸⁴ If Marchal is correct here, this means that the *petit canon* while suppressed in intention and concrete form remains in practical action.

Misguided presbyteral demeanors and interpretations only worsen the problems inherent to the rite. Marchal asserts that “some presbyters accompany... ‘my sacrifice and yours’...with a gesture pointing to the bread and cup sitting on the altar.”⁸⁵ Moreover, some enlarge the slight gesture of elevation prescribed at the blessing prayers and add elevations at the *super oblata*. Extemporaneous prayers over the gifts are

⁸² “*Peccatores ac Famuli: The Roman Preparation of the Gifts and Altar Reconsidered.*” *Studia Liturgica* 16 (1986-7), 74.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

especially problematic for Marchal, particularly those that invoke the Holy Spirit upon the gifts: these add an anticipatory epiclesis to the proleptically sacrificial sense of the preparation.⁸⁶

As a solution to this persistent misunderstanding and faulty enactment of the Preparation, Marchal calls for a clarification of the elements, actions, and actors of the rite. He suggests a threefold method, first, of reviewing the earliest form of the Roman rite of preparation; second, of reexamining, and calling into question the accepted understanding of, two prayers in the rite: the *super oblata* and the *Orate Fratres*; and third, determining the relationship of the preparation rite to the Eucharistic prayer.⁸⁷

In his examination of the rite, Marchal cites and critiques Joseph Jungmann's construction of the seventh century Roman stationary liturgy in *The Mass of the Roman Rite (Missarum Sollemnia)*, which he believes continues to influence the practice and interpretation of the preparation rite.⁸⁸ According to Marchal, Jungmann understood the various movements and prayers rite as "a single unit...with [the] *Dominus vobiscum/et cum spiritu/Oremus* dialogue...as the introduction to the Secret... [and] the quiet presbyteral prayers...as an expansion of the Secret."⁸⁹ For Marchal, a better understanding of this unitary character of the preparation refers to the fact that within the Mass, processions always end with a collect prayer: the *Introit* ends with the Collect; the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 76. See also Josef Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)* 2 vols. Trans. Rev. Francis A. Brunner, C.S.S.R. (New York: Benzinger, 1950). Reprint, Allen TX: Christian Classics, 1986., 6-7.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Communion and its antiphon with the Postcommunion prayer.⁹⁰ The *super oblata* “collects” or gathers and brings to a conclusion the Offertory procession and the presenting of the bread, wine, and other *oblata*, or gifts. As will be shown below, Marchal gives another interpretation of the *super oblata* that presents it not as a concluding collect, but an *introductory* oration.

Marchal argues that the problem with the Offertory as well as with the later Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar involves an overemphasis on the gifts, or the material elements engaged in the rite. As a result, thinking about the preparation has focused on the offering of “the fruits of the earth and the works of human hands” while excluding the sense of a self-offering of those gathered for the Eucharist.⁹¹ This has created the impression, or even perpetuated the erroneous belief, that the preparation rite remains the “Offertory” and a sacrificial action in itself.

While Marchal sees the seventh-century liturgy as at least a good point of reference for a renewed accounting for the current Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar, he seeks to recast the source material in terms free of Jungmann’s “structural and spiritual preconceptions.”⁹² Marchal redirects attention from the *material* of offering to the sacrificial *action* of the Eucharist, and shows how the gestures, prayers, and performance of liturgical roles preceding it should truly serve as a *preparation* for that action. At the end of his reinterpretation of the data, he presents some possibilities for a renewed performance and understanding of the rite.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 77.

⁹² Ibid., 76.

First, Marchal asserts that the presentation of gifts in the early Roman Rite was the role of the whole assembly. Without distinction of clergy and laity, “every individual present...[made] his or her offering both for the poor and the Eucharistic meal.” In this rite, the clergy did not act “as offerers, but as collectors of [the] gifts...[and] no special gestures of offering [were] made by the pope or any bishop or presbyter...especially not at the altar.”⁹³ The whole purpose and meaning of this part of the Mass was not an offering of bread and wine, or of the products of human work on created matter, but the *self-offering* of each individual present in the assembly.⁹⁴ Marchal argues that the rite as currently practiced and understood diverges from this order and “speaks an object-centered message focused on bread and wine as the fruits of the earth and the products of human labor.”⁹⁵ While not denying the value in this interpretation, he regards it as “clearly a message different from the original one of self-offering.”⁹⁶ Where the presenting of gifts in the seventh-century liturgy served a symbolic and mediative role in a whole sacrificial movement, the current rite at least risks a misunderstanding of the presentation as a sacrifice in itself, with the gifts of bread and wine as the sacrificial material.

Second, Marchal identifies an error in the conventional understanding of the prayer *super oblata*, and offers an alternative reading of the type. Even the timing of the prayer raises problems. By the moment of the proclamation of the *super oblata* “the

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 77. Emphasis added.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

presider has been at the altar for a rather long time and has been busy there both in word and gesture with the elements for the Eucharistic meal.”⁹⁷ Perhaps owing to the suppression of the multiple prayers of the Offertory, the *super oblata* “no longer creates the impression...that there is some sort of communal bread and wine *sacrifice* in the Mass in addition to Jesus’ sacrifice.”⁹⁸ This represents a positive development. Nevertheless, Marchal insists, “the medieval gestures still prescribed for the rite indicate that there is a communal *offering* of bread and wine.”⁹⁹ A problem in practice, if not in structure and theory, perpetuates the vagueness of the Preparation of the Gifts. The prayers may no longer convey a sacrificial meaning of the rite, but the gestures do—especially when misunderstood and overemphasized by presiders.

For Marchal, the remedy for the confusion begins with a reinterpretation of the title *super oblata*. The English translation of the traditional designation assumes that the prayers are said *over* the gifts, that is, with the gifts of bread and wine taken “from the many gifts” God gives as the object of the prayers. For example, the *super oblata* for weekdays in the Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time prays

Lord, accept these sacred gifts,
that you have commanded
to be consecrated to your name.
Make us always obedient to your commandments
so that by means of these offerings
we too may be accepted and restored to your good favor.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁹⁸ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁹ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁰ “Suscipe, Domine, sacra munera,
quae tuo nomini iussisti dicanda,
et, ut per ea tuae pietati reddamur accepti,

The oration characterizes *the gifts on the altar* both as the matter of the sacrifice and as an active agent of our acceptability to God: *so that by means of these offerings we too may be accepted*. While not all of the *super oblata* attend so clearly and singularly on the gifts, and while it is not inappropriate for them to do so, this particular subtype focuses almost entirely on the gifts, abstracted from the context of the offering of praise and thanksgiving.

Toward a correction of this misplaced attention, Marchal recommends against any special character being attached to the gifts. Rather than translating *super oblata* as *over* the offerings, he argues, following Albert Blaise, that *oblata* is in the accusative, which when following *super* translates more correctly as “*close to, next to, or by the gifts*.”¹⁰¹ In the liturgy described in *Ordo Romanus Primus*, the pope ascends to the altar after the gifts of the congregation and ministers had been transferred there. Upon his arrival, the pope receives his own offering from the archdeacon, places them on the altar, and says the *super oblata*, “*by the oblation*.”¹⁰²

Even when read as *over* the gifts, *super* still might refer to proximity rather than direct action. A referential distance separates the presider, the prayer, and the gifts on the altar. While *present to* the proclamation of the prayer, and while certainly one feature of its whole subject matter, the material gifts represent neither the primary nor final element.

fac nos tuis semper oboedire mandatis.”” Translation mine with thanks to Dominic E. Serra. All other translations of the *super oblata* are mine.

¹⁰¹ Marchal, *Peccatores ac Famuli*, 78. Emphasis mine. See also Albert Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, revu par Henri Chirat, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967).

¹⁰² Ibid. Emphasis in original.

The fact that the prayer is said over the gifts—the material elements of the Eucharist—simply results from the fact that the gifts are present on the prepared altar, the site of the whole complex of words, objects, persons and actions that composes the liturgy of the Eucharist.

Marchal's alternative reading of *super* is no mere lexical quibble. Rather, it responds to the central problem he sees with the purpose, structure, and interpretation of the Preparation of the Gifts. A shift in the understanding of *super*, if only in the minds of liturgist and presiders at the Eucharist would help clarify the proper performance of this element of the Mass and thereby correct the public impression that the presentation of gifts and preparation for the offering is, in fact, the offering itself. The material gifts certainly represent an essential element of the Eucharistic offering, but they do not exhaust the lifting up of thanks, praise, and adoration to God that is the Eucharist.

Furthermore, a rethinking of the preposition *super* illuminates the proper understanding of the genres of two of the prayers of the rite and, thereby assists in formulating an accurate theology of the preparation rite. Here, Marchal argues that the *Orate Fratres* and the *super oblata* persist in being wrongly interpreted as concluding the Preparation, when, in fact, they prepare for the Eucharistic prayer. Indeed, he insists, they are *part of* the Eucharistic prayer, which is itself part of a larger genre, the *berakhoth*—or blessing prayers that are—wrongly—often understood as limited to the Eucharistic formulae.¹⁰³ Marchal identifies several *berakhoth* within the Roman Rite. These begin

¹⁰³ Ibid., 78. Prescinding from the question of whether or not the blessing prayers of the Roman Rite are properly referred to as *berakhoth*, the title will be used in keeping with Marchal's usage.

with a preliminary prayer “linked not so much with the preceding element in the service, but somehow introducing the great blessing that follows.”¹⁰⁴ For Marchal, the *super oblata* fits into this category. While these are not in themselves *berakhoth*—that would perpetuate the problem of anticipation and duplication of the Eucharistic prayer—they are preparatory elements within the genre.¹⁰⁵ Marchal cites seventeen examples of introductory prayer forms that he believes are structurally and conceptually analogous to the *super oblata* and that lead into a blessing prayer. He locates four of these in the *Missale Romanum* and thirteen in the *Pontificale Romanum*—both books in the editions in use just prior to the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰⁶ The three orations from the 1956 Missal are the blessings of the palms on Palm Sunday and the Paschal Candle and Font at the Easter Vigil.¹⁰⁷ In the Pontifical are “blessing[s] of the Holy Chrism, Abbots and Abbesses, Virgins, a Queen, Penitents, a Church, an Altar in a Church, a Portable Altar, a

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 79-80.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 81. In fact, Marchal points out the “heavily sacrificial” lexicon of the *super oblata*, which use nouns such as *dona*, *munera*, *oblationem*, *hostias*, and *sacrificium*. Thus, there is always the danger of the *super oblata* being understood as “a true offertory concerned with a preliminary hallowing of bread and wine rather than with the preparation of objects and persons for the Eucharistic prayer to follow.”

¹⁰⁶ See Ibid., 79.

¹⁰⁷ For a more comprehensive study of the blessing of Baptismal Water see Dominic Serra, “The Blessing of Baptismal Water at the Paschal Vigil in the Gelasianum Vetus: A Study of the Euchological Texts, Ge 444-448 in *Ecclesia Orans* 6 (1989), 323-344 and “The Blessing of Baptismal Water at the Paschal Vigil in the Post-Vatican II Reform” in *Ecclesia Orans* 7 (1990). In the earlier article, Serra discusses how Ge 444, a prayer originating in the old Gelasian Sacramentary where it precedes the Blessing of the Baptismal Waters, “is an introductory oration...[that] makes two requests: 1) that God be present in the sending of the Spirit, and 2) that the divine presence in the liturgical event render that event efficacious”(325).

Omnipotens sempiterne deus,
 adesto magnae pietatis tuae mysteriis,
 adesto sacramentis et
 ad creandos novos populos,
 quos tibi fons baptismatis parturit,
 spiritum adoptionis emitte,
 ut quod humilitatis nostrae gerendum est ministerio,
 uirtutis tuae conpleatur effectus: per.

Cemetery, the Reconciliation of a Church and Cemetery, as well as the Ordinations of Deacons, Presbyters and Bishops.”¹⁰⁸ Each of these prayers serves the purpose of “introducing the great blessing that follows.”¹⁰⁹ They do so by preparing the persons and objects involved in a particular liturgy for the action about to take place.

While this basic insight proposed by Marchal provides a productive guideline for discovering a more precise understanding of the nature and function of the *super oblata*, Marchal’s use of the sources he cites is less helpful. Specifically, the blessings for the palms and Easter Candle are later, non-Roman sources. The same is true of the orations from the Pontifical. Thus, while there certainly are thematic and functional correspondences between the *super oblata* and these formulae, they are of a different genre and can be too simplistically correlated. A methodologically precise and adequate comparison of the two forms would constitute the subject of another dissertation. Therefore, such a comparison will not be attempted in this discussion.

However, since the formula for the blessing of the font and the *super oblata* are both truly Roman forms appearing in a common source—the ancient sacramentaries—they can be fruitfully compared with each other. In examining this oration for the font and a possible relationship between it and the *super oblata* additional insight from Dominic Serra’s work on the Baptismal formula from the *Gelasianum Vetus* (Ge 444) can provide us with some of the methodological precision lacking in Marchal’s otherwise instructive study. Here, Serra demonstrates precisely how prayers found in the ancient

¹⁰⁸ Marchal, *Peccatores ac Famuli*, 79, nn.17, 18.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

sacramentaries following a similar pattern to Ge 444 function in the Ordinations of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons and in the Consecration of Virgins and the Nuptial Blessing: namely, all invoke the divine presence and participation in the rites about to be performed.¹¹⁰ More specifically, he concludes that each of these introductory prayers, following Ge 444, “seeks God’s presence, mediated by his merciful glance [signified in the orations by the imperative *respice*] or by the sending down of his blessing power or Spirit upon the recipient of the blessing, which participation will guarantee the effectiveness of what is done in the liturgical action”.¹¹¹ Furthermore, Serra points out that each form of “the oration is closely aligned with the longer blessing prayer. It does not have an independent function, *nor one that attaches it to some other part of the rite*”.¹¹² Finally, he concludes “that Ge 444 is similar in both theme and function to the other introductory orations used in major Roman blessings. As such it may be understood to constitute an integral part of the blessing euchology.”¹¹³ Most if not all of the foregoing can be said precisely of the *super oblata*. Specifically, this affirms the notion that the *super oblata* should be rightly understood as a preliminary part of the Eucharistic prayer rather than a conclusion to the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar.

The prayer for the font, on which we here focus, reads:

¹¹⁰ Serra, “The Blessing of Baptismal Water at the Paschal Vigil in the Gelasianum Vetus”, 325-330. In order to argue his point correctly, Marchal would have needed to study these prayers rather than their later forms in the 12th and 13th century Pontificals. This is so because the earlier forms of the blessing prayers and the *super oblata* developed in a common source: the early sacramentaries. The forms of the blessing prayers in the Pontificals represent a different phase in their development and, thus, are not properly compared to earlier forms.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 331.

¹¹² Ibid., emphasis mine.

¹¹³ Ibid., 343.

Almighty and eternal God,
 be present in the mysteries of your great mercy,
 be present in the sacraments:
 Send forth the spirit of adoption
 to the new people about to be created
 who are born at the font of Baptism,
 so that the rite to be performed in the ministry of our humility
 may be effective by the operation of your power.¹¹⁴

This image- and theology-laden oration requests the divine assistance for the fulfillment of the rite about to occur. The oration is followed by the blessing formula for the water of Baptism. Like the majority of the *super oblata*, this preparatory prayer begins with a vocative address to God, followed by a request for a blessing or sacramental empowerment of the material and persons involved and then by an *ut*, or “so that” clause then designates the hoped-for result of the request and the fruits of the liturgical action.

Certainly, important thematic differences exist between this oration and the *super oblata*. Specifically, both forms include themes and images proper to the particular celebrations and material involved. Moreover, while both forms request the divine blessing on the action about to be performed, some, in fact, invoke the descent of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁵ The *super oblata* cited in this study do not on the whole explicitly seek the divine *presence* in the same way as this type of oration, they do invoke God’s empowering action. Moreover, in terms of tone, structure, and purpose, the likenesses

Omnipotens sempiterne deus,
 adesto magnae pietatis tuae mysteriis,
 adesto sacramentis et
 ad creandos novos populos,
 quos tibi fons baptismatis parturit,
 spiritum adoptionis emitte,
 ut quod humilitatis nostrae gerendum est ministerio,
 uirtutis tuae conpleatur effectus: per. Translation mine.

¹¹⁵ Serra, “The Blessing of Baptismal Water at the Paschal Vigil in the Gelasianum Vetus”, 325.

between the two forms are quite clear—even if they are by no means identical.¹¹⁶ Notice, for example, the similarities of the following *super oblata* for eight Sundays in Ordinary Time to the prayer at the font¹¹⁷:

Lord, may this holy offering
always grant us your saving blessing,
so that what it celebrates in mystery
it may accomplish in power (XXII).¹¹⁸

Receive, we beseech you Lord,
the offerings that we bring to you from your bounty,
that by the powerful working of your grace
these most sacred mysteries
might both sanctify us in the conduct of the present life
and lead us to eternal joy(XVII).¹¹⁹

Lord, having been appeased,
receive the offerings of your Church,
which you have mercifully given to be offered
and which you powerfully cause to change
into the mystery of our salvation (XIX).¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 343. Serra points out that the introductory prayer for the Blessing of the Font “is similar in both theme and function to other introductory orations used in major Roman blessings.” While the *super oblata* do not figure in Serra’s discussion, it is argued here that they are precisely such introductory orations and, like these, they “constitute an integral part of the blessing euchology.”

¹¹⁷ The *super oblata* are displayed here in order of their thematic similarity to the prayer for the Font rather than in chronological sequence.

¹¹⁸ Benedictionem nobis, Domine,
conferat salutarem sacra semper oblatio,
ut, quod agit mysterio, virtute perficiat. Translation mine.

¹¹⁹ Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine,
munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus,
ut haec sacrosancta mysteria,
gratiae tuae operante virtute,
et praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent,
et ad gaudia sempiterna perducant

¹²⁰ Ecclesiae tuae, Domine,
munera placatus assume,
quae et misercors offerenda tribuisti,
et in nostrae salutis potenter
efficis transire mysterium.

Lord, we beseech you,
 look upon the gifts we offer to your majesty,
 so that what is accomplished in our servitude
 may be directed especially to your glory (XXX).¹²¹

God, you worthily bring about the effects of your mysteries,
 grant, we beseech you,
 that our services might be rendered
 suitable to these sacred gifts (XIII).¹²²

God, you have ordained the perfection
 of the multiplicity of sacrifices in the law
 by this one sacrifice,
 receive the sacrifice from the servants devoted to you,
 and bless it with the same blessing you gave
 to the offerings of Abel,
 so that what individuals have offered
 to honor your majesty
 may advance all to salvation (XVI).¹²³

Lord, look upon these offerings
 of the supplicating Church,
 and grant that they be taken up
 for the increase of the sanctification of the believing (XV).¹²⁴

¹²¹ Rescipe, quaesumus, Domine,
 munera quae tuae offerimus maiestati,
 ut, quod nostro servitio geritur,
 ad tuam gloriam potius dirigatur

¹²² Deus, qui mysteriorum tuorum
 dignanter operaris effectus,
 praesta, quaesumus,
 ut sacris apta muneribus fiant nostra servitia

¹²³ Deus, qui legalium differentiam
 hostiarum unius sacrificii perfectione sanxisti,
 accipe sacrificium a devotis tibi famulis,
 et pari benedictione, sicut munera Abel, sanctifica,
 ut, quod singuli obtulerunt ad maiestatis tuae honorem,
 cunctis proficiat ad salutem

¹²⁴ Respice, Domine,
 munera supplicantis Ecclesiae,
 et pro credentium sanctificationis
 incremento sumenda concede.

Lord, we beseech you,
 having been appeased,
 consider the sacrifices present,
 so that what we accomplish
 in the mystery of the passion of your Son,
 we might obtain in devoted love (XXXII).¹²⁵

Although the prayer for the font is lexically and thematically more elaborate than these more terse *super oblata*, both ask for some form of blessing upon the work about to be accomplished and that what is done sacramentally by humans is effected and perfected by the active power or at least the consent of God, both in the present liturgy and in the ongoing spiritual life.

The salient point here is that both the prayer forms discussed effectively perform the same purpose; at the very least they follow the same ritual pattern. The orations look *forward* to the action about to be performed, the material to be used therein, and the persons involved in the rite. Just as the other introductory prayers, of which the prayer for the font is a prime example, prepare for the liturgical actions about to occur, the *super oblata* serve “the preparation of objects and persons for the Eucharistic prayer to follow... [and] ask for the right disposition to offer up the sacrifice worthily, or even for

¹²⁵ Sacrificiis praesentibus,
 Domine, quaesumus,
 intende placatus, ut,
 quod passionis Filii tui mysterio gerimus,
 pio consequamur affectu

the fruit of the sacrifice.”¹²⁶ The *super oblata* for the Sundays II, VIII, X, and XXIII also provide clear examples of this:

Lord, grant us, we beseech you,
to attend to these mysteries worthily,
because whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is performed,
the work of our redemption is accomplished.¹²⁷

God, who grants what is to be offered to your name,
and attributes what is offered
to the devotion of our service,
we beseech your mercy,
that what you supply,
from which merit may be,
you might grant to advance us to the reward.¹²⁸

Lord, we beseech you,
look kindly upon our service,
that what we offer
might be acceptable to you
and be the increase of our love.¹²⁹

God, creator of true devotion and peace,
grant, we beseech you,
that we may both fittingly reverence your majesty
with this offering
and be faithfully united in our hearts
by our participation in this sacred mystery.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Marchal, *Peccatores ac Famuli*, 80.

¹²⁷ II. Concede nobis, quaesumus, Domine,
haec digne frequentare mysteria, quia,
quoties huius hostiae commemoratio celebratur,
opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur

¹²⁸ VIII. Deus, qui offerenda tuo nomini tribuis,
et oblata devotioni nostrae servitutis ascribis,
quaesumus clementiam tuam, ut, quod praestas unde sit meritum,
proficere nobis largiaris ad praemium.

¹²⁹ X. Respice, Domine, quaesumus,
nostram propitius servitutem,
ut quod offerimus sit tibi acceptum,
et nostrae caritatis augmentum.

¹³⁰ XXIII. Deus, auctor sinceræ devotionis et pacis,

The prayers ask that true worship, of which God is the source, might be suitably offered by the Church, and that those who partake in the Eucharist might be redeemed, united, filled with love and fit for eternal life. The point here is sacramental efficacy. If the positions of Marchal, Serra, and the present study are correct, then the major Roman blessings are preceded by a request for the divine empowerment of the human work about to be performed so that that work will be made efficacious for the persons involved in it.

In addition to the above introductory features, Marchal also sees the *super oblata* as a plea for joining the individual self-offerings of the faithful with the sacrifice of the whole community. He quotes from the prayer for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost from the pre-Conciliar Missal: "...so that what each of us offers to the honor of your name may advance the salvation of all."¹³¹ Here the Eucharistic *actio* is described as moving from the individual to the communal to be completed in the one offering of Christ,¹³² for which the *super oblata* prepares, but cannot add to or duplicate. The above cited *super oblata* for Sunday XXIII as well as VI, and XXIV contain a similar theme of inclusivity:

Lord, we beseech you
that this offering may cleanse and renew us
and that it be a source of eternal reward
for those who follow your will. (VI)¹³³

da, quaesumus, ut et maiestatem tuam convenienter hoc munere veneremur,
et sacri participatione mysterii fideliter sensibus uniamur.

¹³¹ Marchal, "*Peccatores ac Famuli*", 82. "...ut, quod singuli obtulerunt ad honorem nominis tui, cunctis proficiat ad salutem." Translation mine. See also the oration for Sunday XVI.

¹³² Ibid., 82.

¹³³ VI. Haec nos oblatio,
quaesumus, Domine,
mundet et renovet atque
tuam exsequentibus voluntatem
fiat causa remunerationis aeternae.

Lord, be pleased with our supplications,
and kindly receive these gifts of your servants,
so that what each offers to the honor of your name
may advance to the salvation of all. (XXIV)¹³⁴

The second prayer asks for God's benevolent acceptance not only of the *oblaciones*, but also of the prayers about to be offered, as does the oration for Sunday and XXVIII:

Lord, receive the prayers of the faithful
with offerings of sacrifices,
that through these services of holy devotion,
we might cross over into heavenly glory.¹³⁵

For Marchal these prayers shares a common attitude with most of the prayers introducing blessings in the Roman Rite: all imply the unworthiness of those offering the prayers. They are prayers *for* the prayers as well as for the material gifts offered. These introductory orations "beg that our human frailty not keep the saving work of Christ's redemption from being here and now effective."¹³⁶ For this reason the ends sought in the prayers are expressed in the subjunctive mood. The Church cannot presume the success of its cult in itself; it always seeks and relies upon God's grace that its service *might be* accomplished and made salvifically efficacious. The gathered worshippers "remain

¹³⁴XXIV. Propitiare, Domine,
supplicationibus nostris,
et has oblationes famulorum tuorum
benignus assume, ut quod
singuli ad honorem tui
nominis obtulerunt, cunctis proficiat ad salutem.

¹³⁵ Suscipe, Domine,
fidelium preces cum oblationibus hostiarum,
ut, per haec pia devotionis officia,
ad caelestem gloriam transeamus.

¹³⁶ Marchal, *Peccatores et Famuli*, 83.

peccatores (sinners)... as well [as] *famuli* (God's faithful retainers)" always relying on God's grace and mercy, especially when carrying out the sacred work of the Eucharist¹³⁷:

Receive, we beseech you Lord,
the offerings that we bring to you
from your bounty,
that by the powerful working of your grace
these most sacred mysteries
might both sanctify us
in the conduct of the present life
and lead us to eternal joy. (XVII)¹³⁸

Lord, having been appeased,
receive the offerings of your Church,
which you have mercifully given to be offered
and which you powerfully cause to change
into the mystery of our salvation. (XIX)¹³⁹

The sense of collective unworthiness, ritual inability, and the constant need for divine assistance in offering the Eucharistic sacrifice that prevails in the *super oblata* is also the subject of the *Orate Fratres*. Marchal understands this prayer preceding the *super oblata* as the celebrant's personal prayer for the acceptance of his gift to be offered along with those of the ministers and assembly.¹⁴⁰ The earliest textual witnesses to the *Orate Fratres* provide no response or rubrical direction, suggesting that the prayer was

¹³⁷ Ibid., 89.

¹³⁸ Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine,
munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus,
ut haec sacrosancta mysteria,
gratiae tuae operante virtute,
et praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent,
et ad gaudia sempiterna perducant.

¹³⁹ Ecclesiae tuae, Domine,
munera placatus assume,
quae et misercors offerenda tribuisti,
et in nostrae salutis potenter
efficis transire mysterium.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 84. Marchal bases his comments on the *Orate Fratres* on Jungmann's analysis in *MRR* II, 82-90.

