

THE NOTION OF PRIESTHOOD
ACCORDING TO
IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

by

George J. Augustyniak, O. Praem., B.A.

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Preface

This study is an attempt to show that priestly functions, flowing out from a continuing intensification of priestly sanctity, are effective instrumental causes in the grace life of the Church. In proportion as a priest is open to the redeeming power of Christ, that is, open in so far as his personal life shows forth a continual acceptance of entering into Christ's redemptive attitude, that attitude by which Christ redeemed mankind, the attitude of accepting his Father's will; thus he becomes Christ's voice, a man of the Church, a man of sacrifice, the link between Christ's redemptive love and the Christian community accepting this love so that it continues to express sacrificially and effectively that acceptance of the Father's will which is the source of our salvation.

In Ignatius we have an important witness showing the relationship between individual and communal sanctity. Priestly sanctity cannot develop apart from the Christian community. It grows in proportion as it contributes to the sanctification of the community. The sanctity of the community grows in proportion as it contributes to the sanctification of its priests (Mag. 6, 2; 7, 1-2). Since

there is one God, one Christ, one Christian Body, one Eucharist, one love; Christ is not truly ours, and we are not genuinely Christians, unless we have one prayer, one mind, one hope, one love -- one Christ loving himself.

An analysis of the Epistles of Ignatius will be made with a view of formulating a statement of Ignatius' thought on the nature of the Church, Sacraments and the Christian Life. The evidence within the Epistles brings out the nature of priestly sanctity as the acceptance of victimhood; that in proportion as the priest accepts and exercises his victimhood within the community of Christ, He will play a major role in the Christian Community's acceptance of Redemption and the giving of itself in the spirit of victimhood to God the Father.

I am deeply grateful to the Faculty of the Theology Department whose enthusiasm has motivated this effort. The Thesis Committee is deserving of special mention, their criticism and suggestions were helpful in different stages of this project. Above all, I am indebted to my Thesis Director, The Reverend Bernard J. Cooke, S.J., who gave generously of his learning and of his time.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

IGNATIUS, THE WRITER

An introduction to this study must open with a word about Ignatius as the writer of the Epistles which bear his name. One of the most valuable things these Epistles have to bring to us is a vivid picture of his personality. There are not many figures in the post-Apostolic Church of which it is possible to paint a Character Study, but of Ignatius Dr. Torrance observes: of all the early Fathers it is the figure of Ignatius which comes nearest the Apostolic picture as we find it in the New Testament. His Christianity is centered wholly round the Person of Christ who still lives on in the Church. ¹ P. Schaff writes: "Ignatius stands out in history as the ideal of a Catholic Martyr.... ...He is the incarnation, as it were of the three closely connected ideas: the Glory of Martyrdom, the Omnipotence of the Episcopacy, and the Hatred of Heresy and Schism."²

¹Torrance, T. F., Grace in the Apostolic Fathers. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959.

²Schaff, P., Quoted in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, p. 167, Col. 2. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961.

Ignatius was not a speculative theologian. He is a witness to the actual teachings of historical Christianity. To keep these intact in their original purity is his chief endeavor; to warn against tampering with the Body of Christian truth handed down by the Apostles. His interest is the facts of Christianity. There is not a paragraph in His letters but reminds us of St. Paul's admonition to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11:2): "Uphold your traditions just as I have handed them on to you." This insistence on tradition gains new significance from the fact that the letters were written about A.D. 110, that is, only about fifteen or ³ twenty years after the death of the last Apostle.

³Kleist, J.A., The Epistles of St. Clement of Rome and St. Ignatius of Antioch. Westminster, Maryland. The Neuman Press, 1961, p. 57.

The selection of the Ignatian Epistles for this study was influenced by their pertinence and centrality to New Testament Literature. These writings from within the Early Church provide adequate evidence to appreciate Ignatius' hypothetical idea of priesthood in a post-apostolic age.⁴

⁴The more recent excellent studies dealing with the Theology of St. Ignatius can be found in Corwin, V., St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1960. Professor Corwin formulates the Theology of St. Ignatius and compares it with that of the other early writers. Her book is the first in English to present Ignatius in the full context of second-century Christian and non-Christian thought. This work also contains a complete bibliography on the chief books and articles currently available for an Ignatian Study. Cfr. Lawson, J., A Theological and Historical Introduction To The Apostolic Fathers. New York. The Macmillan Co., 1961. For an excellent commentary of the Epistles. Cfr. Altaner, B., Patrology. New York. Herder and