“addressed to the priests standing around” the celebrant.¹⁴¹ In time, however, the prayer became addressed to the people, *fratres et sorores*, rather than to the clergy, *fratres*, alone. Later, the phrase *meum ac vestrum sacrificium* further extended the prayer to the one offering of the whole assembly, clergy and faithful together.¹⁴²

For Marchal, determining the exact nature of the *sacrificium* indicated in the *Orate Fratres* provides a key to a correct understanding and practice of the Preparation of the Gifts. Does the noun *sacrificium* refer to the material gifts of bread and wine on the altar? Marchal argues that “spontaneous presbyteral gestures... seem to indicate so.”¹⁴³ But against this impression, he insists that “the Christian priesthood is founded upon the sacrifice of Christ alone and not on any material elements.”¹⁴⁴ The former represents the very essence of the Eucharist; the latter serves as one part of a ritual whole that embodies and enacts Christ’s sacrifice in the present time and place. Furthermore, the phrase *sacrificium de manibus* in the *Orate Fratres* refers not to the material of the sacrifice, the bread and wine, present in time and location, but perhaps to the “oblationary gestures which have consistently accompanied the Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman Rite.”¹⁴⁵ Marchal does not list these, but presumably they would include bows, the raising of the eyes and hands to heaven, the making of signs of the cross, the lifting up of the Eucharistic species and so forth. This seemingly literal reading suggests that *de manibus* is, in fact, a metonym for the whole sacrificial *action* carried out in the Eucharistic

¹⁴¹ *MRR* II, 84.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 84-6, 89.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-5. See also 38.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

prayer: the memorial of Christ's own self-offering to the Father made present in ritual word and gesture.

Marchal sees a clear connection between the *Orate Fratres* and the Eucharistic prayer in the response *Suspiciat Dominus sacrificium...ad laudem et gloriam nominis sui*. This phrase anticipates one in the *Memento* of the Roman Canon—*hoc sacrificium laudis*—which “indicate[s] the persistence of that conjunction of praise and oblation which is so important in the Roman Canon.”¹⁴⁶ This foreshadowing should not be understood as a duplication of the Eucharistic prayer; it is not the “little canon” revived. Rather, in his reading of the formula, Marchal sees a thread binding together a unit of prayer from the *Orate Fratres*, through the *super oblata*, and completed in the Eucharistic prayer. There is not, then, a sacrifice of bread and wine in an “offertory” and one of praise and glory to God in the Eucharistic prayer. The one *sacrificium ad laudem et gloriam* to God is the self-offering of the gathered Body of Christ ritualized in the procession and presentation of gifts, prayed for in the *Orate Fratres* and *super oblata*, and joined to Christ's own offering made present in the Eucharistic prayer.

This *sacrificium* is not only the work of the priest, but of the whole assembly. Thus, *meum ac vestrum* alludes to the whole *leitourgia* or communal work of which the material gifts are but one element. The array of liturgical words, actions, persons, and objects is carried out by frail humans, clergy and faithful; its completion in human salvation relies on the gracious omnipotence of a personal and merciful God. For Marchal, the preparation rite, *Orate Fratres*, and *super oblata* invoke God's grace upon

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

not only, or even primarily, the gifts of bread and wine, but also the hearts, minds, hands, and lips of the gathered Church for the worthiness to accomplish the great sacrifice of praise and thanks to God.¹⁴⁷

In Marchal's model, a clearer understanding of the relationship between the *Orate Fratres* and *super oblata*, and, in turn, their preparatory relationship to the Eucharistic prayer rectifies the understanding and practice of the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar. In shifting the focus from the static objects of bread and wine and to the preparation of these along with the prayers, actions, and persons of the Eucharist, the rite is understood not as concluding some self-contained offering of bread and wine, or as a duplication of the Eucharistic prayer, but as an entry into, and preliminary movement towards, the one and perfect sacrifice of Christ.

In addition to a reinterpretation of the preparatory prayers, the refinement of the rite calls for changes in the actual performance of the rite. Such entails, first, "eliminating excess verbiage and needless gestures."¹⁴⁸ This would require that articles 141 and 142 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), which call for minimal gestures and silent recitation of the blessing prayers, be reiterated and more faithfully observed.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 89. Emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁹ 141. At the altar the priest accepts the paten with the bread. With both hands he holds it slightly raised above the altar and says quietly, *Benedictus es, Domine* (*Blessed are you, Lord*). Then he places the paten with the bread on the corporal.

142. After this, as the minister presents the cruets, the priest stands at the side of the altar and pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly, *Per huius aquae* (*By the mystery of this water*). He returns to the middle of the altar, takes the chalice with both hands, raises it a little, and says quietly, *Benedictus es, Domine* (*Blessed are you, Lord*). Then he places the chalice on the corporal and covers it with a pall, as

Second, and perhaps more controversially, Marchal calls for “allowing someone other than a presbyter or bishop to ‘take charge of’ this part of the service.”¹⁵⁰ The emphasis on the celebrant’s role in the preparation that accumulated over the centuries often obscured the sense of the rite as a self-offering of all the faithful in the context of the Mass; meanwhile, attention increasingly focused on the gifts to the diminishment of the *giving*. Even after the reform of the Offertory, these two essential problems remain. As a solution Marchal, in another article, calls for “the elimination of all *priestly* words and gestures from this portion of the service.”¹⁵¹ Here, however, Marchal expects too much: such major change to this or any part of the Mass at this time cannot be reasonably anticipated.

Furthermore, in keeping with articles 73 and 74 in the *GIRM* the gifts should be brought forward in *procession* by the faithful.¹⁵² Moreover, Marchal argues, it was originally foreseen that the gifts should actually be made or at least provided by members

appropriate.

If, however, there is no Offertory chant and the organ is not played, in the presentation of the bread and wine the priest may say the formulas of blessing aloud, to which the people make the acclamation, *Benedictus Deus in saecula (Blessed be God for ever)*.

¹⁵⁰ Marchal, “*Peccatores ac Famuli*”, 89.

¹⁵¹ Marchal, “A Consideration of the Offering”, *Worship* 63 (Jan.1989), 47.

¹⁵² 73. The offerings are then brought forward. It is praiseworthy for the bread and wine to be presented by the faithful. They are then accepted at an appropriate place by the priest or the deacon and carried to the altar. Even though the faithful no longer bring from their own possessions the bread and wine intended for the liturgy as in the past, nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still retains its force and its spiritual significance.

It is well also that money or other gifts for the poor or for the Church, brought by the faithful or collected in the church, should be received. These are to be put in a suitable place but away from the eucharistic table.

74. The procession bringing the gifts is accompanied by the Offertory chant, which continues at least until the gifts have been placed on the altar. The norms on the manner of singing are the same as for the Entrance chant. Singing may always accompany the rite at the offertory, even when there is no procession with the gifts.

of the assembly.¹⁵³ This dual action of provision and presentation would enable an exercise of the faithful's "right...to know they are part of the story and of the gift" as well as "an exercise of that royal priesthood in which all believers share through baptism in Christ."¹⁵⁴

Third, Marchal envisions a clarification and amplification of the *accessus ad altare* by the presider, which would occur only after the faithful have presented the gifts and the deacon or acolytes have prepared the altar. The exclusion of the presider from the preparatory rites insures that the *accessus* represents "an authentic physical gesture on the part of the presbyter(s)."¹⁵⁵ This would initiate the properly presbyteral role of leading the assembly in the only true offering of the Mass. Marchal would accentuate this point of the liturgy with some novel features including: "[t]he use of incense as a gesture of purification for gifts, altar, ministers, and congregation"; a moment of "quiet prayer by the whole community through some adaptation of the *Orate Fratres* perhaps during which...some form of penitential rite might be appropriate"; a relocated sign of peace.¹⁵⁶ These recommendations would require some major and problematic restructuring of the liturgy and the interruption of a well-established flow of liturgical action. The preparation of the altar and gifts by the deacon or ministers followed by the *accessus*, requires only an adjustment of ministerial roles, and certainly has a precedent in the Roman Rite.

¹⁵³ Marchal, "A Consideration of the Offering", 47. See also 12: Marchal asserts that this practice was "effectively squelched" in the U.S. by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy in its June-July 1983 *Newsletter*.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Marchal, *Peccatores ac Famuli*, 90.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

While the implementation of thorough revisions to the Preparation can hardly be expected at this time, Marchal's proposals for it remain instructive; some are clearly practicable, and desirable. A simple adherence to rubrical instructions could reduce unnecessary gestures and oververbalization of prayers intended to be said quietly. A procession of the gifts conducted with proper attention and decorum, and a reception of the gifts by a minister other than the presider can highlight the essentially communal, even lay, character of the rite. Finally, a renewed emphasis on the rite as a self-offering of the whole assembly, clergy and laity, about to be joined with Christ's own offering and completed in the communion with his body and blood can only enhance the Church's experience and understanding of the "font and summit" of its life.

Conclusion

The above critiques of the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar indicate that while an improvement from the Offertory, the revised rite nonetheless contains some problematic elements from the earlier form. McManus and Marchal both detect a persistent lack of clarity in the purpose and meaning of both the words and actions of the rite. An overemphasis on the presider and his role remains even while that of the laity has been increased. Ambiguous words and gestures that impart a sense of the preparation as a sacrifice of the bread and wine for the Eucharist also constitute an ongoing problem.

The authors each suggest measures towards further refinement of the Preparation. McManus would return to the earliest, most minimal schema for the rite, that

of the 1964 *specimen provisorum*, and even allow making much of the proceedings *pro opportunitate*, or optional. He certainly would eliminate such elements as the handwashing, the celebrant's private prayers and the *Orate Fratres*.

Marchal seeks a shift of attention away from the material elements of the Eucharist and toward the liturgical *actions*. While he suggests some structural and performative adjustments—including further refinement or reduction of gestures and prayer forms—he puts more emphasis on clarifying the understanding of what is done in the rite, and, more so, what is said. Specifically, Marchal recommends a reinterpretation of the *oratio super oblata* as an oration preparing for the Eucharistic prayer as much as concluding the preparation rite. Of these two analyses of the Preparation examined in this chapter, Marchal's most directly casts light upon the subject of this study, the *oratio super oblata*. While some details of his understanding of this prayer can be challenged, some of his insights will contribute to the examination of the *super oblata* in the following chapter. Specifically, it will be kept in mind that the orations are concerned as much, or more so, with the *act* of offering as with the material gifts to be offered. The Presentation of the Gifts and the Preparation of the Altar involve not only the gifts, but the givers and the giving.

CHAPTER FIVE

A THEOLOGY FROM THE *SUPER OBLATA*

The remainder of this study will involve the presentation of a theology of and from the *orationes super oblata*. This will entail a close reading of the texts of the prayers in reference to their liturgical context and will draw upon the method proposed by Kevin Irwin in his work *Context and Text*, with ancillary reference to other sources. The goal here is not to present a point-by-point application of Irwin's method; rather, it is to provide an essential foundation for a theologically productive reading of the texts. First, following Irwin, a distinction will be made between theology *of* the liturgy and *from* the liturgy and the present application of each will be stated. Next, his thesis *context is text; text shapes context* and how it will inform the reading of the *super oblata* in the liturgical setting of the Preparation of the Gifts will be explained.

I. Liturgical Theology

Irwin proposes three basic understandings of liturgical theology relevant to the interpretations of the *super oblata* to follow: theology of the liturgy, theology from the liturgy, and doxological theology. These modes will be explained below first in their general features and then as they apply to the *super oblata*.

Theology of liturgy: In this mode, theology “describes what Christian liturgy is and what it does in terms of actualizing Christ's paschal mystery for the Church, gathered and

enlivened by the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹ Irwin understands Christian liturgy as “a ritual enactment in the believing Church of the transtemporal event of Christ’s dying and rising.”² That is, in every liturgical action the Church makes present in particular moments in time the once-for-all saving deeds of Christ.³ It does so not as historical reenactment, but “in such a way that a new act of salvation occurs *here and now*.”⁴

Irwin posits three basic principles as foundational to this view of the liturgy. First, liturgy is *anamnetic*: that is,

it combines the past redemptive deeds of Jesus (obedient life, humiliation, suffering death, resurrection, ascension) and draws the contemporary Church into a unique and ever new experience of these redemptive deeds through the words and symbols of the liturgy even as the Church yearns for redemption’s eschatological fulfillment in the kingdom.⁵

As a genre the *orationes super oblata* involve the anamnetic aspect of liturgy, referring, as most of the orations do, to how the Church’s offering in preparation for the Eucharistic prayer participates here and now in Christ’s redemptive self-offering. The prayer for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time explicitly states, “whenever the commemoration of [Christ’s] sacrifice is performed the work of our redemption is accomplished.”⁶

Moreover, several of the *super oblata* look forward to the eschatological fulfillment of

¹ Kevin Irwin, *Context and Text* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 46.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 320.

⁴ Ibid., 47. Emphasis added.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ . . .quoties huius hostiae commemoratio celebratur, opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur. *Missale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum; auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum*. Editio typica. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1970).

All subsequent uses of the orations will be from this source. See Appendix III for the texts of all the *Super Oblata* for Sundays in Ordinary Time. All translations are mine except where otherwise noted.

the redemptive effects experienced in the Eucharistic liturgy. The prayer for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time reads,

Lord, we beseech you
that this offering may cleanse and renew us
and also that it be a source of eternal reward
for those who follow your will.⁷

Second, liturgy is *epicletic*: “it derives from and is dependent upon the action of the Holy Spirit....who sustains and will bring the liturgy to its fulfillment in the kingdom.”⁸ More precisely, for Irwin, “every act of liturgy is what God accomplishes among us through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁹ While the *super oblata* for Ordinary Time include no explicit references to the Holy Spirit, and, thus, no clear pneumatological insights may be derived from them, this aspect of the liturgy remains in the background of the prayers.¹⁰ If liturgy is intrinsically epicletic, the Holy Spirit operates in all of its parts. This can be said of the *super oblata* for Ordinary Time, most of which, while not invoking the Holy Spirit, do seek divine empowerment of the liturgical action and are oriented towards eternal completion.¹¹

⁷ Haec nos oblatio, quaesumus, Domine,
mundet et renovet
atque tuam exsequentibus voluntatem
fiat causa remunerationis aeternae.

⁸ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 48.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The *super oblata* for other times in the liturgical year and for specific Masses do include explicit pneumatological references. These would require and certainly merit a separate study. For the purposes of this dissertation we will confine ourselves to a brief comment on the limited epicletical function of the *super oblata*.

¹¹ Vincenzo Raffa argues that some of the *super oblata* contain epicletic features. That is, requests for the efficacy and eschatological fulfillment of the Eucharist are epicletic. See “Le Orazioni sulle offerte del proprio del tempo nel nouvo messale”, *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 84 (1970), 318-9.

Third, liturgy is *ecclesiological*, that is, “it is always an act of the Church’s self-understanding and self-expression.”¹² Within the ecclesiological aspect of the liturgy, Irwin also points out the *soteriological*: “the Church at prayer is the Church in need of redemption; through the liturgy it experiences its hoped for redemption.” Both the ecclesiological and soteriological themes are particularly operative in the *super oblata*, most clearly in the prayer for the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Lord, having been appeased,
receive the gifts of your Church,
which you have mercifully given to be offered
and which you powerfully cause to change
into the mystery of our salvation¹³

What is done in the Preparation of the Gifts and what is said in the *orationes super oblata* are always the acts and words of the Church—both its individual members and the one body of Christ—looking forward to its eternal salvation.

Theology from the liturgy: This approach employs liturgical “words and symbols...as a generative source for developing systematic theology.”¹⁴ The reformed rites and their General Instructions are explored for how they “image the very being of God...how they describe the being and redemptive work of Christ...how they describe the being and work of the Holy Spirit...how they image the Church...[and] describe and reflect on our

¹² Irwin, *Context and Text*, 48.

¹³ Ecclesiae tuae, Domine, munera placatus assume,
quae et misericors offerenda tribuisti,
et in nostrae salutis potenter efficis transire mysterium.

¹⁴ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 50.

need for grace...especially as grace is experienced and mediated through the liturgy.”¹⁵

Here, systematic theology derived from the liturgy “is intrinsically connected to the act of worship.”¹⁶ That is, in its liturgical worship of God, the Church, through its words, symbols and gestures, enacts its beliefs about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, humanity, redemption, and eschatology, to name a few themes. The “metaphorical” or “symbolic” language of the liturgy conveys these realities in a way “less precise than the more technical language of dogmatic assertions.”¹⁷ Moreover, in this mode of expression, “the liturgy is oriented to encounter and to the appropriation of the mysteries celebrated.”¹⁸ A theology from the liturgy, then, will be comparatively more dynamic, evocative, and experiential in character rather than a theology that is primarily didactic and propositional. The examination of the *super oblata* will examine the ways in which the prayers poetically articulate some common themes of systematic theology in the context of the Church’s presentation of the gifts for the Eucharistic offering and in preparation for the Eucharistic prayer. In the enacted rites¹⁹ those theological concepts bear the potential for becoming vital aspects of the lived faith experience of the Church—in its individual members and as a body.

Doxological Theology: This mode of theology develops from a “sense of thanks, praise, and acknowledgement” and attends to “how the *mystery* that is God and that is of God is

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 51.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., xi.

experienced through both liturgy and theology.”²⁰ Here, Irwin understands *orthodoxy* in both senses of *doxa*—“right praise” and “correct teaching”, with the former being primary.²¹ This theology is, again, dynamic and experiential, involving “the whole person in the act of liturgy and of doing theology.”²² It attends to the experience of what the liturgy enacts and to “notions of conversion and growth of faith as well as growth in understanding” related to that experience.²³ The *super oblata* clearly engage these experiential and ethical aspects of the presentation of gifts. Moreover, they convey an “orthodox” expression of the Church’s offering of gifts and its relationship to the salvific effects of Christ’s own offering made present in the Eucharistic words and actions. In doing so, they follow the foundational axiom of liturgy theology: *lex orandi lex credendi*.

II. Method

Irwin bases his method for liturgical theology on the twofold thesis, *liturgical context is text; text shapes context*.²⁴ By *context is text* he means that enacted liturgical rites, that is, the texts, symbols, gestures and action, provide “the source—text—for developing liturgical theology.”²⁵ The study of the *super oblata* will focus, naturally, on the texts of the prayers. The principle *text shapes context* refers to how “the theology of the liturgy (*text*) necessarily shapes the theology and spirituality of those who participate

²⁰ Ibid., 52.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 54, 56.

²⁵ Ibid., 54.

in the liturgy (*context*).”²⁶ A proposal for a spirituality derived from the texts of particular *super oblata* in the context of the presentation and preparation of gifts for the Eucharist will comprise part of the conclusion of this study.

For Irwin, establishing the liturgical context involves three main areas of examination, each of which will inform the reading of the *super oblata*: The historical evolution of the rites, contemporary liturgical reform, and critical liturgical theology.

Historical Evolution of Rites: This element of liturgical context involves an historical investigation of a given rite in terms of its “origin, component parts, and variations in history both liturgically and theologically.”²⁷ This inquiry allows for an identification of the enduring theological meanings of a given rite and a distinction between the essential and secondary aspects of the rite. For Irwin, the evolution and perduring interpretations of the rites constitute the *liturgical tradition*, which is normative in the reform and ongoing adaptation of the rites and ensure that these develop organically from existing forms.²⁸

The first three chapters of the present study followed the historical evolution of the rite now known in the Roman Catholic Church as the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar. The investigation showed how the rite grew from a simple presentation of gifts for the Eucharist, the care of the poor, and the ministers of the Church, to a ritual offering with propitiatory connotations, to the highly developed medieval Offertory containing

²⁶ Ibid., 56.

²⁷ Ibid., 54.

²⁸ Ibid., 60.

elements duplicative of the *Canon Missae*, to a revised and simplified form after the Second Vatican Council. The texts, symbols, actions, and gestures of the rite as well the relative roles of the laity and ordained ministers varied with time and place. In some places bread and wine alone were presented; in others, these same items along with oil, honey, livestock, produce, money, and other gifts constituted the material signs of offering. Sometimes the laity played an active and arguably central role in the rite; sometimes the private prayers and actions of the celebrant and ministers predominated. In some forms, a practical simplicity characterized the rite; in others numerous and highly symbolic prayers, actions, and gestures flourished. At times, the rite received heightened attention; in others, such as following Vatican II, it was placed in its proper relationship to the offering of the Eucharistic prayer, for which it prepared.

The core of the offering rite, however, remained stable, consisting of the Church's presentation and preparation of gifts from God's bounty offered as worship to God in memory of, in gratitude for, and in union with, Christ's self-offering for the redemption of all. From as early as the fifth century and possibly earlier, the *orationes super oblata* consistently expressed these offertorial themes, even if at times the prayers were said in silence and at the end of an array of other prayers. The fact that the *super oblata* have endured and remain part of the reformed *ordo missae* and were singled out in the reform to be said aloud reveals their theological, liturgical, and ecclesiological significance. That is, they express some vital ideas about the nature of the Church, the meaning and purpose of its liturgical offering, and the God to whom the Church offers its material gifts and

worship. Furthermore, it points out the stability of the prayers in the Church's liturgical tradition. The first person plural language of the prayers—e.g., *nostra*, *offerimus*, *quaesumus*—shows that at all times the presentation and offering of gifts was, in fact, an *ecclesial* action, involving the whole assembly, laity and ministers—even when this was obscured by the other elements of the Offertory rite.

Contemporary Liturgical Reform: As discussed in Chapter Four, and pointed out by Irwin, two overriding concerns influencing the revision of the liturgical rites following Vatican II involved the full and active participation of the faithful in the liturgy and the development of easily comprehended rites (SC 14, 21).²⁹ This aspect of liturgical context focuses on “the present reformed rites to determine whether the contemporary celebration of these rites in specific contexts expresses what is actually envisioned in the published rites.”³⁰ This means that the actual setting and performance of a rite are investigated to evaluate how effectively they assist in “the assembly's appropriation of the scriptural texts, prayers, symbols, and gestures of the liturgy.”³¹ Variations in physical settings of the liturgy, musical texts, persons involved in conducting the liturgy, and the engagement of symbols can all effect the meanings conveyed by the rites and their appropriation by the given liturgical assembly.³² In other words, the elements of the liturgy are not static artifacts, but living, meaning-bearing and meaning-producing realities that can be brought

²⁹ Ibid., 62.

³⁰ Ibid., 54.

³¹ Ibid., 55.

³² Ibid., 63-5.

into dynamic interaction with the contexts in which they are engaged and the persons who engage them.

An adequate application of this aspect of liturgical engagement would require field studies of actual liturgies in various locations. Such an investigation goes beyond the scope of the present work. The latter can, however, provide an understanding of the purpose and meaning of the *super oblata* in the context of the current reformed Preparation of the Gifts and Altar with its rubrics³³, General Instruction, and insight from the process of the way the post-Vatican II rite came to be revised and changed from the 1570 Order of Mass. This in turn would assist in establishing some norms for the performance and theology of this part of the Eucharistic celebration that would aid in evaluating particular enactments of the rite.

One of the rubrics for the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar provides a clear contextual clue as to the theology of the rite and for interpreting the texts of the *super oblata*: “It is useful that the faithful manifest their participation in the oblation by bringing forward either bread and wine for the Eucharistic celebration or other gifts for the assistance of the Church and the poor.”³⁴ Even where the faithful do not bring up gifts of their own production or possession, the liturgical action, rightly understood, conveys the sense that the assembly—through its representatives—is, in fact, presenting an offering at the altar. The exact nature of that offering can be determined, in part, from the rubric’s own words—“gifts for the assistance of the Church and the poor.” This,

³³ See Appendix II.

³⁴ See Appendix II. Translation mine.

precisely, constituted one important aspect of the earliest Church's understanding of the offering: the offering of gifts of support and charity was a sacrificial offering. Further understandings of the offering will emerge from the reading of the *orationes super oblata*.

The current General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) includes directives for the *super oblata* that will also shed light on the interpretation of the prayers:

30. Among the parts assigned to the priest, the foremost is the Eucharistic Prayer, which is the high point of the entire celebration.

Next are the orations: that is to say, the collect, the prayer over the offerings, and the prayer after Communion. These prayers are addressed to God in the name of the entire holy people and all present, by the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ.

77. Once the offerings have been placed on the altar and the accompanying rites completed, the invitation to pray with the priest and the prayer over the offerings conclude the preparation of the gifts and prepare for the Eucharistic Prayer.

In the Mass, only one Prayer over the Offerings is said, and it ends with the shorter conclusion: *Per Christum Dominum nostrum*. If, however, the Son is mentioned at the end of this prayer, the conclusion is, *Qui vivit et regnat in saecula saeculorum*.

The people, uniting themselves to this entreaty, make the prayer their own with the acclamation, *Amen*.

146. Upon returning to the middle of the altar, the priest, facing the people and extending and then joining his hands, invites the people to pray, saying, *Orate, fraters* (Pray, brethren). The people rise and make their response: *Suscipiat Dominus* (May the Lord accept). Then the priest, with hands extended, says the prayer over the offerings. At the end the people make the acclamation, *Amen*.³⁵

³⁵ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Including Adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States of America* 5th Edition (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2003).

Each of these instructions points out the communal character of the rite, with the celebrant and assembly united in prayer and action. Number 30 establishes the importance of the orations relative to the Eucharistic prayer. Specifically regarding the *super oblata*, this secondary position gives an implicit clue as to its correct performance and role. While the reformers of the liturgy called for a restoration of the importance of the *super oblata*, they were also concerned with the duplicative and anticipatory character of the Offertory. An overemphasis on the content or performance of the *super oblata* would establish what Irwin might consider an inadequate liturgical context for interpreting the *super oblata* and the preparation rite.³⁶

Article 77 of the *GIRM* states clearly the liturgical function of the *super oblata*: namely, they “conclude the preparation of the gifts and prepare for the Eucharistic Prayer.” The prayers are located between two parts of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. On one side they refer back to the actions just performed and name what the Church has done therein—the presentation and preparation of its gifts for the proclamation of the Eucharistic prayer. Furthermore, as the study of the prayer texts will show, they also designate the nature of the gifts offered. On the other side, the orations point to what is about to be done—the commemoration of Christ’s paschal mystery in the Eucharistic prayer, the consecration of the gifts, and communion—and to the fulfillment of the Eucharistic offering, both in the immediacy of the liturgical celebration and in daily life ordered toward eternity. Drawing the two aspects together—the offering of gifts and the

³⁶ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 65.

Eucharistic *anamnesis*—the *super oblata* communicate a succinct theology of the whole Eucharistic liturgy. At the same time, within the context of the liturgical celebration, they bring into focus specific aspects of Christian faith and life such as God, Church, grace, sacramentality, and salvation.

III. A Lexicon of Common Terms

A preliminary examination of some major lexical features of the *super oblata* will assist an accurate theological analysis of the prayers. While an understanding of distinct words in the context of a given oration assists in the interpretation of the specific example, the construction of a general theology from the whole body of the *super oblata* requires knowledge of the commonly accepted theological meanings of certain words that appear more than once or in several instances.³⁷ The following section will include a presentation of several key terms used in the orations along with their degrees of frequency in the prayers for Sundays in Ordinary Time and their conventional definitions.

A methodological note is in order here: in all that follows in this chapter, the analysis of the *super oblata* will make reference to the author's own translations of the prayers. While these renditions might, at times, be highly literal and inelegant, they are not meant for public proclamations, but for investigative purposes only. Since it is assumed that the *lex orandi* of the prayers resides in the Latin originals, we want to stay

³⁷ The definitions of these words will be drawn from two sources: Albert Dumas, "Pour mieux comprendre les tetxtes du missel romain" *Notitiae* 6 (1970), 194-213 and Mary-Pierre Ellebracht, *Remarks on the Vocabulary of the Ancient Orations in the Missale Romanum*, Second Edition (Utrecht: Dekker and Van de Vegt N.V. Nijmegen, 1966).

as close to these as possible.³⁸ The goal is to arrive at a comprehensive account of the theology expressed in the *super oblata*.

Munus, or its variants, is the most common name given to the object of the prayers, occurring seventeen times. Depending on the context, *munus* can refer to an official service, ritual acts (Sunday XXXIII),³⁹ offerings—including material gifts for the sacrifice⁴⁰ (III, IV, IX, XV, XVII, XIX, XX, XXV) or even a sacrificial offering proper (XVI). It can also refer to grace, or God’s gift to us.⁴¹

Quaesumus is precatory verb referring to the prayers of the community occurs in eighteen of the *super oblata* (Sundays I, II, III, V, VI, VIII, X, XI, XIII, XVII, XVIII, XXIII, XXV, XXVII, XXIX, XXX, XXXII, XXXIII).⁴² Dumas posits that this word serves to convey a deprecatory sense and that it is most often not translated directly, but expressed by the sense of the translated prayer.⁴³ Ellebracht, however, does not hesitate in translating *quaesumus* as “we beseech.”⁴⁴ She goes to assert that the verb serves a dual role: first, “it contributes to the rhythm of the prayers”; second, “it serves to soften the imperative [e.g., *suscipe, respice, concede*] which man really has no right to utter before

³⁸ As of this writing the International Commission on English in the Liturgy has completed a thorough revision of the English translations of the *Ordo Missae*, including the *super oblata*. One of the purposes of the revision is precisely this adherence to the language of the originals and, consequently, to their theological depth. This is not the forum to evaluate the relative merits of the new translations or the principles that guided them. It is, however, the working assumption of the present study that the closer one adheres to the original texts, the richer the theology one can derive from them.

³⁹ See Appendix III for the prayer texts.

⁴⁰ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 163.

⁴¹ Ibid. 166-7; Dumas *Notitiae* 6, 197.

⁴² Irwin, *Context and Text*, 184, points out that “[t]he use of the plural in the subjunctive verb form...reflects (in an exemplary way) the ecclesial and petitionary nature” of presidential prayers such as the *super oblata*.

⁴³ Dumas, *Notitiae*, 209.

⁴⁴ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 121.

God.”⁴⁵ Ellebracht’s rendering of *quaesumus*—“we beseech you”—will be used in the translations used in this study.

Mysteria, which can be read as synonymous with *sacramentum*, appears in ten *super oblata* for Ordinary Time (II, VII, IX, XIII, XIX, XXIII, XXII, XXVII, XXIX, XXXII). In the context of the *super oblata*⁴⁶ it most often refers to the Eucharistic Prayer and, thus, to the sacramental celebration of the Paschal Mystery. Although it appears most frequently in the plural form, Ellebracht argues that “no essential difference in meaning” exists between the plural form most common in the *super oblata* and the singular.⁴⁷ The plural “regards the sacramental rites here and now in progress” and the singular tends to refer generically to “the sacramental action.”⁴⁸ This sense of *mysterium* appears in the oration for Sunday XXXII:

Lord, we beseech you,
having been appeased,
consider the sacrifices present,
so that what we accomplish
in the mystery of the passion of your Son,
we might obtain in devoted love.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Dumas, *Notitiae* 6, 198, understands *mysterium* as translatable only in its various contexts: “est un mot chargé de sens, et donc de difficultés pour les traducteurs. Comme toujours, il ne trouve son vrai sens que dans le contexte.”

⁴⁷ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 71.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 71.

⁴⁹ *Sacrificiis praesentibus, Domine, quaesumus, intende placatus, ut, quod passionis Filii tui mysterio gerimus, pio consequamur affectu.*” See Appendix III for source information.

This prayer also illustrates another of Ellebracht's analyses of *mysterium*, namely, that "[t]he whole cultic action of the Eucharist is included in this word"—that is, both the external elements of the rites and the interior effects produced by them.⁵⁰

Oblatio occurs nine times (Sundays I, VI, XIV, XVIII, XXII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVIII, XXXI) and, in the context of the *super oblata*, refers to the gifts offered for the Eucharist, the Eucharistic prayer itself or the act of offering.⁵¹ In this latter sense, Ellebracht argues that many cases emphasize the "verbal meaning" of the noun forms of *oblatio*,⁵² as in the *super oblata* for Sunday XVIII, which includes the phrase *hostiae spiritalis oblatione*. Here, corresponding to Marchal's understanding of offering as discussed in Chapter Four, *oblatione*—"offering" — with the objective genitive—*hostiae spiritalis*—is not meant in the concrete sense of objects such as bread and wine to be offered, but in the *active* sense of presenting or conferring spiritual sacrifices.⁵³ The reference, then, is to the whole Eucharistic *actio*. Other forms are more explicitly verbal, such *oblata devotioni nostrae servitutis* (VIII) and *munus oblatum* (XXXIII).

Offere is the verb from which *oblatio* derives appears in seven instances (VII, VIII, X, XII, XIX, XX, XXX). It refers to the offering of gifts for the Eucharist or the Eucharistic sacrifice itself (VII, X, XXX) and of gifts given by God (VIII, XIX, XX:

⁵⁰ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 68.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 81, 231-2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 80-3. That is, a noun derived from a verb form. Thus, the noun *offering* would refer not to the material presented to be offered, but to the act of making an offering.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 80-1.

offerente quae dedisti). The oration for Sunday XII refers to an interior offering: *nostrae mentis offeramus affectum*.⁵⁴

Servitium/Servitus or its varying forms is found in seven instances (IV, VII, VIII, X, XIII, XXVII, XXX) and once in the verb form *servire* (XXIX), refers to the “cultic service” to God.⁵⁵ While Dumas asserts that *servitium*, at least in the context of the *Hanc igitur* of the Roman Canon, means the service of the ministerial priesthood,⁵⁶ phrases in the *super oblata* such as *munera nostrae servitutis inferimus* (IV), *oblata devotioni nostrae servitutis ascribis* (VIII), and *quae debitae servitutis celebramus officio* (XXVII)⁵⁷ refer to the liturgical service of the whole gathered Church—as in the case of all the first person plural forms in the *super oblata*.

Hostia is a noun that occurs in five instances (II, XVI, XVIII, XXI, XXVIII). According to Dumas, it never carries the classic meaning, “victim.”⁵⁸ Rather, it indicates the gifts offered or the Eucharist itself.⁵⁹ In any case, Dumas does not deny some sacrificial sense of *hostia*. Ellebracht would agree with the notion of referring *hostia* to the Eucharistic action, but, she writes, “[t]he basic meaning of *hostia* as victim is never lost.”⁶⁰ To be sure, the sacrificial significance of *hostia* abounds in the *super oblata* for

⁵⁴ “we may offer you an affection of mind pleasing to you.”

⁵⁵ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 107.

⁵⁶ *Notitiae* 6, 210, “Il indique le «service» du sacerdoce ministerial...”

⁵⁷ “we bring...the offerings of our service”(IV)

“what is offered to the devotion of our service”(VIII)

“by which we celebrate as a duty of service owed”(XXVII)

⁵⁸ *Notitiae* 6, 198. “n’a jamais le sens classique de «victime»”.

⁵⁹ Ibid. “et parfois l’eucharistie elle-même”.

⁶⁰ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 75.

Sundays in Ordinary Time. In the oration for the Sunday XVI, which sums up the whole biblical history of sacrifice *hostia* quite clearly refers to sacrifice:

Deus, qui legalium differentiam hostiarum
unius sacrificii perfectione sanxisti,
accipe sacrificium a devotis tibi famulis,
et pari benedictione, sicut munera Abel,
sanctifica, ut, quod singuli obtulerunt
ad maiestatis tuae honorem, cunctis proficiat ad salutem.⁶¹

In the oration for the Sunday II *hostia* refers to the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the redemptive commemoration of the Paschal Mystery:

Concede nobis, quaesumus, Domine,
haec digne frequentare mysteria,
quia, quoties huius hostiae commemoratio celebratur,
opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur.⁶²

Suscipe is an imperative that appears six times (III, XII, XVII, XX, XXVII, XXVIII, XXXIV) and asks God to receive or accept the Church's gifts, sacrifice, worship, or prayers. In two *super oblata* for Sundays in Ordinary time *quaesumus*, the common ancillary to imperative forms in presidential prayers, appears with *suscipe*.

⁶¹ God, you have ordained the perfection
of the multiplicity of sacrifices in the law
by this one sacrifice,
receive the sacrifice from the servants devoted to you,
and bless it with the same blessing
you gave to the offerings of Abel,
so that what individuals have offered
to honor your divine majesty
may advance all to salvation.

⁶² Lord, grant us, we beseech you,
to attend to these mysteries worthily,
because whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is performed,
the work of our redemption is accomplished.

Concede: this imperative verb, which appears in five *super oblata* can be translated in the positive sense as “allow” or “grant”. Negatively it means “concede”, “compromise”, or “forfeit.” In either sense, *concede* implies condescension on God’s part in which God graciously grants the efficacy of the offering: ...*haec digne frequentare mysteria* (II)⁶³; *munera nostra...salutaria fore* (III)⁶⁴; *pro credentium sanctificationis incremento sumenda* (XV)⁶⁵; *ut haec nostra tibi oblatio sit accepta, et per eam nobis fons omnis benedictionis aperiatur* (XXVI)⁶⁶; *ut oculis tuae maiestatis munus oblatum et gratiam nobis devotionis obtineat, et effectum beatae perennitatis acquirat* (XXXIII).⁶⁷

Maiestas: This clearly biblical term⁶⁸ appearing in five *super oblata* for Ordinary Time (VII, XVI, XXII, XXX, XXXIII), refers to the majesty of God or even to Godself.⁶⁹ In most cases the reference is direct—*ad honorem tuae offerimus maiestati*⁷⁰—in one case it includes the image of *oculis tuae maiestatis*.⁷¹ Albert Blaise thought that the use of abstract words such as *maiestas* added greater solemnity and to simple forms of the pronoun *tu*.⁷²

⁶³ “...to attend these mysteries worthily”

⁶⁴ “our offerings...may become salvific...”

⁶⁵ “they be taken up for the increase of the sanctification of the believing.”

⁶⁶ “that this our offering be accepted by you, and through it may the fountain of all blessing be opened for us.”

⁶⁷ “that the service offered in the sight of your majesty may both obtain for us the grace of devotion and procure the accomplishment of a blessed eternity.”

⁶⁸ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 40.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “that we offer to the honor of your majesty” (VII)

⁷¹ “in the sight of your majesty” (XXXIII)

⁷² Albert Blaise, *Le vocabulaire latin des principaux thèmes liturgiques*. Revised by Antoine Dumas (Turnhout: Brepols), 138. “on emploie...pour plus de solennité et de respect, des noms abstraits.”

Donum appears in four examples, each in the plural form, in the *super oblata* for Ordinary Time (XVIII, XXI, XXIX, XXXIV). This noun refers to gifts offered by the Church (XVIII)—themselves a prior gift from God⁷³—God’s own gifts to and for the faithful (XXIX), and God’s gifts of unity and peace to the Church (XXI) and to the world (XXXIV). In all cases God’s grace is the primary active agency.⁷⁴

Propitius is an adverbial form that appears in four of the orations (X, XVIII, XXI, XXV⁷⁵), asking that God be “favorably inclined [or] well-disposed”⁷⁶ towards the Church’s gifts or worship. It can also refer to regard, attentiveness, or listening on God’s part. As in *concede* a sense of divine condescension or graciousness operates in *propitius*.

Placatus is related to *propitius* is the adjective or perfect passive participle *placatus* which occurs four times (III, IV, XIX, XXXII).⁷⁷ In either form *placatus* can be understood as denoting the state of being appeased, satisfied, or at peace. If one follows Dumas in preferring a reconciliation theme to that of appeasement⁷⁸ then *placatus*, like *propitius*, can refer to God’s being “pleased” by, “favorable” or well, kindly, or pleasantly disposed to the Church’s offering. Dumas held a great concern for how modern ears received the Church’s euchology. Even while his reading of *placatus*

⁷³ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 84. “Everything which man has is a gift of God; and hence what man ‘offers’ to God is His own gift.”

⁷⁴ Ibid., 85. “the usage of *donum* in the [orations] is based more on the specific Christian meaning of the word as ‘grace of God’...It means ‘grace’, virtues as gifts of God, the effect of the Eucharist, and the Eucharist itself as something to be shared.”

⁷⁵ Here it is the participle *propitiatus* used adverbally. The oration for Sunday XXIV uses the infinitive *propitiare*.

⁷⁶ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 142.

⁷⁷ The oration for Sunday XII includes the objective genitive *sacrificium placationis*.

⁷⁸ *Notitiae* 6, 208. “Il est bon de ne pas forcer le sens de ce mot et de le transcrire en termes chrétiens de «réconciliation»...plutôt que de colère. On raconte souvent dans les prières sur les offrandes l’expression: *hostias placationis* = le sacrifice qui nous réconcilie avec toi, plutôt que: la victime qui t’apaise.”

mitigates connotations of God's anger or wrath, throughout the corpus of the *super oblata* the concern with appeasing God traditionally conveyed by *placatus* endures.⁷⁹ Perhaps a better understanding would involve the satisfaction not so much of God's anger as simply of God's due justice.

Sacramentum appears in four of the *super oblata* (IV, V, XI, XXV) where it most commonly refers to the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist and more specifically to the efficacy of "the sacred rites in and through which God continues to work out the Economy of Salvation."⁸⁰ The oration for Sunday IV is explicit in this regard:

Altaribus tuis, Domine,
munera nostrae servitutis inferimus
quae, placatus assumens,
sacramentum nostrae redemptionis efficias.⁸¹

On Sunday V that efficacy takes on a clearly eschatological sense in the request that God let the gifts offered become *aeternitatis sacramentum*.

Proficere denotes to advance, to progress, to grow, to "be conducive to well-being...[or] bringing about real increase."⁸² It is used in four instances (VII, VIII, XVI, XXIV): once with *ad praemium* and three times with *ad salutem*. The former refers to the final, everlasting reward, the latter to the ongoing increase of salvation. Both are sought from and through the liturgical offering of gifts and worship to God, as the orations for two Sundays indicate: *quod praestas unde sit meritum, proficere nobis largiaris ad*

⁷⁹ See especially below the *super oblata* for Sunday XXXII.

⁸⁰ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 75.

⁸¹ Lord, we bring to your altars the offerings of our service, which, having been appeased, you might receive and make the sacrament of our salvation.

⁸² Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 126-7.

praemium (VIII);⁸³ *quod singuli obtulerunt ad maiestatis tuae honorem, cunctis proficiat ad salutem* (XVI).⁸⁴

Famulus appears twice (XVI, XXIV) refers to servant—specifically, “servant of God.”⁸⁵ It can also refer to “Christians in general.”⁸⁶ Dumas understands the service performed by the *famuli* as “the act of rendering the cult owed to God”; that is, liturgical service.⁸⁷ The verb form *famulamur*, which occurs twice (IX, XXIX) conveys this sense: *ut, tua purificante nos gratia, iisdem quibus famulamur mysteriis emundemur*.⁸⁸ Furthermore, Dumas casts the servitude implied by *famulus* in familial terms rather than that of a master-slave relationship: “service which is related more to the intimacy of children in respect to their father rather than the submission of slaves toward their master.”⁸⁹ While this slave imagery rightly might be offensive to contemporary sensibilities, it might more aptly be taken to denote the essential inequality of the divine-human relational dynamic involved the Church’s service to God. In the act of worship, humans stand before God not as equals but as recipients of divine condescension, the proper response to which is the reverence shown to one’s superior. Like Christ, its founder, the Church *is* the servant of God.

⁸³ “that what you supply, from which merit may be, you might grant to advance us to the reward...”

⁸⁴ “so that what individuals have offered to honor your majesty may advance all to salvation.”

⁸⁵ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 30.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Dumas, *Notitiae* 6, 205-6. “l’acte de rendre le culte dû à Dieu...”

⁸⁸ “that through your grace purifying us may we be cleansed by the very mysteries which we serve.”

⁸⁹ Dumas, *Notitiae* 6, 205. “service qui s’apparente plus à l’intimité des fils à l’égard de leur Père qu’à la soumission des esclaves envers leur Maître.”

Assume is an imperative that appears in three of the orations (XIX, XXIV, XXV), asking God to “take up”, receive, or accept the Church’s offerings.⁹⁰ In its three uses in the *super oblata* it is coupled with *placatus*, *propitiatus*, and *benignus*, each of which highlights the atoning or reconciling effects of the liturgical action.

Sanctificatio is found in three orations (I, XV, XXVII) meaning “to make holy”.⁹¹ Sanctification relates to the gifts in two ways: “it expresses either God’s action upon them or His action on the faithful in and through these ritual offerings.”⁹² The verb *sanctificare* occurs four times (III, XVI, XVII, XVIII) in the same two senses. Either the gifts themselves are sanctified—*haec dona sanctifica* (XVIII)⁹³—or the offering of the mysteries they signify sanctifies those offering them—*praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent* (XVII).⁹⁴

Largiaris, *Largitate*, *Largitio*, a verb and two nouns, appear, respectively in the *super oblata* for Sundays VIII, XVII, and XXXI. All refer to God’s abundant generosity to humans. The verb form *largiaris* refers to God’s bestowal of eternal recompense for the Church’s offering: *proficere nobis largiaris ad praemium*. *Largitate* refers directly to God’s generosity *munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus*⁹⁵, while *largitio* describes the mercy of God: *miserericordiae tuae sancta largitio*.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 87.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ “sanctify these gifts”

⁹⁴ “sanctify us in the conduct of the present life”

⁹⁵ “the offerings that we bring to you from your bounty”

⁹⁶ “a holy bounty of your mercy.”

Celebrare: This verb appears in two instances—Sundays II and XXVII—in which it refers to the ritual performance⁹⁷ of the sacred mysteries; that is, the paschal mystery. In both cases, forms of *celebrare* are connected to *mysteria* (II) or *sacris mysteriis* (XXVII). In the former it also refers to *huius hostiae commemoratio*.⁹⁸ Specifically, *celebrare* means to frequent or repeat.⁹⁹ Though the commemoration of the paschal mystery certainly includes elements of joy and happiness, understanding *celebrare* in the common sense of celebration, that is, a party or merriment does not do justice to the gravity and solemnity of what is being accomplished in the liturgical rites.

Respice occurs twice (XV, XXX) meaning “look upon” or “regard with favor”.¹⁰⁰ It is accompanied with the direct object *munera*. The oration for Sunday XV asks God to look with favor on the gifts offered, which will be the source of sanctification of those offering them: *pro credentium sanctificationis incremento sumenda concede*.¹⁰¹ In the *super obalata* for Sunday XXX the request is directed towards the efficacy of the liturgical service and its never-ending fulfillment:

Respice, quaesumus, Domine,
munera quae tuae offerimus maiestati,
ut, quod nostro servitio geritur,
ad tuam gloriam potius dirigatur.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 136-7.

⁹⁸ “the commemoration of this sacrifice”

⁹⁹ Carlton D. Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1879), 309.

¹⁰⁰ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 89.

¹⁰¹ “Grant that they be taken up for the increase of the sanctification of the believing.”

¹⁰² Lord, we beseech you,
look upon the gifts we offer to your majesty,
so that what is accomplished in our servitude

Commercia appears only once in the *super oblata* for Sundays in Ordinary Time (XX), but it provides a vital key in determining a theology of the *super oblata* as a genre and its liturgical context, the presentation and preparation of the gifts for the Eucharistic prayer. In the mercantile sense in which it originated, *commercia* means “trade [or]exchange of goods.”¹⁰³ Dumas understands it in a more modern, personalistic way. It is an “active dialogue...[a] mutual opening...[an]intimate communication between God and man.”¹⁰⁴ In the Eucharistic *commercia*, to which the *super oblata* refer, all that humanity receives from God is returned to God. This exchange includes not only the bread and wine, but all of the good gifts of creation given by God to humanity from which these are made. For Augustine, the *commercia* includes the humanity taken and redeemed by Christ and the divinity received by humans from Christ. Finally, the Christmas collect of Leo I proclaims the exchange of divinity and humanity accomplished in the Incarnation:

Deus, qui in humanae substantiae dignitate
et mirabiliter condedisti
et mirabilius reformasti:
da, quaesumus, nobis Iesu Christi
filii tui [eius] divinitatis esse consortes,
qui humanitatis nostrae fieri
dignatus est particeps.¹⁰⁵

may be directed especially to your glory.

¹⁰³ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 97.

¹⁰⁴ *Notitiae* 6. “Les langues modernes ne manquent pas de mots pour exprimer ce dialogue actif, cette ouverture mutuelle, cette communication intime entre Dieu et l’homme, tout évitant le terme un peu mercantile qui démarque de trop près le mot latin.”

¹⁰⁵ C. Mohlberg, ed., *Sacramentarium Veronense* (Cod. Bibl. Capit Veron. LXXXV [80]) (Roma: Casa Editrice Herder, 1966), 1239. God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human substance and more wonderfully redeemed it:
give us, we beseech you,
to be sharers in the divinity,

In the Eucharistic offering God accepts these and enables humans to receive God's very self in Communion in the body and blood of Christ:

Suscipe, Domine,
munera nostra, quibus
exercentur commercia gloriosa,
ut, offerente quae dedisti,
teipsum mereamur accipere. (XX)¹⁰⁶

IV. Theological Analysis of the *Orationes Super Oblata*

With these key lexical principles established, the study can now be directed to a theological analysis of the *orationes super oblata* in their context, the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar. The survey will proceed thematically in order to reveal the layers of theological texture in the prayers. The lexical and theological density of these short, concise orations allow for the emergence of several possible themes from single texts. Owing to this, and to the fact that a limited set of thirty-four orations will be examined, there will be noticeable repetition of individual phrases or even whole prayers and some overlap of themes.

This reading of the *super oblata* will work toward three main goals: first, to inquire as to how the prayer texts proclaimed in the context of the presentation of gifts name, in a particular way, specific spiritual realities and present them for appropriation by members

of Jesus Christ your Son,
who consented to become a partaker in our humanity. Translation mine.

¹⁰⁶ Lord, receive our offerings,
by which we accomplish a glorious exchange,
so that in offering what you have given, we may be made worthy to receive your very self

of the liturgical assembly; second, to convey an understanding of how the prayers can give shape to the experience and interpretation of the liturgical act of presenting and preparing gifts for the Eucharist; third, to provide for a general theology of the Preparation of the Gifts, which, in turn, will contribute to the ongoing articulation of Eucharistic theology and spirituality.

Two points made by Kevin Irwin will be operative in this exegesis of the *super oblata*: first, is the *anamnetic* quality of euchological texts such as the *super oblata*; that is, their capacity to “express the mystery of salvation accomplished in Christ as presently experienced through the liturgy...and as prayers asking God to continue to make his salvation known here and now.”¹⁰⁷ Second, is the “poetic, metaphoric, and image-filled” nature of the prayers and the fact that they “offer glimpses and insights rather than exact definitions”¹⁰⁸ of the divine persons and realities they make present and active. What is proposed here is not *the* theology of or from the *super oblata*, but a set of possible and, hopefully, cogent theological interpretations of the poetic language of the orations.

Two Potential Problems.

As mentioned in the conclusion to Chapter Three, the *super oblata* continue to contain some phrasing and imagery that tend to anticipate or duplicate the Eucharistic prayer. These are appropriate, however, in that they simply point out a progressive relationship between the Preparation of the Gifts, the Eucharistic offering, and its

¹⁰⁷ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 182.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

completion in communion, the spiritual life, and finally, eternal salvation. Each step is ordered to the following one; each subsumes and completes the one preceding it. The whole is the liturgical economy of salvation in which the individual elements participate in ways proper to each. The *super oblata* orient material gifts of bread and wine—which signify the greater offering of the faithful gathered—from their presentation at the altar toward their fulfillment in the Eucharistic offering, Communion, the lives of the faithful and eternity.¹⁰⁹

Another problem concerns the treatment in this study of the *super oblata* and the preparation rite: namely, the question may arise as to whether too much weight is given to these properly ancillary elements of the Eucharistic liturgy—whether these are emphasized such that they not only anticipate, but obscure the centrality of the Eucharistic Prayer. Here, the subordinate role of the preparatory actions and prayers must be reiterated. If attended to and understood from the proper perspective these serve to bring greater shape and color to the offering accomplished in the Eucharistic prayer. They give expression to the continuity between the Eucharistic liturgy and the lived experience of the faithful—both as it is brought into contact with and shaped by the liturgy.¹¹⁰

V. Theological Themes in the Orationes Super Oblata

The Offerings

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 47.

¹¹⁰ See Ibid. 311ff. This continuity of liturgy and life will be further explored in the conclusion of this chapter.

Although the English translation of the *super oblata* is the Prayers Over the Gifts, more precisely *oblata* means “offered” or “the offerings.” By all appearances in the presentation rite the offerings are the bread and wine for the Eucharist. In some sense, this is correct, but the prayers that complete the presentation, the *super oblata*, name the offerings in a variety of ways. The basic words used to designate the offerings include, most obviously, *oblatio* (Sundays I, VI, XIV, XXII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVIII), *oblata* (VIII), and *offerenda* (VIII); then, most commonly *munera* (III, IV, IX, XV, XVII, XIX, XX, XXIII, XXV, XXX, XXXIII, XXXIV), *sacrificium* (XII, XVI, XXVII, XXXI, XXXII), *servitium* (IV, VIII, X, XIII, XXVII, XXX), *mysteria* (XVII), and *dona* (XVIII, XXIX).¹¹¹ Each of these terms takes on nuances of meanings, both lexical and theological, depending on its relationship to other words and phrases in given orations.

Almost half of the *super oblata*--sixteen of the thirty-four—for Ordinary Time designate the offering specifically as *offering(s)*—that is, the material gifts, the prayers, and act of offering—by way of forms of the nouns *oblatio* (Sunday I, VI, XIV, XVIII, XXII, XXVI, XXVIII, XXXI) and *munus* (Sunday III, IV, IX, XV, XVII, XX, XXV) and the future passive participle *offerenda* used as a noun (“what is to be offered”) which occurs on Sunday VIII. Forms of the noun *munus*, which variously denote offering, gift, or service, can be translated into *offering* in the seven cases cited above. For example on Sunday III the oration refers broadly to the offerings of bread, wine, thanks, and praise in the Eucharistic prayer.

¹¹¹ While actually no First or Thirty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time exist, the corpus of *super oblata* in the current *Missale Romanum* includes prayers designated for Dominica I and Hebdomada XXXIV.

Munera nostra, Domine,
 suscipe placatus,
 quae sanctificando nobis, quaesumus,
 salutaria fore concede.¹¹²

A clue to this comes from the plural *munera* and the phrase *quae sanctificando nobis, quaesumus, salutaria fore concede*. Here, all of the Eucharistic actions, not simply the presentation of the material elements, are considered the offerings that sanctify and become the means of salvation. The same is true for Sunday XXV:

Munera, quaesumus, Domine,
 tuae plebis propitiatus assume,
 ut, quae fidei pietate profitentur,
 sacramentis caelestibus apprehendant.¹¹³

What the offerings “profess in the devotion of faith”—*fidei pietate profitentur*—is the fullness of Christ’s Paschal Mystery to be commemorated in the Eucharistic prayer and which they will grasp finally in eternity—*sacramentis caelestibus apprehendant*. That is, what is seen “in a mirror, dimly” now will be seen “face to face” in eternity (1Cor13.12 NRSV).

On Sunday IV, the *munera* take on a more clearly sacrificial sense:

Altaribus tuis, Domine,
 munera nostrae servitutis inferimus
 quae, placatus assumens,
 sacramentum nostrae redemptionis efficias.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Lord, having been appeased,
 receive our offerings,
 and grant, we beseech you,
 that by sanctifying
 they will be salvific for us.

¹¹³ Lord, we beseech you,
 mercifully receive the offerings of your people,
 so that what they profess in the devotion of faith
 they might grasp in the heavenly mysteries.

This is one of only two of the *super oblata* that makes reference to the altar—that is, the place at which sacrifice is offered. The use of the plural *altaribus* suggests not only the present altar and the sacrifice present there, but all the offerings on all the altars of the universal Church. Although it takes place in a multitude of times and locations, the Eucharistic sacrifice is *one*. The many represent and take part in the one offering made by Christ once for all.

The other oration that includes a reference to the altar appears on Sunday IX:

In tua pietate confidentes, Domine,
cum muneribus ad altaria
veneranda concurrimus,
ut, tua purificante nos gratia,
iisdem quibus famulamur
mysteriis emundemur.¹¹⁵

The prayer again refers to the plural *altars*. The image here is of the Church throughout the world *hurrying*—*concurrimus*—to its local altars with its offerings to God. These offerings mediate both the Church’s participation in the mystery of Christ’s offering to the Father and the grace by which God renders the same offerings efficacious. In one action of offering made on the its many altars, the Church *gives* and is *given to*.

The *super oblata* for Sunday XV also refers to the offering of the whole Church and to the Church’s reception of sanctification in its giving:

¹¹⁴ Lord, we bring to your altars the offerings of our service,
which, having been appeased, you might receive
and make the sacrament of our salvation.

¹¹⁵ Lord, trusting in your kindness,
we hasten to your venerable altar with offerings,
so that by your grace purifying us
may we be cleansed by the very mysteries which we serve.

Respice, Domine,
munera supplicantis Ecclesiae,
et pro credentium sanctificationis
incremento sumenda concede.¹¹⁶

God “takes up” (*sumenda*) all that the Church offers; in doing so God sanctifies those who make the offering in faith.

Finally, the orations for Sundays XVII and XX point out the nature of the offerings themselves as *given*:

Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine,
munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus,
ut haec sacrosancta mysteria,
gratiae tuae operante virtute,
et praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent,
et ad gaudia sempiterna perducant.

Suscipe, Domine, munera nostra,
quibus exercentur commercia gloriosa,
ut, offerente quae dedisti, teipsum mereamur accipere.¹¹⁷

Humans have nothing of their own that is fit to give to God. All that they might offer comes from the same source to which it is returned. In the end humans receive yet again from God.

¹¹⁶ Lord, look upon these offerings of the supplicating Church,
and grant that they be taken up
for the increase of the sanctification of the believing.

¹¹⁷ Receive, we beseech you Lord,
the offerings that we bring to you from your bounty,
that by the powerful working of your grace
these most sacred mysteries might both sanctify us in the conduct of the present life
and lead us to eternal joy.

Lord, receive our offerings,
by which we accomplish a glorious exchange,
so that in offering what you have given,
we may be made worthy to receive your very self.

Forms of the noun *oblatio* denote the offering in eight of the *super oblata* for Sundays Ordinary Time. In each, contextual clues as well as the singular form suggest that *oblatio* refers more to the Eucharistic offering than to the gifts presented for it. On Sunday VI the prayer asks that the oblation “cleanse and renew us”—...*nos...mundet et renovet*—and that it “be a cause of eternal reward” —...*fiat causa remunerationis aeterne*. These are most properly understood as present and future effects of the Eucharist. Two other orations include similar requests for the *oblatio*: *Oblatio nos...purificet, et de die in diem ad caelestis vitae transferat actionem* (XIV)¹¹⁸; *Benedictionem nobis, Domine, conferat salutarem sacra semper oblatio, ut, quod agit mysterio, virtute perficiat* (XXII).¹¹⁹ Both look to the ongoing effects of the Eucharistic offering. The latter asks for the actual effects of the Paschal Mystery—*quod agit mysterio, virtute perficiat*—to be made ever present and active in the liturgical offering; the former looks beyond the present offering and seeks daily progress towards heavenly life—*ad caelestis vitae transferat actionem*—where all giving reaches its completion.

The phrasing of the *super oblata* for Sunday XXXI can be read as relating *oblatio* to the Eucharist about to be offered in the request that the Lord let the sacrifice be a “pure offering”: *Fiat hoc sacrificium, Domine, oblatio tibi munda*.¹²⁰ This phrase refers to

¹¹⁸ May the offering...purify us and day by day advance toward the achievement of heavenly life.”

¹¹⁹ Lord, may this holy offering
always grant us your saving blessing,
so that what it begins in mystery
it might accomplish in power.

¹²⁰ “Lord, may this sacrifice be a pure offering to you”

Malachi 1:11, in which the name of the Lord is glorified “from the rising of the sun to its setting” in the perfect offering of praise.

In the prayer for Sunday XXVIII the ablative plural *oblationibus* evokes the individual and communal aspects of the offering:

Suscipe, Domine,
fidelium preces cum oblationibus hostiarum
ut, per haec piae devotionis officia,
ad caelestem gloriam transeamus.¹²¹

Each member of the whole body of the faithful offers their prayers and sacrificial gifts as *piae devotionis officia*, services of pious devotion, the effects of which carry beyond the present liturgical moment to eternal glory.

The participle *oblata* in the plural appears in the oration for Sunday VIII. Here it names the Church’s offering of Eucharistic worship of God: *Deus, qui offerenda tuo nomini tribuis, et oblata devotioni nostrae servitutis ascribis*.¹²² In both *oblata* and *offerenda* the emphasis is on the offering—in both the external-material and the internal-spiritual modes. *Offerenda* is a future passive participle—“about to be offered”—which refers to what will be offered in the Eucharistic Prayer: namely, the bread and wine, thanks and praise to the “name”, or the divine essence of God, and the memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection.

¹²¹ Lord, receive the prayers of the faithful
with offerings of sacrifice,
so that through these services of pious devotion,
we might pass into heavenly glory.

¹²² “God, who grants what is to be offered to your name,
and attributes what is offered to the devotion of our service.”

Overall, then, the forms of *oblatio* and the related participle, *oblata*, used in the *super oblata* refer to the Eucharistic action as a whole. In only the two last examples does the *oblatio* or *oblata* specifically indicate the presentation of the gifts for the Eucharistic offering. This confirms Marchal's contention discussed in the previous chapter that the presentation rite should focus on the *act of offering* rather than on the material gifts presented.

In two of the *super oblata*, forms of the noun *donum* (Sundays XVIII and XXIX) occur, clearly signifying the gifts presented for the Eucharist. The oration for Sunday XVIII, for example, which designates the gifts as *dona*, provides a model of the form's elegant economy of language:

Propitius, Domine, quaesumus,
haec dona sanctifica,
et, hostiae spiritalis oblatione suscepta,
nosmetipsos tibi perfice munus aeternum.¹²³

In three terse phrases the prayer communicates a concise theology of the Eucharistic offering in which the gifts—*dona*—the offering lifted up to God—*hostiae spiritalis oblatione suscepta*—and the offerer of the gifts—the gathered Church—are united and brought to fulfillment. The Church presents its gifts to the Lord, who, in the Eucharistic offering, receives and sanctifies the gifts as a spiritual sacrifice which initiate the eternal self-oblation of the Church, the Body of Christ, to the Lord—*nosmetipsos tibi perfice munus aeternum*. This final phrase points out the ethical aspect of the offering: the

¹²³ Lord, we beseech you,
kindly sanctify these gifts
and by the offering of spiritual sacrifices received,
perfect us ourselves as an eternal offering to you.

presentation of gifts at the altar finds its proper meaning and end in presenting oneself—indeed, the whole community of the faithful—as an everlasting offering to God. The offering goes beyond that of the ritual action; the “spiritual sacrifices”—*hostiae spiritualis*—offered are the moment to moment sacrifices of self in acts of love and justice toward God and neighbor that will be perfected in eternity. These offerings are lived acts of worship that flow from and return to the liturgical offering.

The oration for Sunday XXIX begins with the request *Tribue nos, Domine, quaesumus, donis tuis libera mente servire*.¹²⁴ The phrase *donis tuis...servire*—“to serve you by your gifts”—can be understood here in the sense of the gifts offered as a fitting means of rendering worship to God. In the phrase *libera mente*—“with a free mind”—the Church asks that it might perform its due service free from whatever might hinder it: a lack of faith, an awareness of its sinfulness and unworthiness among other distractions. The right use of God’s gifts entails that the Church offers them in the Eucharistic commemoration of Christ’s own self-offering in freedom and thanksgiving to God.

In some instances, the *super oblata* also use the plural *munera* for gifts. The prayers for three Sundays name the gifts presented as prior gifts from God, thus pointing out the essential poverty of humanity before its Lord: *Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine, munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus* (XVII); *Ecclesiae tuae, Domine, munera placatus assume, quae et misercors offerenda tribuisti* (XIX); *Suscipe, Domine, munera nostra, quibus exercentur commercia gloriosa, ut, offerente quae dedisti, teipsum*

¹²⁴ “Lord, grant us, we beseech, to serve you by your gifts with a free mind.”

mereamur accipere (XX).¹²⁵ In each, whatever the Church has to offer *to* God is, first, a gift *from* God, the source of all that is given. The subjunctive *mereamur*—“that we might be worthy”—further points out the poverty of those making the offering: the end of the Church’s giving, like the beginning, depends on God’s graciousness.

The same oration portrays the offering as an exchange between God and humanity—*commercia gloriosa*—as represented by the Church. Here, the Church returns to God what God has given humanity—*offerente quae dedisti*. In a manner of speaking this *commercia* is a *do ut des*—I give so that you give—transaction. This is not, however, a mercenary exchange, because on the human side there can be no presumption of the very possibility of humans giving God any fitting gift. Instead, the language of the prayer gives recognition to the notion that God gives all so that humanity may have all to give in return to God and for others. So, the gifts are not simply bread and wine, but the simple gifts of bread and wine metonymically represent the cosmic profusion of God’s generosity.¹²⁶ In presenting these small things, humanity—which of itself has nothing to give God—metaphorically returns *everything* to God. In turn, those offering the gifts are made worthy to receive the gift of God’s very self—*teipsum mereamur accipere*. Thus, the *commercia* begins anew.

¹²⁵ “Receive, we beseech you Lord, the gifts that we bring to you from your bounty” (XVII)
 “Lord, having been appeased, receive the gifts of your Church, which you have mercifully given to be offered” (XIX)
 Lord, receive our gifts,
 by which we accomplish a glorious exchange,
 so that in offering what you have given,
 we might be made worthy to receive your very self. (XX)

¹²⁶ This “cosmic” understanding of the offering is derived from Irwin’s “Model II: Cosmic Mass” in his *Models of the Eucharist* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 39-66.

Alternatively, and in a perhaps less familiar way, the Church offers gifts as a service or worship rendered to God. On Sunday XIII the Church asks that its service be appropriate to the gifts presented: *...praesta, quaesumus, ut sacris apta muneribus fiant nostra servitia.*¹²⁷ The gifts are called *sacred* here on two accounts: first, they are gifts from God and, thus, are holy; second, the Church uses these gifts for sacred purposes—namely, rendering thanks and praise to God and offering the memorial of the dying and rising of Christ. The Church prays, then, that what it does in its liturgy rises to the dignity of the material it lifts up in worship.

On Sunday XXX, the offering of gifts is the means by which the service is performed or celebrated:

Respice, quaesumus, Domine,
munera quae tuae offerimus maiestati,
ut, quod nostro servitio geritur,
ad tuam gloriam potius dirigatur.¹²⁸

In offering its service to God, the Church instantiates the right relation between God and creation by glorifying and proclaiming the majesty of God.

Finally, the *super oblata* for Sunday XI emphasizes the divine origin of the gifts and names them as nourishing food and restorative sacrament for body and soul:

¹²⁷ “that our services might be rendered suitable by these sacred gifts.”

¹²⁸ Lord, we beseech you,
look upon the gifts we offer to your majesty,
so that what is accomplished in our servitude
might be directed especially to your glory.

Deus, qui humani generis utramque
 substantiam praesentium munerum
 et alimento vegetas et renovas sacramento,
 tribue, quaesumus,
 ut eorum et corporibus nostris
 subsidium non desit et mentibus.¹²⁹

The emphasis here goes not to humans offering gifts to God, but to recognizing God's constant provision of gifts for the health and salvation of humans. The Church offers what God has given for human sustenance in hope that God will always provide again for the corporeal and spiritual needs of humans.

Sacrifice

Nine of the *super oblata* designate the Church's offering as *sacrificium* or *hostia*. Of the five orations that contain *sacrificium* three employ the singular form and two the plural of this noun. In all cases, it refers to the Eucharistic sacrifice. The oration for Sunday XII names the Eucharist *sacrificium placationis et laudis*, the sacrifice of propitiation or atonement and praise. On Sunday XXXII similar propitiatory language characterizes the gifts presented for the Eucharist, which are here understood as sacrificial by virtue of their providing the material signs by which the liturgical assembly commemorates the mystery of the passion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God:

¹²⁹ God, by the food and sacrament of the present gifts
 you both nourish and renew
 the dual substance of human nature,
 grant, we beseech you,
 that the help of your gifts may never be lacking
 to either our bodies or our souls.

Sacrificiis praesentibus, Domine, quaesumus,
intende placatus, ut,
quod passionis Filii tui mysterio gerimus,
pio consequamur affectu.¹³⁰

Here the Church prays that in the same way as God the Father was appeased by the Son's complete offering of self in the Paschal Mystery, God will regard the Church's *anamnesis* of that saving event. In and through the present liturgical realization of Christ's self-offering, the Church hopes to be affectively changed by and formed in the obedient love unto death of the Son for the Father. Here, there is an echo of Eph. 5:2 : "live in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (RSV).

The *super oblata* for Sunday XVI provides an excellent example of the linguistic and theological richness of the form in its portrayal of the offering:

Deus, qui legalium differentiam hostiarum
unius sacrificii perfectione sanxisti,
accipe sacrificium a devotis tibi famulis,
et pari benedictione, sicut munera Abel, sanctifica,
ut, quod singuli obtulerunt ad maiestatis tuae honorem,
cunctis proficiat ad salutem.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Lord, we beseech you,
having been appeased, consider the sacrifices present,
so that what we accomplish in the mystery of the passion of your Son,
we might obtain in devoted love.

¹³¹ God, who has ordained the perfection
of the multiplicity of sacrifices in the law
by this one sacrifice,
receive the sacrifice from the servants devoted to you,
and bless it with the same blessing
you gave to the offerings of Abel,
so that what individuals have offered
to honor your divine majesty
may advance all to salvation.

In a single, extended sentence, the one sacrifice of Christ, now present in the Eucharistic *sacrificium*, fulfills all other sacrifices. Christ's sacrifice, accomplished in his own body, is the one, perfect sacrifice that encompasses and finalizes the whole human project of offering the first and best to God. Like Abel's prefigurative sacrifice, Christ's self-offering alone is pleasing to God; no other sacrifice, past or future, can replace or surpass it. The Church's current offerings share in both the primeval sacrifice of Abel and its fulfillment in Christ's self-oblation to the Father. More precisely, the individual offering to God made by each member of a given assembly participates in the offerings of the whole. In doing so, it partakes in the whole sacrificial movement of salvation history—from Abel to Christ—then in the commemorative sacrifice offered by the whole Church as it progresses toward the salvation of all.

The oration for Sunday XXVII sounds a similar theme:

Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine,
sacrificia tuis instituta praeceptis,
et sacris mysteriis,
quae debitae servitutis celebramus officio,
sanctificationem tuae nobis redemptionis dignanter adimple.¹³²

The plural forms *sacrificia* and *praeceptis* in the phrase *sacrificia tuis instituta praeceptis* suggest two senses in which the present offering might be understood. In the first, the present sacrifice recalls those mandated by God in the Torah, which, again, prefigure and come to completion in the sacrifice of Christ. In the second sense, the sacrifice is founded

¹³² Receive, we beseech you Lord,
the sacrifice instituted by your commandments,
and by the sacred mysteries by which we celebrate
a duty of service owed,
worthily fulfill in us the sanctification of your redemption.

upon Christ's command "Do this in memory of me." This leads logically to the second clause, *et sacris mysteriis*: the memorial sacrifice commanded by Christ is the ritual enactment of the mystery of his dying, rising and abiding presence in the Eucharist. In obeying this command, the Church, like Israel before it, performs a solemn duty to the Lord—*quae debitae servitutis celebramus officio*—and advances to the fullness of redemption-- *sanctificationem tuae nobis redemptionis dignanter adimple*. Thus, the prayer summarizes the sacrificial economy about to be enacted: God commands the offering; the Church obeys by memorializing Christ's sacrifice, which advances the process of redemption.

The singular *sacrificium* appears in the *super oblata* for Sunday XXXI:

Fiat hoc sacrificium, Domine,
oblato tibi munda, et nobis
misericordiae tuae sancta largitio.¹³³

This simple request evokes the idea of the *sacra commercia* as it shows an intimate, two-way, though not equal, relationship between God and humanity mediated in and through the Eucharistic sacrifice. On the human side, the Church prays that its sacrifice will be a "pure offering" to the Lord; on the divine side, the Lord makes the offering a bounty of the divine mercy for those making the offering—*nobis misericordiae tuae sancta largitio*. The Church offers what it has been given—the Eucharist; the Lord alone makes the sacrifice possible, acceptable, and abundantly efficacious.

¹³³ Lord, may this sacrifice be a pure offering to you and a holy bounty of your mercy to us.

In four of the *super oblata*, the noun *hostia* signifies the sacrifice. On Sunday XXI *hostia* is the one sacrifice of Christ by which God makes an adopted family of those sharing in it—that is, the Church:

Qui una semel hostia, Domine,
adoptionis tibi populum acquisisti,
unitatis et pacis in Ecclesia tua
propitius nobis dona concedas.¹³⁴

Notice here that the *one* sacrifice of Christ is brings about the adoption of a *single* people as well as the fulfillment of the unity of the Church.

The oration for Sunday II shows how each commemoration of this same sacrifice makes ever present and effective the redemption won by Christ in the paschal mystery: *quoties huius hostiae commemoratio celebratur, opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur.*¹³⁵ What the Church does on any given *today* of the liturgical representation makes present and redemptively efficacious Christ's saving work in history.

On Sunday XVIII *hostia* indicates the spiritual sacrifice—*hostiae spiritualis oblatione*—offered by the Church in and along with the material gifts. In and through these present offerings, it is prayed, the eternal self-gift to God of each one making oblations begins their advancement to eternal perfection: *nosmetipsos tibi perfice munus aeternum*. In the Kingdom to come, all will be returned to God perfectly and completely.

¹³⁴ Lord, by a one time sacrifice
you have acquired an adopted people,
mercifully grant to us
the gifts of unity and peace in your Church.

¹³⁵ “whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is performed, the work of our redemption is accomplished.”

The theme of spiritual sacrifice is implied in a unique use of the plural of *hostia* on Sunday XXVIII: *Suscipe, Domine, fidelium preces cum oblationibus hostiarum...*¹³⁶ The phrase, *oblationibus hostiarum*, refers to the sacrifices offered, along with prayers, by individual members of the faithful as a body. In one sense, the bread and wine and gifts of charity presented at the altar might be understood as the sacrifices. As pointed out in Chapter Two, however, sacrifice here would be better interpreted in the metaphorical sense; that is, the material gifts offered represent and convey the interior offering of the faithful. Together, the material and spiritual sacrifices of each person present make up the single embodied act of the Church's united worship of God, which is ordered to the hoped-for movement of all towards heavenly glory: *ut, per haec pia devotionis officia, ad caelestem gloriam transeamus.* (XXVIII)¹³⁷

One possible reading of the phrase *piae devotionis officia* is "the service of our holy devotion." The concept of the offering as service appears more explicitly in the forms of the noun *servitium* in six of the *super oblata*. In these, *servitium* primarily denotes liturgical service or the worship owed to God. The oration for Sunday XIII employs the neuter plural *servitia* perhaps in reference to the service of each member of the assembly joined to the whole: *...praesta, quaesumus, ut sacris apta muneribus fiant nostra servitia.*¹³⁸ The neuter singular appears on Sunday XXX in reference to the liturgical rite of offering of gifts by which the service is performed:

¹³⁶ "Lord, receive the prayers of the faithful with offerings of sacrifices..."

¹³⁷ "so that through these services of pious devotion, we might pass into heavenly glory."

¹³⁸ "grant, we beseech you, that our services might be rendered suitable by these sacred gifts."

Respice, quaesumus, Domine,
munera quae tuae offerimus maiestati,
ut, quod nostro servitio geritur,
ad tuam gloriam potius dirigatur.¹³⁹

On four Sundays phrases from the prayers include forms of the feminine *servitus*—*Altaribus tuis, Domine, munera nostrae servitutis inferimus* (IV)¹⁴⁰; *oblata devotioni nostrae servitutis ascribis* (VIII)¹⁴¹; *Respice, Domine, quaesumus, nostram propitius servitatem* (X)¹⁴²; *debitae servitutis celebramus officio* (XXVII)¹⁴³. A question arises as to the reason for the use of *servitium* in two of the *super oblata* and *servitus* in four others. While *servitium* clearly denotes the abstract *service*, in this case liturgical service, *servitus* refers to the *condition* of servitude or of being a servant. The notion of servitude specifies the relationship between God and the communion of persons offering gifts and worship to God. The service given to God is a duty or a debt owed—*debitae servitutis officio*—by humans, who owe their very existence to God. This is supported by a theme that recurs in the corpus of the *super oblata* in which God is acknowledged as the source of all that humans have and might offer in return to God. Indeed, the very possibility that humans might rightly honor God through their worship is a gift of God. A

¹³⁹ Lord, we beseech you,
look upon the gifts we offer to your majesty,
so that what is accomplished in our servitude
may be directed especially to your glory.

¹⁴⁰ “Lord, we bring to your altars the offerings of our service.” The plural *altaribus* refers to the Church’s many altars throughout the world to which the offerings of all Christians are brought. See *supra*, 173.

¹⁴¹ “...you attribute what is offered to the devotion of our service.”

¹⁴² “Lord, look kindly upon our service.”

¹⁴³ “...we celebrate a duty of service owed...”

strong translation of *servitus* points out the proper attitude of humans in relationship to the primacy, majesty, and total otherness of God.

More notably the phrase *sacris mysteriis*¹⁴⁴ from the oration for Sunday XXVII refers to the paschal mystery of Christ, which the Church commemorates at Christ's command in the Eucharistic sacrifice. In this active remembrance, the Church, the Body of Christ, participates in the mystery of Christ's sacrificial obedience in servitude to the Father. Only by means of this participation can the Church's liturgical celebration be considered redemptive. Moreover, in sharing in Christ's humiliation the faithful will also share in his final exaltation (Phil. 2:9). On Sunday VIII the offering of devoted servitude looks forward to such recompense in eternity: *quod praestas unde sit meritum, proficere nobis largiaris ad praemium*.¹⁴⁵ On Sunday XXVII the office of servitude performed by the Church seeks its redemptive fulfillment: *sanctificationem tuae nobis redemptionis dignanter adimple*.¹⁴⁶

The above examined the ways both the offerings themselves and the act of offering in general are named in the *orationes super oblata*. By way of these various designations the prayers shed light on particular theological and spiritual realities enacted in the liturgical rite of presenting and preparing the gifts for the Eucharist. The focus of the study will now broaden to examine the variety of sacred realities communicated in and through the *super oblata*.

¹⁴⁴ "...by the sacred mysteries..."

¹⁴⁵ "that what you supply, from which merit may be, you might grant to advance us to the reward..."

¹⁴⁶ "...worthily fulfill in us the sanctification of your redemption..."

VI. Elements of Systematic Theology in the *Super Oblata*

Grace

Grace operates explicitly in four of the *super oblata* and at least implicitly in all.

Whatever the Church does liturgically—indeed, in its whole life and activity—relies on a prior enabling gift of God. More broadly, grace is understood here as “God’s own loving kindness toward human beings” which is “generous, free and totally unexpected and undeserved.”¹⁴⁷ The presentation and preparation of the gifts for the Eucharist is a specific event of God’s grace articulated by the *super oblata* in three ways. The orations that explicitly include the noun *gratia* point out the particular workings of grace active in the Eucharistic celebration. In these, respectively, grace purifies—*tua purificante nos gratia, iisdem quibus famulamurysteriis emundemur* (IX and XXIX),¹⁴⁸ sanctifies and leads to eternal joy—*haec sacrosancta mysteria, gratiae tuae operante virtute, et praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent, et ad gaudia sempiterna perducant* (XVII),¹⁴⁹ and strengthens the devotion of those offering gifts for the commemoration of the Paschal mystery—*Concede, quaesumus, Domine, ut oculis tuae maiestatis munus oblatum... gratiam nobis devotionis obtineat* (XXXIII).¹⁵⁰

In those orations from which allusions to grace can be gleaned, grace, first, renders the Church’s offering of gifts and service acceptable to, and received by, God and

¹⁴⁷ Quentin Quesnell, “Grace” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Eds., Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 437.

¹⁴⁸ “purifying us by your grace, we may be cleansed by these very mysteries by which we serve.”

¹⁴⁹ “by the powerful working of your grace these most sacred mysteries might both sanctify us in the conduct of the present life and lead us to eternal joy.”

¹⁵⁰ “Lord, grant we beseech you that the service offered in the sight of your majesty may...obtain for us the grace of devotion...”

profitable for the Church. In these the imperative verbs *da* and *concede* ask that God give or grant what the Church requests; *respice*, and *propitiare* as well as the adverb *propitius* ask God to be favorably or graciously inclined toward the Church's offering¹⁵¹: ...*da, quaesumus, ut et maiestatem tuam convenienter hoc munere veneremur* (XXIII)¹⁵²; *Concede nobis, misercors Deus, ut haec nostra tibi oblatio sit accepta* (XXVI)¹⁵³; *Respice, quaesumus, Domine, munera quae tuae offerimus maiestati* (XXX)¹⁵⁴; *Propitiare, Domine, supplicationibus nostris, et has oblationes famulorum tuorum benignus assume* (XXIV)¹⁵⁵; *Propitius, Domine, quaesumus, haec dona sanctifica, et, hostiae spiritalis oblatione suscepta* (XVIII).¹⁵⁶ While no one can merit or expect God's grace, the worshipping Church humbly beseeches—*quaesumus*—God to extend the divine grace. The title *misercors Deus* in the final prayer brings out another sense of grace: divine mercy.

Second, by grace the Lord grants the Church's rite of offering the power to become an efficacious commemoration of and sharing in the mystery of the sacrificial dying and rising of Christ:

Concede nobis, quaesumus, Domine,
haec digne frequentare mysteria,
quia, quoties huius hostiae commemoratio celebratur,
opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur (II).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ The Greek word for grace, χάρις, as used in the NT also translates to "favor" and expresses this sense of grace. See Ibid., 418. "[I]n every place where an English NT now says 'grace' some other term or terms, such as 'favor' or 'kindness' or 'gift' ... could plausibly be substituted, even in the letters of Paul."

¹⁵² "grant, we beseech you, that we may fittingly reverence your divine majesty with this offering."

¹⁵³ "Merciful God, grant to us that this our offering be accepted by you"

¹⁵⁴ "Lord, we beseech you, look upon the gifts we offer to your majesty"

¹⁵⁵ "Lord, be pleased with our supplications, and kindly receive these gifts of your servants"

¹⁵⁶ "Lord, we beseech you, kindly sanctify these gifts and by the offering of spiritual sacrifices received"

¹⁵⁷ Lord, grant us, we beseech you,
to attend to these mysteries worthily,

Here, God's grace provides the necessary prior condition for the liturgical anamnesis: by grace the Church is made worthy to celebrate anew the once-for-all mystery of Christ's dying and rising in every Eucharistic liturgy. In doing so it continues the work of salvation accomplished by Christ. In the oration for Sunday XXII—*Benedictionem nobis, Domine, conferat salutarem sacra semper oblatio, ut, quod agit mysterio, virtute perficiat*¹⁵⁸—grace is the *benedictione*, or blessing, by which the liturgical enactment of the paschal mystery, that is, the self-emptying death and glorious resurrection of Christ comes to its efficacious perfection—*perficiat virtute*—for and in us. The *super oblata* for Sunday XXXII draws an explicit connection between God's favorable acceptance of the present sacrificial action—*Sacrificiis praesentibus, Domine, quaesumus, intende placatus*—the commemoration, or ritual enactment, of the paschal mystery—*ut, quod passionis Filii tui mysterio gerimus*—and the effect of the whole ritual act—*pio consequamur affectu*.¹⁵⁹ The love unto death that Son showed for the Father in offering himself becomes the same love in which the Church makes the Eucharistic offering.

All of these examples show that the offering can neither exist in itself nor bring about the *anamnesis* or its spiritual effects; only God's grace can accomplish these. To

because whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is performed, the work of our redemption is accomplished.

¹⁵⁸ Lord, may this holy offering
always grant us your saving blessing,
so that what it begins in mystery
it might accomplish in power

¹⁵⁹ Lord, we beseech you, having been appeased,
consider the sacrifices present,
so that what we accomplish in the mystery of the passion of your Son,
we might obtain in devoted love.

paraphrase Saint Paul, the Church's offering, indeed its whole liturgical cult, is "a treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Cor: 4:7, RSV). Indeed, sacramental liturgy necessarily involves matter and human activity, but it begins and ends by the effective power of divine grace.

A unique *super oblata* for Sunday XXI employs a scriptural reference indicating an event of grace in the presentation of the gifts:

Qui una semel hostia, Domine,
adoptionis tibi populum acquisisti,
unitatis et pacis in Ecclesia tua
propitius nobis dona concedas.¹⁶⁰

In and through the liturgical commemoration of the sacrificial dying and rising of Christ, God grants the assembly the grace of adoption. The author of this oration may have had in mind the Vulgate rendering of Gal. 4:1-7, in which Paul proclaims how the redemption of humanity achieved by the Incarnate Son of God bestows the status of sonship on those who have faith in Christ; these now can call God *Abba*, Father.¹⁶¹ In the oration the divinely formed family—God's Church—prays for the further gifts of unity and peace. In the one sacrifice of Christ, now made present and active by grace in the particular

¹⁶⁰ Lord, by a one time sacrifice
you have acquired an adopted people,
mercifully grant to us the gifts of unity and peace in your Church.

¹⁶¹<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatas+4&version=VULGATE>. Accessed 12/03/10. 1. Dico autem : quanto tempore hæres parvulus est, nihil differt a servo, cum sit dominus omnium : 2. sed sub tutoribus et actoribus est usque ad præfinitum tempus a patre : 3. ita et nos cum essemus parvuli, sub elementis mundi eramus servientes. 4. At ubi venit plenitudo temporis, misit Deus Filium suum factum ex muliere, factum sub lege, 5. ut eos, qui sub lege erant, redimeret, ut adoptionem filiorum reciperemus. 6. Quoniam autem estis filii, misit Deus Spiritum Filii sui in corda vestra, clamantem : Abba, Pater. 7. Itaque jam non est servus, sed filius : quod si filius, et hæres per Deum.

Eucharistic liturgy, the whole economy of salvation, beginning with paschal mystery to its ongoing realization in the life of the Church, is God's free gift to humanity.

Third, grace, as it operates in the offering of gifts and is expressed in the *super oblata*, orders the offering to completion in the sacramental communion and its effects. By grace, the liturgical actions performed and the words spoken initiate the ongoing cleansing and sanctification of those receiving communion and the ultimate fulfillment of the liturgical commemoration in eternal salvation and blessing. Clauses from three orations in particular can be read as referring to the continuing effects and completion of the offering. The prayer for Sunday III asks God to grant that the sanctifying power of the sacred rites become salvific for those partaking in the liturgy: *quae sanctificando nobis, quaesumus, salutaria fore concede* (III).¹⁶² On Sunday XV the gathered body of believers asks for the grace of increasing sanctification: *pro credentium sanctificationis incremento sumenda concede*.¹⁶³ On Sunday XXVI, the imperative *concede* asks God to grant what the Church's offering will be acceptable and will open the fountain of God's blessing:

Concede nobis, misercors Deus,
ut haec nostra tibi oblatio sit accepta,
et per eam nobis fons omnis benedictionis aperiatur.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² "grant, we beseech you, that in sanctifying they might be salvific for us."

¹⁶³ "grant that they be taken up for the increase of the sanctification of the believing."

¹⁶⁴ Merciful God, grant to us
that this our offering
be accepted by you,
and through it
may the fountain of all blessing
be opened for us.

This last phrase refers to a profusion of God's generous blessing. Ironically, in presenting its gifts to God, the Church makes known not its own largesse but the boundless generosity of God; in giving—however small it might be—the Church “imitates” God's graciousness and, in doing so, receives a blessed share in the divine life.

Providence

Related to grace, divine providence, too, is operative in the Church's offering of gifts to the Lord. Providence here refers to “the biblical sense of God's fatherly love and care”¹⁶⁵ for creation, particularly, in this context, human beings. This sense of providence recalls Matthew 6: 25-34 in which Christ teaches his disciples to trust completely in God's care and to shun anxiety for the future and 7:11 which reveals God as a loving Father who gives good gifts to his children. The very fact that the Church has anything to offer God or that it is drawn to worship God in this way depends on God's providential love. The phrase *Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine, munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus*¹⁶⁶ in the *super oblata* for Sunday XVII shows the gifts brought forth by the Church for the offering as coming from God's *largitas*, bounty or generosity. The orations for Sundays VIII and XIX contain further indications of this sense of providence in the phrases *offerenda...tribuis/tribuisti*, that is, “you give/have given for the offering”. The prayers read:

¹⁶⁵ John H. Wright, “Providence” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 816.

¹⁶⁶ “Lord, receive the offerings that we bring to you from your bounty”

Deus, qui offerenda tuo nomini tribuis,
 et oblata devotioni nostrae servitutis ascribis,
 quaesumus clementiam tuam,
 ut, quod praestas unde sit meritum,
 proficere nobis largiaris ad praemium. (VIII)¹⁶⁷

Ecclesiae tuae, Domine,
 munera placatus assume,
 quae et misercors offerenda tribuisti,
 et in nostrae salutis potenter efficis
 transpire mysterium.(XIX)¹⁶⁸

The first oration points out that in these same gifts of divine providence, God also endows the assembly with the merit by which it might make the offering: *ut, quod praestas unde sit meritum*. The second adds the adverbial *misercors* to its address of God, which shows divine providence as an action of divine mercy. This can also be seen in the first oration which refers to God's *clementia*. Thus, God mercifully provides what the Church offers for its salvation—in *nostrae salutis*. Only owing to God's mercy can the Church perform its offering and hope for any benefit to result from it.

Another sense in which the *super oblata* express God's providence appears in the orations for Sundays V and XI:

¹⁶⁷ God our Father, you grant what is to be offered to your name,
 and attribute what is offered the devotion of our service,
 we beseech your mercy,
 that what you supply from which merit may be,
 you might grant to advance us to the reward.

¹⁶⁸ Lord, having been appeased,
 receive the gifts of your Church,
 which you have mercifully given to be offered
 and which you powerfully cause to change into the mystery of our salvation.

Domine Deus noster,
 qui has potius creaturas ad fragilitatis
 nostrae subsidium condidisti,
 tribue quaesumus,
 ut etiam aeternitatis nobis fiant sacramentum.¹⁶⁹

Deus, qui humani generis utramque
 substantiam praesentium munerum
 et alimento vegetas et renovas sacramento,
 tribue, quaesumus,
 ut eorum et corporibus nostris subsidium
 non desit et mentibus.¹⁷⁰

In the first oration, providence operates on both sides of the offering: the gifts the Church presents for the Eucharist are taken from the created things God has provided as aid and sustenance for human life in its frail, natural condition—*has potius creaturas ad fragilitatis nostrae subsidium*. In the Eucharist—the *sacramentum aeternitatis*—to which these earthly objects are ordered, God provides nourishment for the eternal, supernatural life of humans.

The second oration, Sunday XI, is comprised of a concise statement of the singularity of divine providence for the natural and supernatural, the physical and spiritual life of humans. Here, the prayer includes an equally succinct anthropological

¹⁶⁹ Lord our God,
 you have especially made these created things
 as help to our fragility.
 Grant we beseech you,
 that they also be for us the sacrament of eternity.

¹⁷⁰ God, by the food and sacrament of the present gifts
 you both nourish and renew
 the dual substance of human nature,
 grant, we beseech you,
 that the help of your gifts may never be lacking
 to either our bodies or our souls.

insight: namely, the human persons gathered in worship of their creator each represent a unity of body and soul. Their being is neither simply spiritual nor simply corporeal, but an integration of both. The same is true of the liturgical worship they offer. The gifts offered are both earthly food and heavenly sacrament, given by God as nourishment for and renewal of the material and spiritual life of humankind—*humani generis utramque substantiam praesentium munerum et alimento vegetas et renovas sacramento*. The prayer goes on to beg God: *tribue, quaesumus, ut eorum et corporibus nostris subsidium non desit et mentibus*. That is, always to provide for the needs of humans—in both body and soul—by way of the gifts presented at the altar.

Providence is also expressed in the *super oblata* in terms of God's guidance of all things in creation towards the realization of the divine purpose.¹⁷¹ As the author of the Wisdom of Solomon wrote of creation, "it is your providence, O Father that steers its course" (14:2, RSV). In the Eucharistic liturgy what the Father of all has provided—that is, the material elements, the faith of the Church gathered, and the sacred ritual itself—all receive their order and completion by the direction of divine governance. On Sunday XVII the power of divine grace guides the Church's sacramental enactment of the paschal mystery to its fulfillment in the ongoing sanctification of the life of the faithful and in everlasting joy: *ut haec sacrosancta mysteria, gratiae tuae operante virtute, et praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent, et ad gaudia sempiterna perducant*.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 815.

¹⁷² "that by the powerful working of your grace these most sacred mysteries might both sanctify us in the conduct of the present life and lead us to eternal joy."

Providence, then, like grace, is efficaciously present at the beginning, middle, and end of the liturgical offering: in the material offering, its liturgical efficacy, and in its sanctifying effects in daily life and in eternity. Believers can, therefore, trust that their meager offerings of bread and wine as well as the struggles of daily life will, under God's direction, become the sacraments of its salvation, to be taken up and brought to completion in God.

The Church

In much of the preceding the Church has been referred to as one of the acting subjects in the *super oblata*. The Church presents gifts from the bounty of what God has given as an act of worship to and communication with God in union with Christ and his perfecting offering of worship to the Father. In its liturgical rites the Church "performs" itself as a Body created and empowered by God and for God from beginning to end; in doing so it realizes and expresses its identity and mission in a particular way.¹⁷³ The *orationes super oblata* contain several images and names for the Church, both implicit and explicit.

In the oration for Sunday XIX in Ordinary Time the Church is named explicitly as God's own that makes the offering by which it hopes its Lord is appeased: *Ecclesiae tuae, Domine, munera placatus assume*.¹⁷⁴ On Sunday XXVIII the Church is the body of the faithful offering prayers and sacrifices in its devotion to the Lord and in hope of its final glorification:

¹⁷³ See Irwin, *Context and Text*, 48-9.

¹⁷⁴ "Lord, having been appeased, receive the offerings of your Church"

Suscipe, Domine,
 fidelium preces cum oblationibus hostiarum,
 ut, per haec piae devotionis officia,
 ad caelestem gloriam transeamus.¹⁷⁵

The *super oblata* for Sunday XV highlights the humility of the Church:

Respice, Domine,
 munera supplicantis Ecclesiae,
 et pro credentium sanctificationis
 incremento sumenda concede.¹⁷⁶

This is the beseeching or imploring Church, the assembly of the believing—
credentium—groaning with all creation, pleading with the Lord for an increase of
 sanctification.¹⁷⁷ On this given Sunday, in this particular moment in the Eucharistic
 liturgy, the Church confesses, in a sense, that it has not yet reached its goal. Rather, it
 remains ever in need of further sanctification and trusts that its liturgical worship of the
 Lord comes to fulfillment in the hoped for redemption of humanity and the cosmos.¹⁷⁸

In the oration for Sunday XXI the Church names itself a people adopted by the
 Lord through the self-oblation of the Son: *Qui una semel hostia, Domine, adoptionis tibi*
populum acquisisti.¹⁷⁹ Thus, the Church is the *family* of God. The prayer for Sunday
 XXV evokes a less familial and less specific sense of the Church:

¹⁷⁵ Lord, receive the prayers of the faithful
 with offerings of sacrifices,
 that through these services of holy devotion,
 we might pass into heavenly glory.

¹⁷⁶ Lord, look upon these offerings of the supplicating Church,
 and grant that they be taken up
 for the increase of the sanctification of the believing.

¹⁷⁷ See Irwin, *Context and Text*, 339.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁷⁹ “Lord, by a one-time sacrifice you have acquired an adopted people”

Munera, quaesumus, Domine,
 tuae plebis propitiatus assume,
 ut, quae fidei pietate profitentur,
 sacramentis caelestibus apprehendant¹⁸⁰

The *plebs* in the designation *plebis tuae* refers generically to “the people of God” or “the body of Christians”.¹⁸¹ While this title does not name the Church as a family or people adopted by God, *plebis tuae* nevertheless indicates a specific relationship of belonging between God and God’s people whose liturgical service to God allows them by way of the offerings presented to participate in the unfolding of the sacramental economy from its earthly beginning in faith to its otherworldly fulfillment.

The notion of the offering as service or servitude owed to God was discussed previously. Whether this service is understood in the intimate, familial sense or as a duty owed by an inferior to a superior, it represents a special office of the Church. Here, the title *servant* emerges from the *super oblata* and can be applied to the Church and its individual members. This is especially true in those prayers already cited that employed the nouns *servitium* and *servitus*—Sundays IV, VIII, X, XIII, XXVII, and XXX—and in those that explicitly name the offerers of the gifts in the plural form of the noun *famulus*, or servant. The *super oblata* for Sunday XVI, for example, includes the phrase *accipe sacrificium a devotis tibi famulis*,¹⁸² naming the members of the assembly offering the sacrifice of “servants devoted” to God. The prayer continues, asking God to sanctify the

¹⁸⁰ Lord, we beseech you,
 mercifully receive the offerings of your people,
 so that what they profess in the devotion of faith
 they might grasp in the heavenly mysteries.

¹⁸¹ Ellebracht, *Remarks on Vocabulary*, 49.

¹⁸² “receive the sacrifice from servants devoted to you”

offering of each just as God blessed the sacrifice of Abel, the primeval and exemplary servant of God: *pari benedictione, sicut munera Abel, sanctifica*.¹⁸³ On Sunday XXIV the Church asks God to receive in kindness the gifts of each of God's servants: *has oblationes famulorum tuorum benignus assume*.¹⁸⁴ Both of the prayers end with the request *ut quod singuli ad honorem tui nominis obtulerunt, cunctis proficiat ad salutem*¹⁸⁵ asking that the offerings of the many, individual servants of God, indicated by the plural of *famulus*, be united and perfected for the salvation of the whole body of servants, the Church: *cunctis proficiat ad salutem*.

While the Church, individually and collectively, might be the servant of God, this does not necessarily imply *servility* or *slavish* service to God. The theological breadth of the Church's euchology allows them to express the one reality of God in all its depth and complexity. The *super oblata* can speak of the divine-human relationship in terms of servant and master as well as parent and child or even friend to friend. Two of the *super oblata* in particular point this out quite clearly. On Sunday XXIX the Church is portrayed as seeking to serve God in freedom of spirit:

Tribue nos, Domine, quaesumus,
donis tuis libera mente servire,
ut, tua purificante nos gratia,
iisdem quibus famulamur mysteriis emundemur.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ "bless it with the same blessing you gave to the offerings of Abel"

¹⁸⁴ "kindly receive these offerings of your servants"

¹⁸⁵ "so that what each offers to the honor of your name may advance all to salvation"

¹⁸⁶ Lord, grant, we beseech you,
to serve you by your gifts with a free mind,
so that, purifying us by your grace,
we may be cleansed
by these very mysteries by which we serve.

Here, two verbs conveying service—*servire* and *famulamur*—are tempered by the phrase *libera mente*. This freedom of service recalls Irenaeus’ understanding of the Church as the assembly of free persons who generously and joyfully relinquish their possessions and selves in worship of God.¹⁸⁷ The oration for Sunday XX portrays the Church as an active participant in a “glorious exchange” between God and humanity:

Suscipe, Domine, munera nostra,
quibus exercentur commercia gloriosa,
ut, offerente quae dedisti,
teipsum mereamur accipere.¹⁸⁸

While this is not “commerce” between equals—indeed God has provided whatever humans might offer—it establishes a relationship with God in which humans are not relegated to mere servility, but are lifted up to give themselves to the Lord and to receive or accept God’s very self in return: *teipsum mereamur accipere*. In this exchange, God no longer calls humans slaves, but friends (John 15:15). In this friendship, this reciprocal exchange, humans receive an infinitely greater gift than they have given.

In the “glorious exchange” enacted in the presentation of gifts of bread and wine and the offering of these in the Eucharistic Prayer, the Church offers the God-given gifts of creation in worship of God, and, thus, serves as *cultor*. Here, the Body of Christ called from the whole of humanity performs a privileged role of cultivating the right use of

¹⁸⁷ See *infra*, Ch. 1, p. 23-4.

¹⁸⁸ Lord, receive our offerings,
by which we accomplish a glorious exchange,
so that in offering what you have given,
we might be made worthy to receive your very self.

God's good gifts—material and spiritual—to humanity.¹⁸⁹ This is exemplified in the Church's "cult": its public offering of thanks and praise to God for the gifts of creation and redemption in Christ.¹⁹⁰ In doing this, the Church proclaims God as the creative source, provider, and rightful owner of all that humanity needs and might have and of all the Church offers in its worship. Four of the *super oblata* emphasize this theme: *Domine Deus noster, qui has potius creaturas ad fragilitatis nostrae subsidium condidisti* (V)¹⁹¹; *Deus, qui offerenda tuo nomini tribuisti* (VIII)¹⁹²; *Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine, munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus* (XVII)¹⁹³; *Ecclesiae tuae, Domine, munera placatus assume, quae et misercors offerenda tribuisti* (XIX).¹⁹⁴

The Church also carries out the vital, human task of making known, and praising God for, the gift of redemption achieved in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. It does so, again, primarily through its *cult*: that is, the daily ritual commemoration of the

¹⁸⁹ As Alexander Schmemmann writes "man...is the priest...[who] stands in the center of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God—by filling the world with this eucharist, he transforms his life, the one that he receives from the world, into life in God, in communion.... The world was created as the 'matter', the material of one all-embracing eucharist, and man was created the priest of this cosmic sacrament." *Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 16. See also Irwin, *Context and Text*, 131.

¹⁹⁰ Schmemmann holds a negative attitude towards "cult", which he regards as "the 'sacred' religious act isolated from, and opposed to, the 'profane' life of the community." He characterizes Christianity and the Eucharist as the end of cult. (Ibid., 28) While I agree with Schmemmann's rejection of the sharp division of the sacred and profane and with his overall understanding of cult in one sense, I understand cult in the sense discussed above. In the Christian "cult" the Church *cultivates*, that is, tends to, nurtures, and grows the good gifts God has bestowed upon and through creation. Furthermore, it attends the constant offering of praise and worship to God. I understand cult in its best sense simply as what the gathered Church performs in its liturgical and ethical actions; that is, rendering to God what is rightly God's.

¹⁹¹ "Lord our God, you have especially made these created things as help to our fragility."

¹⁹² "God, who grants what is to be offered to your name."

¹⁹³ "Receive, we beseech you Lord, the offerings that we bring to you from your bounty."

¹⁹⁴ "Lord, having been appeased, receive the gifts of your Church, which you have mercifully given to be offered"

paschal mystery in its Eucharistic worship of God. Two of the *super oblata* in particular point out the Church's duty to celebrate the mysteries for the glory of God and the salvation of all: *Mysteria tua, Domine, debitis servitiis exsequentes, supplices te rogamus, ut, quod ad honorem tuae maiestatis offerimus nobis proficiat ad salutem* (VII)¹⁹⁵; ...*sacris mysteriis, quae debitae servitutis celebramus officio, sanctificationem tuae nobis redemptionis dignanter adimple* (XXVII)¹⁹⁶. Another oration more clearly specifies the duty as that of glorifying God and asks that the Church's due service to God be directed to God's glory: *quod nostro servitio geritur, ad tuam gloriam potius dirigatur* (XXX).¹⁹⁷ In every liturgical enactment of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, the Church participates in making the ongoing work of redemption present and active in and for the world: *quoties huius hostiae commemoratio celebratur, opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur* (II).¹⁹⁸ This constitutes the Church's vocation: the cultivation of the worship of God and the sanctification of humanity and, indeed, the whole created order.

Sacramentality

The Church's cult is a sacramental cult. As the preceding discussion indicated, in the liturgical engagement of material signs and symbols—words, gestures, persons,

¹⁹⁵ Lord, accomplishing in your mysteries
the debt of service we owe you,
we humbly beseech you
that what we offer to the honor of your majesty
might advance us to salvation"

¹⁹⁶ "by the sacred mysteries by which we celebrate a duty of service owed, worthily fulfill in us the sanctification of your redemption."

¹⁹⁷ "what is accomplished in our servitude may be directed especially to your glory"

¹⁹⁸ "whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is performed, the work of our redemption is accomplished."

actions, and artifacts—spiritual realities are made efficaciously present. This sacramental presence spans the temporal spectrum: the redemptive power of past saving events and an initiation of their ongoing and eternal efficacy are realized in the immediate liturgical action. As a genre, the *orationes super oblata*, serve the purpose of situating the presentation and preparation of the offerings in the whole sacramental economy of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The prayer for Sunday XVII provides a concise summary of this:

Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine,
munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus,
ut haec sacrosancta mysteria,
gratiae tuae operante virtute,
et praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent,
et ad gaudia sempiterna perducant.¹⁹⁹

Here, the assembly's offering of the God-given gifts—*quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus*—the commemoration of the Paschal Mystery—*haec sacrosancta mysteria*—the sanctifying work of grace in the present life of the faithful—*gratiae tuae operante virtute, et praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent*—and the hope of eternal joy—*ad gaudia sempiterna perducant*—coalesce into a single moment and action. In an expression of liturgical *anamnesis* properly understood present action, remembrance of the past, and a vision of the future are realized simultaneously.

¹⁹⁹ Receive, we beseech you Lord,
the offerings that we bring to you from your bounty,
so that by the powerful working of your grace
these most sacred mysteries might both sanctify us in the conduct of the present life
and lead us to eternal joy.”

Other orations follow this pattern of offering, memorial, present and ongoing effect, and eternal fulfillment. In the following examples the singular forms *oblatio* and *munus oblatum* refer to the Eucharistic offering, both of the material gifts and the paschal memorial:

Haec nos oblatio,
quaesumus, Domine,
mundet et renovet
atque tuam exsequentibus voluntatem
fiat causa remunerationis aeternae. (VI)²⁰⁰

Oblatio nos, Domine,
tuo nomini dicata purificet,
et de die in diem
ad caelestis vitae
transferat actionem. (XIV)²⁰¹

Benedictionem nobis, Domine,
conferat salutarem sacra semper oblatio,
ut, quod agit mysterio,
virtute perficiat. (XXII)²⁰²

Concede, quaesumus, Domine,
ut oculis tuae maiestatis
munus oblatum et gratiam
nobis devotionis obtineat,
et effectum beatae perennitatis acquirat.
(XXXIII)²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Lord, we beseech you
that this offering may cleanse and renew us
and also that it be a source of eternal reward
for those who follow your will.

²⁰¹ Lord, may the offering consecrated to your name
purify us and day by day
advance toward the achievement of heavenly life.

²⁰² Lord, may this holy offering
always grant us your saving blessing,
so that what it begins in mystery
it might accomplish in power.

In the first, the immediate effects are cleansing and renewal—*mundet et renovet*; the eschatological is eternal reward—*remuneracionis aeternae*. The second oration asks that the offering purifies and daily carries over into the work of eternal life: *purificet, et de die in diem ad caelestis vitae transferat actionem*. The third asks that the assembly receives God's blessing in the present sacramental action so that its saving power will be perfected in all. In the fourth, the Church seeks in its offering to the majesty of God—*oculis tuae maiestatis munus oblatum*—the ongoing “grace of devotion”—*gratiam devotionis*—and the reward of eternal blessedness—*effectum beatae perennitatis*. As a set, these prayers suggest a vision of sacramentality that gradually unfolds in the *super oblata* through the course of the liturgical year. Each distinct element of the one sacramental economy receives a particular expression at various points in Ordinary Time.

Other examples of the *super oblata* provide more concise and perhaps less thorough summaries of Eucharistic sacramentality. The oration for Sunday V seems to bypass the immediate effects of the offering and moves directly from a designation of the material for the sacrament as help for human physical weakness and that God has provided for the offering to a statement of the hoped-for eternal destiny of the sacrament:

Domine Deus noster,
qui has potius creaturas
ad fragilitatis nostrae subsidium condidisti,
tribue quaesumus, ut etiam aeternitatis
nobis fiant sacramentum.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Lord, grant we beseech you
that the service offered in the sight of your majesty
may both obtain for us the grace of devotion
and procure the accomplishment of a blessed eternity.

²⁰⁴ Lord our God,
you have especially made these created things

However, the phrase *has potius creaturas ad fragilitatis nostrae subsidium condidisti* might be read in another way: while it clearly indicates the created material for the offering it also refers to the sacramental food and drink provided for the strengthening of spiritually frail humans. If this is the case, then the prayer succinctly shows the sacramental progression of matter to spiritual efficacy to eternal completion. That is, the basic, ordinary fare of everyday existence becomes a singular approach toward eternal life.

On Sunday XXVIII the Church prays that in the offering of prayers, material sacrifices, and devoted service to the Lord—*fidelium preces cum oblationibus hostiarum... piae devotionis officia*—it passes into the heavenly glory—*ad caelestem gloriam transeamus*.²⁰⁵ On Sunday XVIII the Church seeks the eternal perfection of the self-gift of the faithful sacramentally signified in the present sacrifice, material and spiritual:

Propitius, Domine, quaesumus,
haec dona sanctifica,
et, hostiae spiritalis oblatione suscepta,
nosmetipsos tibi perface munus aeternum.²⁰⁶

as help to our fragility.
Grant we beseech you,
that they also be for us the sacrament of eternity.

²⁰⁵ Lord, receive the prayers of the faithful
with offerings of sacrifices,
so that through these services of holy devotion,
we might pass into heavenly glory.”

²⁰⁶ “Lord, we beseech you,
kindly sanctify these gifts
and by the offering of spiritual sacrifices received,
perfect us ourselves as an eternal offering to you.

In these prayers the Church's daily liturgical activity—the offering of gifts and praise—is ordered to its eternal fulfillment. Thus, in the context of a sacramental action, the *super oblata* express a basic principle of sacramentality: the material opens to the spiritual, the past to the present to the future, the temporal to the eternal. In the engagement of the former, the latter becomes present and efficacious in a distinct moment in time.

Soteriology

The sacramental sacrifice offered in the Eucharist is both an event and a means of salvation.²⁰⁷ Indeed, as the *super oblata* for Sunday II makes clear, “whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is carried on.” The Church accomplishes this sacrifice in the three elements of offering in the one Eucharistic liturgy: in presenting to God the fruits of creation and human productivity, here symbolized in the bread and wine brought to the altar;²⁰⁸ in the lifting up of thanks and praise to God for the gifts of creation and redemption; and in proclaiming in the present the salvation won by God for all through the once-for-all self-sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection of Jesus Christ.²⁰⁹ In each of these what God has given to humanity—the gifts of creation and redemption—the Church offers or “gives” in return to God. Thus, on both sides of the *gloriosa commercia* it can be said that *giving saves*.

²⁰⁷ See Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist*, 217-37. Irwin joins the two words *sacramental* and *sacrifice* in order to emphasize the unity of Christ's self-sacrifice and his abiding presence in the Eucharist; a unity, he argues, that was obscured in the decrees of the Council of Trent and following. The sacramental sacrifice of the Eucharist “engages us in sacred signs and symbols that we use to perpetuate the sacrifice of Christ so that we can become holy as he is holy.” pp. 218-9. See also SC 2,6, 10, and 47 http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html. Accessed 3/4/10.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 236.

²⁰⁹ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 320.

Not that any gift humans might give to God can ever repay God for the infinite outpouring of divine generosity; nor can any amount of giving possibly merit salvation. Rather, God has given humans the means, the reason, the opportunity, and the salvific completion of their giving in the Eucharistic memorial of Christ's own self-gift to the Father for the salvation of all. The human return of God's giving completes the circle of giving intended and initiated by God from eternity.

In the Eucharist, then, as well as in the Presentation of the Gifts that prepares for it, a soteriology of giving is operative. The liturgical act of giving represents the sacramental commencement of the eternal salvation of those offering the gifts. The *super oblata* for Sunday IV clearly expresses the sacramental and, thus, provisional nature of the liturgical economy:

Altaribus tuis, Domine,
munera nostrae servitutis inferimus
quae, placatus assumens,
sacramentum nostrae redemptionis efficias.²¹⁰

The prayer does not ask that the giving and the gifts brought to the altar be salvific *in se*, but that they become the sacrament of redemption: *sacramentum nostrae redemptionis*. That is, the offering by the Church of its gifts and service to God becomes the sensible sign of a redeemed humanity, one that is turned not in on itself, but that turns to the Lord in the self-sacrificial service for which it was created by God.

²¹⁰ Lord, we bring to your altars
the offerings of our service,
which, having been appeased,
you might receive and make the sacrament of our salvation.

The oration for Sunday XIX includes a similar request, but uses *mysterium* synonymously with *sacramentum*: *quae et misercors offerenda tribuisti, et in nostrae salutis potenter efficis transire mysterium*.²¹¹ Here, the Church asks that God powerfully transform the gifts given by God for the offering into the mystery of salvation, which is Christ's own paschal sacrifice. In offering the memorial of this sacrifice, along with its thanks praise and material gifts, the Church participates sacramentally in Christ's saving act.

Other examples of the *super oblata*, such as that for Sunday XXII, look to the efficacious fulfillment of the sacramental offering:

Benedictionem nobis, Domine,
conferat salutarem sacra semper oblatio,
ut, quod agit mysterio, virtute perficiat.²¹²

The prayer asks that the redemptive sacrifice of Christ celebrated sacramentally in the offering --*quod agit mysterio*—might be completed in power, or actual salvific effects--*virtute perficiat*.

The short, simple request made on Sunday III encapsulates the direct link between the sacrament offering and salvation. The Church asks that what it gives in the present might sanctify it and become its salvation:

²¹¹ “which you have mercifully given to be offered and which you powerfully cause to change into the mystery of our salvation.”

²¹² Lord, may this holy offering
always grant us your saving blessing,
so that what it begins in mystery
it might accomplish in power.

Munera nostra, Domine,
 suscipe placatus,
 quae sanctificando nobis, quaesumus,
 salutaria fore concede.²¹³

The *super oblata* for Sundays VII and XXIV end with the phrase *proficiat ad salutem* which indicates the ongoing salvific effects of the offering made to God, both of the whole assembly and each individual member: ...*ut, quod ad honorem tuae maiestatis offerimus, nobis proficiat ad salutem;*²¹⁴ ... *ut quod singuli ad honorem tui nominis obtulerunt, cunctis proficiat ad salutem.*²¹⁵ The first oration expresses the real salvific value of the Church's worship; the second shows salvation as a communal event in which each contributes to the salvation of all.

As Ordinary Time draws toward its conclusion the Church prays for the final, salvific goal of the giving in a blessed eternity:

Concede, quaesumus, Domine,
 ut oculis tuae maiestatis munus oblatum
 et gratiam nobis devotionis obtineat,
 et effectum beatae perennitatis acquirat (XXXIII).²¹⁶

In the continuous offering of gifts, the offerers are already in the presence of the divine gaze and are given the grace to become ever more devoted—that is, *vowed* or wholly

²¹³ Lord, having been appeased,
 receive our offerings,
 and grant, we beseech you,
 that by sanctifying they will be salvific for us.

²¹⁴ "...that what we offer in honor of your majesty may advance us to salvation."

²¹⁵ "...that what each of us offers to the honor of your name may advance all to salvation."

²¹⁶ Lord, grant we beseech you
 that the service offered in the sight of your majesty
 may both obtain for us the grace of devotion
 and procure the accomplishment of a blessed eternity.

given over—to God. This is the eternal bliss to which humans are invited and the realization of which the Church anticipates in its offering.

Jesus Christ

The language of the *orationes super oblata* clearly portrays the Church's liturgical offering of gifts of material goods, worship and praise, spiritual devotion, and collective memory as performing an active and positive role in the economy of human salvation. To affirm this is not to suggest that the offering in itself bears any redemptive efficacy; as has been sufficiently established, the offering always and everywhere relies first and finally upon the saving power of God's grace working through the mediation and the original, salvific self-oblation of Jesus Christ. Many of the verbs in the orations are in the subjunctive; they hope for rather than assume the efficacious completion of the Church's offering. It is by divine command and graciousness that the offering is made and brought to fulfillment.

Each of the *super oblata* ends with the invocation, *Per Christum*. As in all of the Church's prayer and liturgical activity, the offering of gifts derives its spiritual efficacy and completion through the intercession of Jesus Christ. In this sense, all of the *super oblata* are explicitly Christological: that is, all name Christ as the one through, whom the Church offers its gifts and worship and addresses its prayers to God.

Only one of the orations, however, includes a direct reference to Christ within the body of the text, and here not by a proper name:

Sacrificiis praesentibus, Domine,
 quaesumus, intende placatus,
 ut, quod passionis Filii tui mysterio gerimus,
 pio consequamur affectu (XXXII).²¹⁷

The phrase *quod passionis Filii tui mysterio gerimus*—“what we accomplish in the mystery of the passion of you Son”—states explicitly what the prayers as a genre imply: the Church’s offering commemorates and, thus participates in, and receives its efficacy from, Christ’s Paschal Mystery. This is especially clear in most of those orations that include the nouns *mysterium*, *sacrificium*, or *hostia*.

In general *mysterium* as it is used in the *super oblata* signifies the sacred rites commemorating the paschal mystery and the saving effects accomplished in and through Christ’s redemptive work. The oration for Sunday XXVII provides a good indication of this: ...*sacrisysteriis...sanctificationem tuae nobis redemptionis dignanter adimple*.²¹⁸ Here the Church’s sacramental enactment of the paschal mystery is clearly stated as the means by which the Church hopes to reach the fullness of redemption. This sense of *mysterium* also appears in the orations for Sundays II, VII, IX, XIII, XVII, XXII, XXIII, XXIX, and XXXII.

Sacrificium, which appears on Sundays XII, XVI, XXVII, XXXI, and XXXII, refers either directly or anamnetically to the one self-sacrifice of Christ. The oration for

²¹⁷ Lord, we beseech you,
 having been appeased,
 consider the sacrifices present,
 so that what we accomplish in the mystery of the passion of your Son,
 we might obtain in devoted love.

²¹⁸ “by the sacred mysteries by which we celebrate a duty of service owed, worthily fulfill in us the sanctification of your redemption.”

Sunday XVI portrays this sacrifice as fulfilling all sacrifices preceding it and making possible and effective the one that follows it: the Eucharist. On Sunday XII the expiatory character of the Church's commemoration of Christ's sacrifice is highlighted:

Suscipe, Domine,
sacrificium placationis et laudis,
et praesta, ut, huius operatione mundati,
beneplacitum tibi nostrae mentis
offeramus affectum.²¹⁹

The Eucharistic offering is one of appeasement (*plactionis*), that is, it establishes peace between the Lord and those offering the sacrifice. In accomplishing this peace it also cleanses those offering of sin and reorders their minds and hearts to God.

Hostia, as it is used on Sundays II and XXI also signifies Christ's sacrifice. The initial phrase of the latter prayer is especially clear in this regard: *Qui una semel hostia, Domine, adoptionis tibi populum acquisisti.*²²⁰ By the *single* sacrifice offered once by Christ, God adopts an entire people as God's own. Any sacrifice the Church offers depends first and last on the single sacrifice of Christ the Son, in whom all others are made children of God.

The oration for Sunday II expresses the anamnestic character of the Church's offering, which commemorates the sacrifice of Christ and carries forward its redemptive work: *quoties huius hostiae commemoratio celebratur, opus nostrae redemptionis*

²¹⁹ Lord, receive the sacrifice of appeasement and praise and grant, that cleansed by its work, we may offer you an affection of mind pleasing to you.

²²⁰ "Lord, by a one-time sacrifice you have acquired an adopted people"

exercetur.²²¹ Here, Christ is the eternal victim, present and acting for human redemption in every Eucharistic sacrifice.

A Christology derived from the *super oblata* emphasizes Christ's mediative and expiatory offices; thus, it is primarily a *priestly* Christology. As the final invocation of every *super oblata* verifies, the Church's offering and prayers are made efficacious through the intercession of Christ. Moreover, salvation and the very possibility of offering gifts to God depend on the reconciliation of humans with God accomplished by Christ in his self-oblation to the Father. The gifts presented for Church's Eucharistic offering participate in Christ's saving gift of self. All giving to, all right worship of, God depends on this. The Church's sacrifice is Christ's paschal sacrifice; Christ's sacrifice is the Church's sacrifice. In both, Christ is always the High Priest.

Naming God in the Super Oblata

Ultimately, the *orationes super oblata* are *theological*. That is, in the prayers God is the addressee, the primary active agent, and the recipient of the Church's offering of gifts and worship. Initially, however, an abstraction of particular concepts of God from the prayers might seem difficult. Most of the prayers do not explicitly state attributes of God. Nevertheless, all of them are imbued with God: who God is, what God does, how God relates to creation, time, matter, humanity, the Church, and individuals. It is precisely within the profusion of references to God, direct and oblique, that the orations provide a "doctrine" of God.

²²¹ "because whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is performed, the work of our redemption is accomplished."

The most basic, direct, and common name by which the Church addresses God in the *super oblata* is *Domine*, Lord or Master, which occurs in twenty-eight of the orations. While this somewhat generic, if venerable, title could be considered sufficient, the aims of this study are better served by going further, by searching the prayers for indications of, and even explicit references to, divine attributes. Who is the “Lord” the Church encounters in its offering of gifts and the words of its prayers? Since these euchological texts are being approached as poetic texts, ordered to a here-and-now experience of divine being and activity in the liturgical act of offering gifts, a more expansive and expressive field of images and insights drawn from them is possible and will be helpful.

In the *super oblata* for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time the Lord is God, the creator and provider of all created things, and the fulfiller of human need: *Domine Deus, qui has potius creaturas ad fragilitatis nostrae subsidium condidisti.*²²² Two of the prayers use the title *Deus* alone. On the Sunday VIII, God is the provider of the very gifts the Church offers to God in the present Eucharistic liturgy: *Deus, qui offerenda tuo nomini tribuis.*²²³ On Sunday XI also, God is provider of nourishment as well as the sustainer of humans in the integrity of body and soul:

Deus, qui humani generis utramque
substantiam praesentium munerum
et alimento vegetas et renovas sacramento,
tribue, quaesumus,
ut eorum et corporibus nostris
subsidium non desit et mentibus.²²⁴

²²² “Lord our God, you made these created things especially as help to our fragility.”

²²³ “God, who grants what is to be offered to your name.”

²²⁴ God, by the food and sacrament of the present gifts
you both nourish and renew

The God addressed on the Sunday XVI is the one, wholly other, majestic God of the Scriptures. This God's own initiative alone has established, empowers, and fulfills sacrifice as the means of communication between humanity and God and the salvation of humans. This God received the primordial sacrifice of Abel and the final sacrifice of Jesus, which the Church now commemorates for the salvation of all:

Deus, qui legalium differentiam hostiarum
unius sacrificii perfectione sanxisti,
accipe sacrificium a devotis tibi famulis,
et pari benedictione, sicut munera Abel,
sanctifica, ut, quod singuli obtulerunt
ad maiestatis tuae honorem,
cunctis proficiat ad salutem.²²⁵

On Sunday XXIII, this same, transcendent God is the creator of healthy human interiority and the uniter of the hearts of those partaking in the sacred mysteries:

Deus, auctor sinceræ devotionis et pacis,
da, quaesumus,
ut et maiestatem tuam
convenienter hoc munere veneremur
et sacri participatione mysterii fideliter
sensibus uniamur.²²⁶

the dual substance of human nature,
grant, we beseech you,
that the help of your gifts may never be lacking
to either our bodies or our souls.

²²⁵ God, you have ordained the perfection of the multiplicity of sacrifices in the law
by this one sacrifice,
receive the sacrifice from your devoted servants,
and bless it with the same blessing you gave to the offerings of Abel,
so that what each has offered to honor your divine majesty
may advance all to salvation.

²²⁶ God, creator of true devotion and peace,
grant, we beseech you,
that we may both fittingly reverence your majesty with this offering
and be faithfully united in our hearts

Finally, in the *super oblata* for Sunday XXVI God is named the merciful One who kindly accepts the offerings of the faithful and opens to them a flowing fountain of blessing:

Concede nobis, misercors Deus,
ut haec nostra tibi oblatio sit accepta,
et per eam nobis fons
omnis benedictionis aperiatur.²²⁷

As the Church presents its offerings at the altar in preparation for the Eucharistic offering of bread and wine, thanks and praise, it approaches a God who is essentially unapproachable yet who reaches into, touches, and provides for humans: body, heart, and soul.

In a similar way, the phrasing of the orations can give some indication of the many facets of the name *Domine*. First, *Domine* is the Lord or Master of time and history who creates the very possibility for the Church to continue celebrating the paschal mystery and for its redemptive power to be present and active every time the Church commemorates Christ's dying and rising. As the Church prays on Sunday II:

Concede nobis,
quaesumus, Domine,
haec digne frequentare mysteria,
quia, quoties huius hostiae commemoratio celebratur,
opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur.²²⁸

by our participation in this sacred mystery.

²²⁷ "Merciful God,
grant to us that this our offering be accepted by you,
and through it may the fountain of all blessing be opened for us."

²²⁸ Lord, grant us, we beseech you,
to attend to these mysteries worthily,
because whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is performed,
the work of our redemption is accomplished.

Humans possess neither the worthiness nor inherent power to bring about the redemption the Eucharist celebration makes present and efficacious. The Church can only do what its Lord commanded and trust that by God's grace its obedience will be rewarded. Even the worthiness of the Church to carry out its liturgy requires the empowering permission of the Lord.

The Lord who is the empowering agent that makes the liturgical celebration possible is also the very source of the gifts the Church can present for the Eucharistic offering: *Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine, munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus...* (XVII)²²⁹; *Ecclesiae tuae, Domine, munera placatus assume, quae...misericors offerenda tribuisti...* (XIX)²³⁰; *...offerente quae dedisti, teipsum mereamur accipere* (XX).²³¹ In the last example the Lord is the *Alpha* and *Omega*—both the source and fulfillment—of the gifts and the giving: in offering what God has given, those making the offering “merit” the gift of God's very self. In all, the Lord is the initiator of the Church's giving.

Precisely as the source and end of all, *Domine* is also the Lord to whom humans owe a debt of service. Looking back to the lexicon, words such as *servire*, *servitium*, *famulus* and so on need not be read in the negative sense of a master-servant relationship. Still, the Lord far surpasses humanity and all creation in being and certainly in glory. Indeed, the Lord is the cause, sustainer, and savior of all being and life; as such the Lord rightly deserves the worship and service of all, particularly humans. The prayers for

²²⁹ “Receive, we beseech you Lord, the offerings that we bring to you from your bounty”

²³⁰ “Lord, having been appeased, receive the offerings of your Church, which you have mercifully given to be offered”

²³¹ “in offering what you have given, we might be made worthy to receive your very self”

Sundays IV, VII, IX, X, XVII, XX, XXV, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, and XXXIII evoke this image the proper divine-human relationship. Among these orations several in particular point out the debt of service owed to the Lord by humanity: *Altaribus tuis, Domine, munera nostrae servitutis inferimus...* (IV)²³²; *Mysteria tua, Domine, debitis servitiis exsequentes...* (VII)²³³; *...ut, tua purificante nos gratia, iisdem quibus famulamur mysteriis emundemur* (IX, XXIX)²³⁴; *Respice, Domine, quaesumus, nostram propitius servitutem* (X)²³⁵; *...quod nostro servitio geritur, ad tuam gloriam potius dirigatur* (XXX)²³⁶; *sacris mysteriis, quae debitae servitutis celebramus officio* (XXVII).²³⁷

The Lord served in the Church's offering of gifts is not only the wholly other Master. The Lord is also the loving, merciful, and openhanded Other of Psalm 104—"when you open your hand, they are filled with good things." The Church offers these good gifts to this Lord, who graciously receives them, transforms them and gives them again as a source of blessing, sanctification, and eternal beatitude. This is the Lord named in the *super oblata* for Sundays XVII and XXVI:

Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine,
munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus,
ut haec sacrosancta mysteria,
gratiae tuae operante virtute,
et praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent,
et ad gaudia sempiterna perducant.²³⁸

²³² "Lord, we bring to your altars the offerings of our service to you."

²³³ "Lord, accomplishing in your mysteries the debt of service we owe you"

²³⁴ "through your grace purifying us may we be cleansed by the very mysteries which we serve"

²³⁵ "Lord, we beseech you, look kindly upon our service"

²³⁶ "that what is accomplished in our servitude may be directed especially to your glory"

²³⁷ "by the sacred mysteries by which we celebrate a duty of service owed"

²³⁸ Receive, we beseech you Lord,
the offerings that we bring to you from your bounty,

Concede nobis, misercors Deus,
 ut haec nostra tibi oblatio sit accepta,
 et per eam nobis fons omnis
 benedictionis aperiatur.²³⁹

Thus, the Church's rite of offering to God has its origin in the God who is bounty in itself—*largitate*—and ends in the God who is the eternal joy—*gaudia*—the source of all blessing—*fons omnis benedictionis*.

VII. A Liturgical Theology From the *Super Oblata*

A theology drawn from the *orationes super oblata* in their liturgical context is, ultimately, a Eucharistic theology. That context, the rite of presenting and preparing the gifts for the Eucharist as it developed throughout the Church's history constitutes a necessary element in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It must be admitted, however, that the Preparation of the Gifts and the prayer that concludes it—the *super oblata*—both inescapably anticipate the offering accomplished in the Eucharistic Prayer. The varying degrees of solemnity—often a great degree—that have traditionally accompanied the presentation and preparation of the gifts have also often obscured the fact that this liturgical action is precisely a *preparation* for, and an orientation of the liturgical environment toward, the Eucharistic prayer. As it developed in the Middle Ages, the

that by the powerful working of your grace
 these most sacred mysteries
 might both sanctify us in the conduct of the present life
 and lead us to eternal joy.
²³⁹ Merciful God,
 grant to us that this our offering be accepted by you,
 and through it may the fountain of all blessing be opened for us

Offertory of the 1570 *ordo missae* approached the character of another, virtual Eucharist in the so-called *petite Canon*. The correction of this situation led the revisers of the *ordo missae* following Vatican II initially to propose a simple placing of the material for the Eucharist on the altar in silence.²⁴⁰ This would have returned the Church to a minimal practice similar to that of the earliest forms of the Roman Offertory.

As Chapters Two and Three of this study showed, however, even from the earliest times, the simplicity of the presentation of the gifts soon became elaborated. The Church seems to have recognized from early on the significance of the presentation of its gifts at the altar. Formative writings, such as the Syriac *Didache*, the *Apostolic Tradition*, and those of Irenaeus of Lyons, show that an understanding of this activity in sacrificial terms.²⁴¹ Each person who presented gifts offered to God what God had provided to each, both from creation and the work their hands, to be united with Christ's own offering commemorated in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The offering was sacrificial in the sense that it involved the surrender to God of the first and best of one's possessions and the making holy (*sacrificere*) of what was offered in its unity with Christ's sacrifice.

Thus, a theology of the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar can be stated as follows: the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar in the current *ordo missae* involves the

²⁴⁰ Schema 16. 38-44, *Relatio coetus a studiis "De Ordine Missae"* in Maurizio Barba, *La riforma conciliare dell'«Ordo Missae». Il percorso storico-redazionale dei riti d'ingresso, di offertorio e di comunione*. (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 2002), 279.

²⁴¹ See *infra*, Ch. 1, p. 11ff.

ritual union of the self-offering of the individual faithful with the offering of the Church gathered for a particular Eucharistic celebration. This offering of the whole Body of Christ commemorates and participates in the paschal sacrifice of Christ in obedient love to the Father, which is proclaimed in the Eucharistic prayer, enacted in the lives of the faithful and will come to its eternal fulfillment in heaven. The offerings suggested by the title *super oblata* and stated explicitly in a number of the orations represent a real offering by the faithful to God. The gifts of bread and wine especially, as well as the Church's thanks and praise and any charitable gifts that might be included in the presentation, represent the self-surrender of each member and of the whole gathered Church—itsself representing humanity—to be united daily to the sacrifice of Christ and brought to eschatological fulfillment.

The foregoing does not entail the faithful crudely imagining themselves placed upon the altar or joining Christ on Calvary. Rather, the Presentation of the Gifts and the Preparation of the Altar provides a pause for reflection upon the many gifts, material and spiritual, God has given and for orienting oneself—indeed, the whole assembly—towards the return in gratitude of these gifts to God in union with the self-offering of Christ made present on the Eucharistic offering. Beyond this, the *super oblata* order the offering to the fullness of the Eucharistic *actio*: they direct the gifts and the giving to their sacramental completion in communion, in the ongoing, daily life of the faithful, and, finally, in eternal beatitude.²⁴²

²⁴² See Irwin's discussion of sacramentality in *Models of the Eucharist*, 43-5.

As the prayers of blessing spoken at the beginning of the Preparation rite state, the simple gifts of bread and wine presented at the altar signify “what earth has given and human hands have made.” What the Church presents at the altar to be offered in the Eucharistic prayer is, in effect, *everything*—the inexhaustible expanse of God’s gracious providence. The wheat and grapes of which the bread and wine are made are the products of the cosmic processes of sun and earth, wind and rain; the rising and setting of the sun, the turning of the seasons.²⁴³ The ingenuity and work of humans in concert with this work of creation makes the products by which humans live and thrive and that are presented at the altar. This cosmic offering embraces anthropological, ecclesiological, and personal facets. Here, the Church represents humanity returning its bounty to the God who created and provided it. At the individual level, one’s personal possessions and productivity are taken up into the universal worship of God.

However, lest the Preparation rite acquire too much importance and be overly emphasized in the liturgy, it must be kept in mind that it is but a preliminary to something much more vital, both liturgically and in the lives of Christians. The Presentation of the Gifts represents the first step towards the great lifting up thanks and praise to God and the liturgical representation of Christ’s passion, death, and triumphant resurrection for the eternal salvation of all. On the other hand, the material elements presented play an essential role in the liturgical act of worship and memory: they are sacramental signs—the “signs perceptible to the senses”—in and through

²⁴³ See *Ibid.*, 52, also Irwin, *Context and Text*, 57-9.

which the Church offers itself and its worship and receives its sanctification. In giving appropriate attention to the matter presented for the Eucharist the Church also properly acknowledges a basic sacramental principle: in and through material realities humans experience God's grace and receive a share in the divine life. In the sacramental worldview there is no wall between matter and spirit; the boundaries are permeable. Matter communicates spirit; spirit animates and completes matter. Thus, sacramental liturgy always involves the engagement of material realities—people, objects, actions, gestures—for “the sanctification of [humans] in Christ and the glorification of God” (SC 10).²⁴⁴ Human life is an embodied life. Our sanctification occurs in the body, as will our eternal salvation. The Church's liturgical worship recognizes these principles and continually enacts them so that those who experience them will learn to live what they do when they pray as a body of believers.²⁴⁵ In the material signs presented at the altar and in the worship offered in connection with them, believers learn the habit of offering themselves to God and others.

Given the sacramental value of the material elements present, the establishment of an appropriate performance and interpretation of the Presentation of the Gifts and the Preparation of the Altar requires that particular enactments of would involve three essential elements, First, an understanding of the gifts and the giving should be informed by the blessing prayers—*Benedictus es, Domine*—which point out that the

²⁴⁴ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html. Accessed 3/4/10.

²⁴⁵ See Irwin, *Context and Text*, 46-7.

gifts of bread and wine signify the fruits of creation and the human work, given by God and now offered back to God in gratitude. Second, an understanding of the gifts and the offering conveyed by the *super oblata* shows these as ordered to, and made efficacious by, the celebration of Christ's paschal mystery. Third, an appropriately solemn procession of the gifts to the altar by members of the liturgical assembly—not ushers, altar servers, or other ministers—shows that the material gifts offered in the Eucharistic Prayer actually represent the gifts of the gathered faithful. Obviously, the gifts presented will include the bread and wine for the Eucharist; it is also fitting, given historical precedent and as envisioned in the rubric for the presentation, that gifts for support of the poor and the Church could or should be included.²⁴⁶

Although extended, elaborate rituals in which the Church presents a variety of material gifts may not always and everywhere desirable or possible, certain feasts and seasons might provide excellent opportunities for such. Certain cultural contexts might also be appropriate for more developed presentation rites: for example, farming communities where the cycles of planting and harvesting the fruits of the earth constitute part of the local consciousness; locations where great material need—either temporary or chronic—exists among segments of the community; and in parishes that are, or seek to be, highly conscious of and active in concerns of social justice and charity. At a minimum, a theologically appropriate and enlightening presentation rite will go beyond a mere transport of material and dressing the altar for the Eucharistic

²⁴⁶ See *infra*, Ch. 1, p. 10.

prayer. It will point out clearly, but with restrained solemnity, the theological, anthropological and ecclesiological import of what occurs in the rite. It will reveal that the presentation and preparation of the Church's offerings is, in fact, an essential element of the Eucharistic sacrifice. If the rite is properly performed and understood, and the *super oblata* that conclude it are given due attention, these will show that what is offered in the Eucharistic prayer includes the gifts, praise, lives and possessions of the gathered Church. This is best accomplished by simple and faithful adherence to the prescribed texts, actions, and actors of the rite. Both an over-elaboration and under-emphasis obscures the true nature and purpose of the presentation rite.

The *orationes super oblata* as a genre comprise a preliminary summary of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and a proclamation of the unity of the material gifts presented, the individual self-offerings of the faithful, the gathered Church's offering of worship to God in and through the commemoration of Christ's paschal mystery, the sanctifying grace of the offering, and its completion in the joy of eternal salvation. Within this body of prayers, individual examples emphasize particular theological notions which, in turn, highlight one or more of the various facets of meaning involved in the Church's offering of gifts and the Eucharist to which the gifts are ordered.

At the same time, the liturgical action of presenting gifts for the Eucharist provides a unique context for the enactment, experience, and appropriation of these notions. For example, *providence* as expressed in the context of offering to God what God has provided for the life, health and salvation of humans takes on an entirely

different connotation than it does in the abstract: in the offering, God's providence is actively present to, and acknowledged by, the Church. The same is true for references made to *grace*, *sanctification*, and *redemption* in the *super oblata*. As the Church prepares its material offerings for their transformation into the sacrament of its salvation all of these theological concepts become living realities, present and active in a "privileged" way; that is, in a completely new, immediate, and unique event of salvation that takes place in the particular liturgical celebration of the salvation achieved once for all in Christ's paschal mystery.²⁴⁷ The sacred realities engaged in every liturgical celebration both interpret and are interpreted by the lived experience of those taking part in them.

This means that in the acts of presenting its gifts and preparing for its Eucharist the Church enacts and potentially experiences the genesis of a new event of transformative grace and sanctification. It encounters in unique way the omnipotent and gracious God who creates and sustains, redeems and perfects all being and life. In tendering its material and spiritual sacrifices, the Church begins its incorporation into the mystery of the self-emptying death and glorious resurrection of Christ. It discovers its identity as the family of God bound to devoted service to God through the proclamation of God's love, generosity, and salvific will for humans. It comes to realize its role as the custodian of all God has created and provided and to perform its duty of returning in gratitude to God the firstfruits of what God has bestowed on humanity in

²⁴⁷ See Irwin, *Context and Text*, 47.

creation and redemption. Finally, the Church looks forward to the eternal fulfillment of all of this in the Kingdom to come.

This offering of the first and best of God's bounty begins with the presentation of the simple gifts of bread and wine and offerings for charity. Joining these to the proclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer the Church faithfully enacts the paschal mystery, the once-for-all saving power of which is made present and active by God's grace and in the Church's act of memory. In receiving its gifts again, transformed into the sacrament of salvation, the Church enters into the ongoing sanctification of human being and action, which find their ultimate purpose and meaning in the eternal gift of God's own self.

All of these sacred realities are expressed in the *super oblata*. Their transformative and formative power requires the active attention and appropriation of those participating in the liturgy. This, in turn, requires that the faithful—ordained as well as lay—come to a clearer and more profound understanding of what occurs in the preparation rite and what is expressed in the *super oblata*.

VIII. Conclusions

This final section will comprise some proposals for the practical application for a theology drawn from the *super oblata*. These will include Eucharistic theology, liturgical catechesis, and spirituality.

Eucharistic Theology

First and foremost, as stated at the beginning of the analysis of the orations, a theology from the *super oblata* contributes to the ongoing development of a comprehensive liturgical theology of the Eucharist. The concepts and insights gathered from a close, interpretive reading of the *orations* in their context constitute elements of a *theologia prima*—that is, one founded upon and derived from the Church’s experience of a direct and particular encounter with God and the saving realities present in the Eucharistic offering.²⁴⁸ The lexical and theological abundance of the *super oblata* provides multiple perspectives from which the Eucharistic liturgy might be experienced and understood not as a fixed ritual unit, but as an unfolding event of providence, grace, salvation and God’s very self mediated by words and symbols. The *super oblata* provide a variety of lenses through which the one Eucharistic action can be experienced, interpreted and appropriated.

Liturgical Catechesis

Teaching the faithful the means of effectively engaging, understanding, and appropriating the content of the words and symbols employed in the liturgy is one of the tasks of liturgical catechesis. As SC 19 instructs, the liturgical education of faithful should “promote...their active participation, both internal and external in the liturgy.”²⁴⁹ A theology from the *super oblata* can serve as foundational in this training. Specifically,

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 44-5. See also Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1984), 75.

²⁴⁹ http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html

it could inform—and, indeed, be informed by—an application of the exhortation given in

Article 48:

they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration... They should give thanks to God. Offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to offer themselves. Through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other, so that finally God may be all in all.²⁵⁰

What this instruction calls for, the *super oblata* state at least implicitly: the offering referred to in the orations is that of the faithful in union with the whole Church to be joined with the sacrifice of Christ, which produces daily effects of conversion and sanctification ordered to their completion in eternal life in God. Active, conscious attention to what is said in and enacted by the *super oblata* in their liturgical context can assist in the ongoing integration of these effects by the faithful. The *internal* participation in the liturgy called for in SC 19 should be understood not only as one's contribution to the liturgical action, but one's transformation *by* it as well. Both a giving and a receiving take place in the Eucharistic action.

Not only do the *super oblata* as a genre verbally instantiate the economy of offering, they also, as I argued throughout this study of the prayers, make present and active various specific experiences of God, the Church, Christ, salvation and other sacred realities. Of course, the same can be said for all of the euchology of the Mass—in particular the Collect, the Eucharistic Prefaces, and the Postcommunion Prayer—but the focus here is on the *super oblata*. A catechesis informed by, and making explicit

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

reference to, these orations would contribute to a multilayered Eucharistic theology that opens to believers the depth of meaning and potential experience conveyed by the prayers and by the Eucharistic offering to which they are ordered. At the same time this catechesis would help to establish an understanding of the proper relationship between the preparation rite and the Eucharistic prayer.

Such a catechesis would entail a *mystagogy* based on the model developed in the patristic era of the Church, which explained the sacraments by way of discourses on the words and actions of the liturgy. Mystagogy as envisioned here would involve a spiritual explanation both of the Preparation rite as a whole and specifically the *super oblata*. The latter would expound upon and elucidate the words, images and concepts contained in the prayers in a way accessible to and formative of believers at all levels of faith. This would facilitate an adequate performance of, and beneficial participation in, the liturgy as well as the appropriation of the transformative realities it enacts. In short, it would teach the faithful how to pray and live the Eucharistic liturgy. It would show how the brief, easily ignored or forgotten moments of prayer can, in fact, provide a passageway into an ever more expansive experience and integration of sacred realities, particularly, of the Eucharist and its saving, transformative power.

While mystagogical catecheses could be included in the curriculum of regular religious education classes and seminars, they would be communicated more frequently and to a wider audience in homilies. Furthermore, mystagogical homilies can and should be made primarily on feast days, providing a deeper understanding of those days

and their theological significance; they would also be useful in illuminating the full range of the liturgy and the liturgical year.²⁵¹ Specifically, theological themes found in the *super oblata* might be incorporated either explicitly or as part of the overall fabric of a given homily. This could be done throughout the liturgical year where and when appropriate—namely, in those homilies in which the homilist seeks to draw connections between the Eucharistic offering and the scriptural readings of the day and between the Eucharist and its implications for the lived faith of those participating in it.²⁵² The latter means that a mystagogical reading of the *super oblata* can yield a Eucharistic ethics founded upon and set into motion by the lifting up of one's life, work, possessions, self—and indeed, all of creation—to God in the moments of each day.

Spirituality

Toward an effective linkage of the liturgy and life, the experience of and insights into the divine realities communicated in the *super oblata* and explained by way of mystagogical catecheses and homilies would contribute to a spirituality founded on the liturgy. A liturgically grounded formed spirituality flows from and into the living of life in the world, both by individual Christians and the Body of Christ that is the Church. There is a continual movement of practical action and experience into the liturgy in which the two domains mutually interpret and inform each other. That is, one's experience in the world shapes how that one enters into the liturgical action; one's

²⁵¹ Irwin, *Context and Text*, 47.

²⁵² See *Ibid.*, 8. The ethical implications of liturgical participation will be discussed more fully below.

engagement in the liturgy shapes how one's prior experience is understood and how subsequent affairs of life should be conducted.

In this spirituality, liturgy, prayer, and spirituality are closely interrelated aspects of Christian life and being.²⁵³ Liturgy is, in fact, a form of prayer, even though there numerous others. The many forms of private and communal prayer serve a vital role in the integration of liturgy and life. Spirituality emerges from the matrices of liturgical and personal prayer. Thus, spirituality is understood as the particular living out of a Christian life formed and enlightened by the liturgical enactment of the mysteries of salvation and by personal prayer that is rooted in the liturgy and always brings new insights and possibilities into every engagement of the Church's rites.

The experience of God and the sacred realities enacted in the liturgy are events of grace that provide a source for spirituality and the impetus for renewed ways of being and acting. One includes the experience and insight acquired in the liturgy in individual prayer and meditation. Each time one consciously and actively participates in the liturgy and applies its fruits to personal prayer and action, the process of conversion and sanctification continues.²⁵⁴ As shown in the analysis of the *super oblata*, the ongoing enactment of the sacred mysteries made present in the liturgy and a daily living out of the self-offering they celebrate are finally and eternally taken up into and fulfilled in the very life of God.

²⁵³ See Ibid., 311f. Irwin identifies and describes the relationship between the three in terms of concentric circles. I envision it in cyclical terms with each flowing into and out of the other in a singular, circular model in which each informs and is informed by the other.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

This notion of the integration of liturgy, prayer, and spirituality can be applied to the theological concepts derived from the reading of the *super oblata*. In the rites preparing for the Eucharistic prayer four themes that occur repeatedly in the orations are those of *offering*—which the very title *super oblata* presupposes—*providence*, *grace*, and *service*. The Church, both in its individual members and as a body, offers what God has graciously provided to humanity, both in the gifts of created matter and in the redemption won by Christ. It does so in fulfillment of a debt of service due to the God who provides and saves. Grace acts in empowering the offering to become a memorial of the paschal mystery, in cleansing those making the offering, and in bringing the offerings to their fulfillment, both as sacrament and eternal reward.

As pointed out in the analysis of the *super oblata*, the presentation of the bread and wine for the Eucharist signifies the offering of what God has provided. It was maintained that the offering consists of at least four elements: the material gifts presented as well as the whole liturgical act of offering, the Church's act of remembering Christ's saving deeds, and the plenitude of God's bounty. When the Church presents bread and wine at the altar it presents in the form of simple, sensible signs *all* of what God has given—creation, life, sustenance, human productivity and so on. In the communal presentation of the gifts each individual, by participation, offers their share of God's providence for all. This reality is implied in the phrase *ut, quod singuli obtulerunt... cunctis proficiat ad salutem* in the orations for Sundays XVI and XXIV.

Next, the *super oblata* can serve as the “raw material” for prayer and meditation—as, of course, the whole of the Church’s euchology can. As might be done with passages from scripture in *lectio divina*, experiences, images, and insights that arise from careful attention to the orations are pondered thoughtfully over time and integrated into the prayer vocabulary and spiritual sensibilities of both individuals and the collective body of the faithful. In the case of the *super oblata*, this facilitates the internalization of the realities proclaimed in the liturgy: the utter dependence of creation and humanity on God’s providence; the absolute gratuity of God’s care for and redemption of all; the human need to express gratitude to God for God’s goodness and the rightful duty to do so; the necessity of God’s grace to enable even the worship owed to God; and finally, the eschatological fulfillment of all giving in God’s eternal gift of self.

In keeping with the call of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* for popular devotions to be more rooted in and ordered to the liturgy, some Eucharistic devotions could be informed by themes expressed in the *super oblata*. The image of the Eucharist involving the self-gift of the individual both in the liturgical context—indeed within the context of the whole communal offering—and in daily Christian life in the world would provide a check against an overly personalized Eucharistic spirituality as well as one that limits the sacrificial action strictly to the “cultic” and sacerdotal realm of the altar and the church. Instead the economy of giving, receiving, and giving again which is

embodied in the Church's offering would become "second nature" to those who make that offering the focal point of their personal spirituality.

Finally, a Eucharistic spirituality informed by these realities entails a conversion from a life-attitude of self-sufficiency, even arrogance, and possessiveness to one of humility, generosity, and gratitude for the sheer *givenness* of what one might call "mine": life, health, relationships, possessions, abilities, and spirituality itself. Certainly, all of these involve the "work of human hands", but each is first and foremost a gift given by God. Both in one's life practice and in subsequent liturgical offerings, all these things that God has provided and human effort has produced are given over to God in all their present incompleteness and with confidence that God's grace will, time and again, transform them into holy things and guide them to their eternal perfection. The same can be said of the persons making the offering. The material gifts and the service of thanks, praise and memory lifted up in the Eucharistic sacrifice are the means by which those making the offering are sanctified and obtain their eternal salvation.

In a Eucharistic spirituality grounded in meditation on the *super oblata*, the liturgical and practical offerings of self and of all God has provided are performed not as acts of spiritual self-affirmation, but as *service* owed to God. As pointed out in the discussion of the orations, this service is not necessarily that of a slave, but is offered in freedom—*libera mente*—and in the devotion of love—*piae devotionis officia*.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ See the orations for Sundays XXIX and XXVIII, respectively.

Moreover, this service relies not on human strength or goodness, but on God's grace: *gratiam devotionis*.²⁵⁶

In this sense, even the service—liturgical or quotidian—one offers to God is a gift of God. As Irenaeus taught concerning the making of offerings, service increases the gratitude and “fruitfulness” of the one performing the service.²⁵⁷ Thus, in serving God one comes to experience servitude not as a diminution, but an enlargement of oneself through acts of grateful devotion and love. This increase comes through the decrease or emptying of self or the modeled by the Lord Jesus, particularly as expressed by Paul in the hymn of Christ's kenosis in Phil. 2:7-8, and commemorated in the Eucharistic sacrifice. This requires a giving over, or giving up, of one's possessions, prerogatives, self-assertion and self-satisfaction to the God who provides all, directs all, and fulfills all.

The service named in the *super oblata* refers to the liturgical celebration as a whole—the offering of the gifts of creation and human craft, of thanksgiving to God for the gifts of creation and redemption, and, especially, the commemoration of Christ's paschal mystery. In a Eucharistic spirituality the saving mysteries made present in liturgical offering provide the foundation for living the paschal mystery in daily life, in which believers are “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body” (2Cor. 4:10 RSV).

²⁵⁶ See Sunday XXXIII.

²⁵⁷ See *infra*, Ch. 1, p. 21.

In a “paschal spirituality”, or the daily living of the paschal mystery, believers carry in their bodies both the entirety of the paschal mystery, death and the life, the dying and rising, of Christ. Just as one dies with Christ so will that one live with him (2 Tim. 2:11, RSV). Therefore, in the same way that the Eucharistic memorial of the paschal mystery does not end with the crucified Christ, but celebrates his resurrection and ascension and looks forward in joy to his glorious *parousia*, so too should any prayer, devotion, and spirituality flowing from, or formed by, the Eucharistic liturgy. Similarly, just as the Eucharistic prayer ends in the doxology glorifying God—“through him, with him, in him”—so too does the offering made by the faithful end not at the cross but in eternal glory: both of the people saved through Christ’s self-sacrifice and of the God who wills the salvation of all.

Returning to the texts of the *super oblata*, three in particular are relevant here. A phrase from the oration for Sunday II reads “whenever the commemoration of this sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is carried on.” This ongoing work does not end in the liturgy. Instead, the paschal sacrifice can be understood as being celebrated, or enacted, not only in the liturgy, but in daily life, attitudes, activities, and relationships receiving their shape and direction from the liturgy. By their ongoing conformity to Christ’s self-emptying model these lived realities are sanctified and redeemed. The cross is embraced only to be transformed. A redeemed life is a truly resurrected life, one in which sin, failure, and death are encountered, passed through, and conquered, not embraced for their own sake and not merely glossed over.

In the same way, the emptying of self is not an exercise in nihilism, but one in which one allows room for the fullness and fulfillment of life: “Those who lose their life...will find it” (Matt.16:25). The Eucharistic liturgy, including the Preparation of the Gifts and Altar and the texts of several of the *super oblata*, is a school in the divine act of giving. Here believers learn that the giving over of God’s gifts to humanity—including the individual self—always is ordered to the reception of more and greater life from God, which in turn is to be always given away again in service to God and one’s neighbor.

The *super oblata* for Sunday XVII more clearly expresses the connection of the liturgy to life in the world, and to the glory beyond: “that by the powerful working of your grace may these most sacred mysteries might both sanctify us in the conduct of the present life and lead us to eternal joy.” Similarly, the prayer for Sunday XXII asks that what the liturgical offering “begins in mystery it might accomplish in power.” This efficacious accomplishment of the paschal mystery begins in the constant renewal—the dying and rising—of earthly life, which works toward and will be fulfilled in the everlasting resurrection, which is nothing less than the complete fulfillment and incorporation of all in the life in God.

Renewal of life is both the seed and the fruit of a Eucharistic spirituality. The saving realities evinced in the *super oblata* provide one possible source from the wealth of the Church’s euchology for the nourishment for such a spirituality; prayer and action are the fields in which it is cultivated. Like the cycles of planting and harvest from

which so many of the good gifts of creation come, the liturgy is a perennial process of regeneration. Those participating in the liturgy bring their life experiences into the liturgy, where, by way of the liturgical signs, words, persons, and gestures, they come into an always renewed and renewing contact with the living God and the salvation that God wills for all. The liturgy communicates not only *ideas* about these theological realities, but enacts them as living, effective *realities*. These realities nourish the seeds of new life latent in the thought, affect, and will of believers. The seeds open and, when further fed by personal prayer come to maturity in grace-inspired life and action. This lived experience returns, always anew, into the liturgy where again it encounters and is nurtured by an ever-deepening, ever more fruitful engagement of the saving realities expressed and performed in the sacred rites.

The cycle continues: in the presentation of the gifts at the altar, the lives and works of the faithful—imperfect and incomplete as they are, but redeemed by the dying and rising of Christ—are presented as offerings to God of the firstfruits of creation and human activity. The Eucharistic offering of gifts and worship to God is the ritual enactment of the Christian response to Paul’s appeal in Rom. 12:1: “present your bodies as a living sacrifice.” Lives offered and transformed in and by each liturgical memorial of the saving mystery become, in turn, the firstfruits offered to God in the daily attitudes and actions of embodied life in the world. In the interaction between the liturgical and the quotidian, each context nourishes and completes the other until both will come to fruition in eternity. Then the giving of good gifts initiated by God from

eternity and carried on by participation by humanity and all of creation will finally and fully come to its actualization in the eternal gift of God. Until then, in both liturgy and life, at all times the Church—in its members and as a body—lifts up its offerings and beseeches God: *suscipe munera nostra*.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Since at least the early twentieth century there has been a retrieval of the notion of the liturgy as *theologia prima*, that is, as a primary source for theological reflection. The foregoing study of the orations *super oblata* in their liturgical context presented the prayers as such a theological source. The history of the liturgical practice of presenting gifts of bread and wine and gifts of charity at the Eucharistic altar shows the rite as a theological event that developed and became increasingly elaborate over time. The Church from the earliest times understood the presentation as not simply a practical action, but an approach to God and an embodied statement of Christian belief, being, and action marked by a sacrificial and propitiatory character. However, because the only true and efficacious sacrifice is the one accomplished by Jesus Christ and memorialized in the Eucharistic action, the offerings presented by the faithful in the Eucharistic liturgy were and remain sacrificial in the metaphorical and participatory sense. Still, at times in the Church's history, the sacrificial and propitiatory senses of the rite of presentation were highlighted. Such was the context in which the rite became increasingly elaborate and developed, especially in the Middle Ages, into the *Offertorium*.

The *super oblata* entered into the *ordo Missae* at an early point in this development. In fact, they are among the oldest orationss in the Mass. Originally, they were the sole “offertory” prayers, those commending the gifts presented by the faithful to God. The orations concluded the rite of presentation and served as a preliminary to the

lifting up of the Eucharistic prayer. They provided a concise theological summarization of both the communal act of offering just completed and the Eucharistic action about to take place at the altar. The *super oblata* anticipated and duplicated the Eucharistic prayer in the limited sense that they looked forward to and, indeed, participated in what was about to be done and shed light upon particular aspects of the Eucharistic mystery. The prayers and actions that developed in addition to the *super oblata* and that became the *Offertorium* brought increasing complexity to what was originally a simple, unadorned rite and obscured the theological value of the *super oblata*. These became but one of a series of prayer formulae and were spoken silently.

The return of the *super oblata* to their original position and function in the revised *Ordo Missae* and the proclamation of the orations aloud and especially in the vernacular allows for a reconsideration of the orations as a source for theological reflection upon and appropriation of this part of the Mass. The translations of the *super oblata* completed by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy following the Second Vatican Council provided concise versions of the prayers that were accessible to modern English speakers. These translations, however, lacked explicit expression of much of the theological content of the prayers. Revised versions of the *super oblata* closer in content to the Latin originals will become available with the promulgation of a new English translation of the *Ordo Missae* on the First Sunday in Advent, 2011. The current study

employed the author's own, admittedly literal translations towards the construction of a theology drawn from the *super oblata* as *theologia prima*. In no way are they fit or suggested for use in actual liturgical settings.

It was pointed out that this theology is a Eucharistic theology. The study of the *super oblata* showed that the orations function theologically in two directions. On the one hand, they point out the theological aspects of what is done in the presentation of gifts for the Eucharistic sacrifice. On the other hand, the prayers proclaim in the liturgical context of offering specific aspects of the Church's beliefs.

The *super oblata* name God as creator, provider, initiator and empowering agent of the Church's worship. The orations show how only through God's providence for humans does the Church have the gifts of creation and human work and the active memorial of Christ's Paschal Mystery to offer in return to God; and only through the same providence that guides the course of the cosmos is the offering directed to its saving end.

Providence works by means of God's grace and only by grace is the Church's offering possible and efficacious. The Church cannot and does not initiate its act of worship nor does this worship work its salvific effects apart from God's empowering grace. At every moment the Church's work—the liturgy—is God's saving work.

To be sure, the *super oblata* do identify the Church's offering as active in the work of salvation. When the Church offers itself and its gifts at the altar these are joined to Christ's own offering to the Father in the Paschal Mystery. Everything that God has given humanity for its existence and its eternal salvation is given back to God in gratitude and praise in union with the perfect act of worship offered to the Father by the Son in his life, suffering, death and resurrection. The saving work accomplished once for all by Christ is made present and efficacious for human salvation in the Eucharistic liturgy, which includes presentation of the offerings at the altar. The *super oblata* point out the unity of the Church's offering with Christ's self-offering for the salvation of the world.

Because the Church's offering participates in Christ's, and because that offering is symbolic of the surrender in worship to God of the first and best of nature and human productivity it rightly can be said that the presentation of the offerings at the altar is sacrificial. A number of the *super oblata* are quite clear in naming the Eucharist *sacrificium* and *hostiae* and the presentation of the offerings is a foundational element in the sacrifice. Moreover, several of the orations include the participle *placatus*, which indicates the propitiatory value of the offerings. Even if the sacrificial and propitiatory senses of the offering are understood as metaphorical or derivative, the fact remains that several of the orations designate the liturgical action in these terms.

The Church's sacrifice is a *sacramental* sacrifice. It involves the engagement of sensible signs as both the means of offering worship to God and of receiving the hoped for saving benefits of that worship. The material gifts of bread and wine are not the only visible signs of the offering; the public, physical act of the Church presenting its gifts at the altar is the outward sign of the interior offering of "spiritual sacrifice".

The Church's sacrifice has ethical implications. As the earliest writings on the Eucharistic liturgy point out, the Church's worship is never simply cultic; the offering of gifts at the altar of the Eucharist always extends to the sharing of one's gifts with the poor and the ministers of the Church. In the *super oblata* the move from the cultic to the ethical is made in more general terms. The offerings presented at the altar signify the self-offering of the Church as a body and as individuals. The offering of one's self in the liturgical action is ordered to the transformation of the conduct of one's daily life in the world in anticipation of the fulfillment that will come in eternal life.

Christian worship and living as expressed in the *super oblata* are eschatological realities. Both are provisional activities in which the promise of eternity is made present and active in the liturgy and in life in the world. Indeed, these two spheres are contiguous: what is done in the liturgy extends into life; what is done in life is brought into the liturgy to be offered, sanctified, and renewed. In either case, everything looks forward to completion. The Church makes its daily offering and Christians live and act in

the world until the Lord comes in glory. The *super oblata*, along with the greater part of the Church's euchology, provide Christians with a constant reminder of the contingent nature of their worship and life. Both take part in, while always looking forward to, their hoped-for fulfillment.

What the Church does in its liturgy and in its ethical action in the world it does as the servant of God. Time and again, the *super oblata* use the language of servant, service, and servitude in describing the Church and its activity. The service the Church performs is certainly directed to God; at the same time it is service on behalf of humanity. In its offering to God of God's good gifts to humanity the Church serves as the steward of what humans have received. The Church is also the cultivator of humanity's relationship to God. While the world increasingly learns to forget God, the Church always remembers what God has done in the Paschal Mystery of his Son and gives to God the thanks, praise and gifts due to God for this great work. This it does most perfectly in the Eucharistic sacrifice. In offering of gifts in preparation for the sacrifice, this Church offers to God all the fruits of creation and the "work of human hands" for the salvation of all humanity.

Whatever the Church does, it does in memory and the name of Jesus Christ. Every *super oblata* ends, as does all the Church's euchology, by committing its prayers to God the Father through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the one through whom all the Church's prayers and activities are made acceptable to, and brought to fulfillment

by, God. Only one of the *super oblata* for Sundays in Ordinary Time refers explicitly to Christ, or, more accurately, the Son. Nevertheless, the Church's offering is always ordered to and empowered by Christ's own self-offering to the Father, which is memorialized in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

In all of the above, the well-known maxim *lex orandi lex credendi* comes into action: what the Church says and does in its liturgical actions forms, expresses, and enacts what it believes. To be sure, the immediacy of the tersely worded theological statements made in the *super oblata*—or any of the other elements of the Church's euchology—can in no way be thought to substitute for more expansive, second-order reflection on the divine mysteries, nor can they provide anything approaching a thorough Eucharistic theology. Rather, like the Scriptures, the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and statements of the Magisterium, the *super oblata*, as components of the Church's whole liturgical and euchological treasury, can serve as a contributing factor in the construction and elaboration of a systematic theology. Moreover, as shown in the conclusion to Chapter Five, the *super oblata* contain vital raw material for the ongoing project of articulating a multi-faceted Eucharistic theology that draws upon the fullness of the Church's liturgical, spiritual, intellectual and magisterial tradition.

The theological insight developed from this study of the *super oblata* has practical application as part of a general liturgical and Eucharistic catechesis. Such instruction can

be conducted by way of regular religious education curricula, homilies, and mystagogical teachings. Here participants in the liturgy would discover the purpose and depth of theological meaning in the presentation of gifts at the altar preceding the Eucharistic prayer. This knowledge, in turn, can open out into a spirituality of self-offering.

Since at least the pontificate of John Paul II the notion of self-donation has become current in Catholic spirituality. A spirituality of self-offering can be based in and nourished by the *super oblata* and their liturgical context, the Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar. Such would begin and end in the Church's common act of worship, thus avoiding an overly personalized Eucharistic spirituality. The individual aspect would involve the appropriation of the communal act of offering by the individual believer and the living out of the rite's implications in daily life.

An intentional engagement with, and appropriation of, the rite and the words accompanying it can facilitate an increasing approach to all life as an offering to the Lord. What one does and says in life, who that person is and how that one chooses to live out the implications faith are grounded in the idea that what one brings to the altar in the liturgical moment is not just the bread and wine for the Eucharist but one's very self, everything has been received from God, one's work, relationships with others, and whole way of being and acting in this world. In this the individual comes to a clearer understanding of a personal vocation, which is not simply a matter of what one is to do in

this life, but who that person is to be. That being is understood as a gift, given by God and returned to God in gratitude. It begins in the liturgical act, carries out into life in the world, and finds its eternal fulfillment in the source of all giving: the Triune God.

APPENDIX I
Offertorium
Ordo Missae of Pius V¹

Ascent to the altar

Deinde osculatur altare, et versus ad populum, [sacerdote] dicit:
V. DOMINUS VOBISCU. R. ET CUM SPIRITU TUO.

Reception and offering of the paten and host

Postea dicit: Oremus, et Offertorium. Quo, dicto, si est Missa sollemnis, diaconis, porrigit patenam celebranti; si private, sacerdos ipse accipit patenam cum hostia, quam offerens dicit:

SÚSCIPE, SANCTE PATER, OMNÍPOTENS ÆTÉRNE DEUS, HANC IMMACULÁTAM HÓSTIAM, QUAM EGO INDÍGNUS FÁMULUS TUUS ÓFFERO TIBI DEO MEO VIVO ET VERO, PRO INNUMERABÍLIBUS PECCÁTIS, ET OFFENSÍONIBUS, ET NEGLIGÉNTIIS MEIS, ET PRO ÓMNIBUS CIRCUMSTÁNTIBUS, SED ET PRO ÓMNIBUS FIDÉLIBUS CHRISTIÁNIS VIVIS ATQUE DEFÚNTIS: UT MIHI ET ILLIS PROFÍCIAT AD SALÚTEM IN VITAM ÆTÉRNAM. AMEN.

Mixing of water and wine in the chalice

Deinde reposita hostiam super corporale, ministrat Diaconus vinum, subdeaconus vero aquam in calice: vel si privata est Missa, utrumque infundit sacerdos, et aquam miscendam in calice benedictit, dicens:

DEUS, QUI HUMÁNÆ SUBSTÁNTIÆ DIGNITÁTEM MIRABÍLITER CONDIDÍSTI ET MIRABÍLIUS REFORMÁSTI: DA NOBIS, PER HUIUS AQUÆ ET VINI MYSTÉRIUM, EJUS DIVINITÁTIS ESSE CONSÓRTE, QUI HUMANITÁTIS NOSTRÆ FÍERI DIGNÁTUS EST PÁRTICEPS, JESUS CHRISTUS, FÍLIUS TUUS, DÓMINUS NOSTER: QUI TECUM VIVIT ET REGNAT IN UNITÁTE SPÍRITUS SANCTI DEUS: PER ÓMNIA SÆCULA SÆCULÓRUM. AMEN.

In Missis pro defunctorum dicitur praedicta oratio: sed aqua non benedicitur. Accipiens calicem, offert dicens:

OFFÉRIMUS TIBÍ, DÓMINE, CÁLICEM SALUTÁRIS, TUAM DEPRECÁNTES CLEMÉNTIAM: UT IN CONSPÉCTU DIVÍNÆ MAJESTÁTIS TUÆ, PRO NOSTRA ET TOTÍUS MUNDI SALÚTE, CUM ODÓRE SUAVITÁTIS ASCÉNDAT. AMEN.

¹ *Missale Romanum : editio princeps, 1570. Edizione anastatica, introduzione e appendice a cura di Manlio Sodi, Achille Maria Triacca ; presentazione di Carlo M. Martini. (Città del Vaticano : Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 237-9.*

Inclined prayer over chalice

Deinde posito calice super corporale, et palla cooperto: tum, iunctis manibus aliquantum inclinatus, dicit:

IN SPÍRITU HUMILITÁTIS, ET IN ÁNIMO CONTRÍTO SUSCIPIÁMUR A TE, DÓMINE: ET SIC FIAT SACRIFÍCIUM NOSTRUM IN CONSPÉCTU TUO HÓDIE, UT PLÁCEAT TIBI, DÓMINE DEUS.

Blessing of gifts

Erectus expandit manus, easque in altum porrectas iungens, elevatis ad caelum oculis, et statim demissis, dicit:

VENI, SANCTIFICÁTOR OMNÍPOTENS ÆTÉRNE DEUS: BENEDICIT OBLATA PROSEQUENDO: ET BÉNEꝰDIC HOC SACRIFÍCIUM, TUO SANCTO NÓMINI PRÆPARÁTUM.

Blessing of Incense

Postea, si sollemniter celebrat, benedicit incensum, dicens:

PER INTERCESSIÓNEM BEÁTI MICHAÉLIS ARCHÁNGELI, STANTIS A DEXTRIS ALTÁRIS INCÉNSI, ET ÓMNIUM ELECTÓRUM SUÓRUM, INCÉNSUM ISTUD DIGNÉTUR DÓMINUS BENEꝰDÍCERE, ET IN ODÓREM SUAVITÁTIS ACCÍPERE. **PER CHRISTUM DÓMINUM** NOSTRUM. AMEN.

Incensing

Et, accepto thuribulo a diacono, incensat oblata, modo in rubricis praescripto, dicens: **INCÉNSUM ISTUD** A TE BENEDÍCTUM, ASCÉNDAT AD TE, DÓMINE: ET DESCÉNDAT SUPER NOS MISERICÓDIA TUA.

Deinde incensat altare, dicens:

DIRIGÁTUR, DÓMINE, ORÁTIO MEA, SICUT INCÉNSUM, IN CONSPÉCTU TUO: ELEVATIO MÁNUUM MEÁRUM SACRIFÍCIUM VESPERTÍNUM. PONE, DÓMINE, CUSTÓDIAM ORI MEO, ET ÓSTIUM CIRCUMSTÁNTIÆ LÁBIIS MEIS: UT NON DECLÍNET COR MEUM IN VERBA MALÍTIAE, AD EXCUSÁNDAS EXCUSATIÓNES IN PECCÁTIS.

Dum reddit thuribulum diacono, dicit:

ACCÉNDAT IN NOBIS DÓMINUS IGNEM SUI AMÓRIS, ET FLÁMMAM ÆTÉRNÆ CARITÁTIS. AMEN.

Washing of Hands

Postea incensatur sacerdos a diacono, deinde alii per ordinem. Interim sacerdos lavat manus, dicens:

Psalm 25: 6-12

LAVÁBO INTER INNOCÉNTES MANUS MEAS: ET CIRCÚMDABO ALTÁRE TUUM, DÓMINE. UT AUDIAM VOCEM LAUDIS: ET ENÁRREM UNIVÉRSA MIRABÍLIA TUA.

DÓMINE, DILÉXI DECÓREM DOMUS TUÆ: ET LOCUM HABITATIÓNIS GLÓRIÆ TUÆ.
NE PERDAS CUM ÍMPIIS, DEUS: ÁNIMAM MEAM, ET CUM VIRIS SÁNGUINUM VITAM MEAM.
IN QUORUM MÁNIBUS INQUITÁTES SUNT: DÉXTERA EÓRUM REPLÉTA EST MUNÉRIBUS.
EGO AUTEM IN INNOCÉNTIA MEA INGRÉSSUS SUM: RÉDIME ME, ET MISERÉRE MEI.
PES MEUS STETIT IN DIRÉCTO: IN ECCLÉSIIS BENEDÍCAM TE, DÓMINE.
GLORIA PATRI...

The Oblation

Deinde, in medium altaris, et aliquantum inclinatus iunctis manibus, dicit:
SÚSCIPE, SANCTA TRÍNITAS, HANC OBLATIÓNEM, QUAM TIBI OFFÉRIMUS OB
MEMÓRIAM PASSIÓNIS, RESURRECTIÓNIS, ET ASCENSIÓNIS JESU CHRISTI DÓMINI NOSTRI,
ET IN HONÓREM BEÁTÆ MARÍÆ SEMPER VÍRGINIS, ET BEÁTI JOÁNNIS BAPTÍSTÆ, ET
SANCTÓRUM APOSTOLÓRUM PETRI ET PAULI, ET ISTÓRUM, ET ÓMNIUM SANCTÓRUM: UT
ILLIS PROFÍCIAT AD HONÓREM, NOBIS AUTEM AD SALÚTEM: ET ILLI PRO NOBIS
INTERCÉDERE DIGNÉNTUR IN CÆLIS, QUORUM MEMÓRIAM ÁGIMUS IN TERRIS. PER
EÚNDEM CHRISTUM DÓMINUM NOSTRUM. AMEN.

Orate Fratres

Postea osculatur altare, et versus populum dicit:
ORÁTE FRATRES: UT MEUM AC VESTRUM SACRIFÍCIUM ACCEPTÁBILE FIAT APUD DEUM
PATREM OMNIPOTÉNTEM.
Circumstantes respondent: alioquin ipsemet sacerdos:
SUSCÍPIAT DÓMINUS SACRIFÍCIUM DE MÁNIBUS TUIS AD LAUDEM ET GLORIAM NÓMINIS
SUI, AD UTILITÁTEM QUOQUE NOSTRAM, TOTIÚSQUE ECCLÉSIAE SUÆ SANCTÆ. AMEN

Oratio Super Oblata/Secreta

Deinde, manibus extensis absolute subiungit orationes secretas. Quibus dictis, cum
perventum fuerit ad conclusionem clara voce dicit:
PER OMNIA SAECULA SAECULORUM.

APPENDIX II
Preparation of the Gifts and Altar
Ordo Missae Paul VI¹:

His absolutis, incipit cantus as offertorium. Interim ministri coporale, purificatorium, calicem, et missale in altari collocant.

Expedit ut fideles participationem suam oblatione manifestent, afferendo sive panem et vinum ad Eucharsitiae celebrationem, sive alia dona, quibus necessitatibus Ecclesiae et pauperum subveniatur.

Sacerdos, stans ad altare, accipit patenam cum pane, eamque aliquantulum elevatum super altare tenet, secreto dicens:

BENEDICTUS ES DOMINE, DEUS UNIVERSI, QUIA DA TUA LARGITATE ACCEPIMUS
PANEM, QUEM TIBI OFFERIMUS, FRUCTUM TERRAE ET OPERIS MANUUM
HOMINUM: EX QUO NOBIS PANIS VITAE.

Deinde deponit patenam cum pane super corporale.

Si vero cantus ad offertorium non peragitur, sacerdoti licet haec verba elata voce proferre; in fine populus acclamare potest:

BENEDICTUS DEUS IN SAECULA.

Diaconus, vel sacerdos, infundit vinum et parum aquae in calicem, dicens secreto:

PER HUIUS AQUAE ET VINI MYSTERIUM EIUS EFFICIAMUR DIVINITAS CONSORTES,
QUI HUMANITATIS NOSTRAE FIERI DIGNATUS EST PARTICEPS.

Postea sacerdos accipit calicem, eumque aliquantulum elevatum super altare tenet, secreto dicens:

¹ *Missale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum*. Editio typica (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970), 390-1.

BENEDICTUS ES, DOMINE, DEUS UNIVERSI, QUIA DE TUA LARGITATE ACCEPIMUS VINUM, QUOD TIBI OFFERIMUS, FRUCTUM VITIS ET OPERIS MANUUM HOMINUM, EX QUO NOBIS FIET POTUS SPIRITALIS.

Deinde calicem super corporale deponit.

Si vero cantus ad offertorium non peragitur, sacerdoti licet haec verba elata voc proferre; in fine populus acclamare potest:

BENEDICTUS DEUS IN SAECULA.

Postea sacerdos, inclinatus dicit secreto:

IN SPIRITU HUMILITATIS ET IN ANIMO CONTRITO SUSCIPIAMUR A TE, DOMINE; ET SIC FIAT SACRIFICIUM NOSTRUM IN CONSPECTU TUO HODIE, UT PLACEAT TIBI, DOMINE DEUS.

Et, pro opportunitate, incensat oblata et altare. Postea vero diaconus vel minister incensat sacerdotem et populum.

Deinde sacerdos, stans ad latus altaris, lavat manus, dicens secreto:

LAVA ME, DOMINE, AB INIQUITATE MEA, ET A PECCATO MEO MUNDA ME.

Stans postea in medio altaris, versus ad populum, extendens et iungens manus, dicit:

ORATE FRATRES: UT MEUM AC VESTRUM SACRIFICIUM ACCEPTIBILE FIAT APUD DEUM PATREM OMNIPOTENTEM.

Populus respondet:

SUSCIPIAT DOMINUS SACRIFICIUM DE MANIBUS TUIS AD LAudem ET GLORIAM NOMINIS SUI, AD UTILITATEM QUOQUE NOSTRUM TOTIUSQUE ECCLESIAE SUAE SANCTAE.

Super Oblata

APPENDIX III
Orationes Super Oblata

The original Latin *super oblata* are followed by the author's own translations.¹

1. Grata tibi sit,
quaesumus, Domine,
 tuae plebis oblatio,
 per quam et sanctificationem referat,
 et quae pie precatur obtineat.

Lord, we beseech you
that the offering of your people
may be pleasing to you,
through it, may it bring sanctification
and obtain what is trustingly entreated.

2. Concede nobis,
quaesumus, Domine,
haec digne frequentare mysteria,
quia, quoties huius hostiae
commemoratio celebratur,
opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur.

Lord, grant us, we beseech you,
to attend to these mysteries worthily,
because whenever the commemoration
of this sacrifice is performed,
the work of our redemption is accomplished.

3. Munera nostra, Domine,
suscipe placatus,
quae sanctificando nobis,
quaesumus, salutaria fore concede.

Lord, having been appeased,
receive our offerings,
and grant, we beseech you,
that by sanctifying
they might be salvific for us.

¹ All Latin versions of the prayers are from *Missale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum; auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum*. Editio typica. Civitas (Vaticana: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1970).

4. Altaribus tuis, Domine,
munera nostrae servitutis inferimus
quae, placatus assumens,
sacramentum nostrae redemptionis efficias.

Lord, we bring to your altars
the offerings of our service,
which, having been appeased,
you might receive and make
the sacrament of our salvation.

5. Domine Deus noster,
qui has potius creaturas
ad fragilitatis nostrae subsidium condidisti,
tribue quaesumus, ut etiam
aeternitatis nobis fiant sacramentum.

Lord our God,
you have especially made these created things
as help to our fragility.
Grant we beseech you,
that they also be for us the sacrament of eternity.

6. Haec nos oblatio,
quaesumus, Domine,
mundet et renovet atque
tuam exsequentibus voluntatem
fiat causa remunerationis aeternae.

Lord, we beseech you
that this offering may cleanse and renew us
and also that it be a source of eternal reward
for those who follow your will.

7. Mysteria tua, Domine,
debitis servitiis exsequentes,
supplices te rogamus, ut,
quod ad honorem tuae maiestatis offerimus,
nobis proficiat ad salutem.

Lord, accomplishing in your mysteries
 the debt of service we owe you,
 we humbly beseech you
 that what we offer to the honor of your majesty
 might advance us to salvation.

8. Deus, qui offerenda tuo nomini tribuis,
 et oblata devotioni nostrae servitutis ascribis,
 quaesumus clementiam tuam,
 ut, quod prestas unde sit meritum,
 proficere nobis largiaris ad praemium.

God, who grants
 what is to be offered to your name,
 and attributes what is offered
 to the devotion of our service,
 we beseech your mercy,
 that what you supply,
 from which merit may be,
 you might grant to advance us to the reward.

9. In tua pietate confidentes, Domine,
 cum muneribus ad altaria veneranda concurrimus,
 ut, tua purificante nos gratia,
 iisdem quibus famulamur mysteriis emundemur.

Lord, trusting in your kindness,
 we hasten to your venerable altars with offerings,
 so that through your grace purifying us
 may we be cleansed by the very mysteries which we serve.

10. Respice, Domine, quaesumus,
 nostram propitius servitatem,
 ut quod offerimus sit tibi acceptum,
 et nostrae caritatis augmentum.

Lord, we beseech you,
 look kindly upon our service,
 that what we offer might be acceptable to you
 and be the increase of our love.

11. Deus, qui humani generis utramque
 substantiam praesentium munerum
 et alimento vegetas et renovas sacramento,
 tribue, quaesumus,
 ut eorum et corporibus nostris
 subsidium non desit et mentibus

God, by the food and sacrament of the present gifts
 you both nourish and renew
 the dual substance of human nature,
 grant, we beseech you,
 that the help of your gifts may never be lacking
 to either our bodies or our souls.

12. Suscipe, Domine,
 sacrificium placationis et laudis,
 et praesta, ut, huius operatione mundati,
 beneplacitum tibi nostrae
 mentis offeramus affectum.

Lord, receive the sacrifice
 of appeasement and praise
 and grant, that cleansed by its work,
 we may offer you an affection of mind pleasing to you.

13. Deus, qui mysteriorum tuorum
 dignanter operaris effectus,
 praesta, quaesumus,
 ut sacris apta muneribus
 fiant nostra servitia.

God, you worthily bring about
 the effects of your mysteries,
 grant, we beseech you,
 that our services might be rendered
 suitable by
 these sacred gifts.

14. Oblatio nos, Domine,
 tuo nomini dicata purificet,
 et de die in diem
 ad caelestis vitae tranferat actionem.

Lord, may the offering consecrated to your name
 purify us and day by day
 advance toward the achievement of heavenly life.

15. Rescipe, Domine,
 munera supplicantis Ecclesiae,
 et pro credentium sanctificationis
 incremento sumenda concede.

Lord, look upon these offerings
 of the supplicating Church,
 and grant that they be taken up
 for the increase of the sanctification of the believing.

16. Deus, qui legalium differentiam hostiarum
 unius sacrificii perfectione sanxisti,
 accipe sacrificium a devotis tibi famulis,
 et pari benedictione, sicut munera Abel,
 sanctifica, ut, quod singuli
 obtulerunt ad maiestatis tuae honorem,
 cunctis proficiat ad salutem.

God, you have ordained the perfection
 of the multiplicity of sacrifices in the law
 by this one sacrifice,
 receive the sacrifice from the servants devoted to you,
 and bless it with the same blessing
 you gave to the offerings of Abel,
 so that what individuals have offered
 to honor your majesty
 may advance all to salvation.

17. Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine,
munera, quae tibi de tua largitate deferimus,
ut haec sacrosancta mysteria,
gratiae tuae operante virtute,
et praesentis vitae nos conversatione sanctificent,
et ad gaudia sempiterna perducant.

Receive, we beseech you Lord,
the offerings that we bring to you from your bounty,
that by the powerful working of your grace
these most sacred mysteries
might both sanctify us
in the conduct of the present life
and lead us to eternal joy.

18. Propitius, Domine, quaesumus,
haec dona santifica,
et hostiae spiritalis oblatione suscepta,
nosmetipsos tibi perfice munus aeternum.

Lord, we beseech you,
Kindly sanctify these gifts
and by the offering of spiritual sacrifices received,
perfect us ourselves as an eternal offering to you.

19. Ecclesiae tuae, Domine,
munera placatus assume,
quae et misercors offerenda tribuisti,
et in nostrae salutis potenter
efficis transire mysterium.

Lord, having been appeased,
receive the offerings of your Church,
which you have mercifully given to be offered
and which you powerfully cause to change
into the mystery of our salvation.

20. Suscipe, Domine,
munera nostra, quibus exercentur
commercia gloriosa, ut,
offerente quae dedisti,
teipsum mereamur accipere.

Lord, receive our offerings,
by which we accomplish a glorious exchange,
so that in offering what you have given,
we might be made worthy to receive your very self.

21. Qui una semel hostia, Domine,
adoptionis tibi populum acquisisti,
unitatis et pacis in Ecclesia tua
propitius nobis dona concedas.

Lord, by a one time sacrifice
you have acquired an adopted people,
mercifully grant to us the gifts
of unity and peace in your Church.

22. Benedictionem nobis, Domine,
conferat salutarem sacra semper oblatio,
ut, quod agit mysterio,
virtute perficiat.

Lord, may this holy offering
always grant us your saving blessing,
so that what it begins in mystery
it might accomplish in power.

23. Deus, auctor sinceræ devotionis et pacis,
da, quaesumus,
ut et maiestatem tuam convenienter
hoc munere veneremur
et sacri participatione mysterii
fideliter sensibus uniamur.

God, creator of true devotion and peace,
 grant, we beseech you,
 that we may both fittingly reverence
 your majesty with this offering
 and be faithfully united in our hearts
 by our participation in this sacred mystery.

24. Propitiare, Domine,
 supplicationibus nostris,
 et has oblationes famulorum tuorum
 benignus assume,
 ut quod singuli ad honorem
 tui nominis obtulerunt,
 cunctis proficiat ad salutem.

Lord, be pleased with our supplications,
 and kindly receive these offerings of your servants,
 so that what each offers
 to the honor of your name
 may advance all to salvation.

25. Munera, quaesumus, Domine,
 tuae plebis propitiatus assume,
 ut, quae fidei pietate profitentur,
 sacramentis caelestibus apprehendant.

Lord, we beseech you,
 mercifully receive the offerings of your people,
 so that, what they profess
 in the devotion of faith
 they might grasp in the heavenly mysteries.

26. Concede nobis, misercors Deus,
 ut haec nostra tibi oblatio sit accepta,
 et per eam nobis fons
 omnis benedictionis aperiatur.

Merciful God, grant to us
 that this our offering
 be accepted by you,
 and through it may the fountain
 of all blessing be opened for us.

27. Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine,
sacrificia tuis instituta praeceptis,
et sacris mysteriis, quae
debitae servitutis celebramus officio,
sanctificationem tuae nobis
redemptionis dignanter adimple.

Receive, we beseech you Lord,
the sacrifice instituted by your commandments,
and by the sacred mysteries
by which we celebrate a duty of service owed,
worthily fulfill in us
the sanctification of your redemption.

28. Suscipe, Domine, fidelium preces
cum oblationibus hostiarum,
ut, per haec piae devotionis officia,
ad caelestem gloriam transeamus.

Lord, receive the prayers of the faithful
with offerings of sacrifices,
so that through these services of holy devotion,
we might pass into heavenly glory.

29. Tribue nos, Domine, quaesumus,
donis tuis libera mente servire,
ut, tua purificante nos gratia,
iisdem quibus famulamur
mysteriis emundemur.

Lord, grant, we beseech you,
to serve you by your gifts with a free mind,
so that, purifying us by your grace,
we may be cleansed by these very mysteries
by which we serve.

30. Rescipe, quaesumus, Domine,
munera quae tuae offerimus maiestati,
ut, quod nostro servitio geritur,
ad tuam gloriam potius dirigatur.

Lord, we beseech you,
 look upon the gifts we offer to your majesty,
 so that what is accomplished in our servitude
 may be directed especially to your glory.

31. *Fiat hoc sacrificium, Domine,
 oblatio tibi munda,
 et nobis misericordiae
 tuae sancta largitio.*

Lord, may this sacrifice
 be a pure offering to you
 and a holy bounty of your mercy to us.

32. *Sacrificiis praesentibus,
 Domine, quaesumus,
 intende placatus, ut,
 quod passionis Filii tui mysterio gerimus,
 pio consequamur affectu.*

Lord, we beseech you,
 having been appeased,
 consider the sacrifices present,
 so that what we accomplish
 in the mystery of the passion of your Son,
 we might obtain in devoted love.

33. *Concede, quaesumus, Domine,
 ut oculis tuae maiestatis
 munus oblatum et gratiam nobis
 devotionis obtineat,
 et effectum beatae
 perennitatis acquirat.*

Lord, grant we beseech you
 that the service offered
 in the sight of your majesty
 may both obtain for us
 the grace of devotion
 and procure the accomplishment
 of a blessed eternity.

34. Christus Rex
 Hostiam, tibi Domine,
 humanae reconciliationis offerentes,
 suppliciter deprecamur,
 ut ipse Filius tuus cunctis gentibus
 unitatis et pacis dona concedat.

Lord, offering to you the sacrifice
 of human reconciliation,
 we submissively entreat you
 that your Son himself
 may grant to all peoples
 the gifts of unity and peace.

Hebdom. 34.

Suscipe, Domine,
 sacra munera, quae
 tuo nomini iussisti dicanda,
 et, ut per ea tuae pietati
 reddamur accepti,
 fac nos tuis semper
 oboedire mandatis.

Lord, accept these sacred gifts,
 that you have commanded
 to be consecrated to your name.
 Make us always obedient to your commandments
 so that by means of these offerings
 we too may be accepted and restored to your good favor.

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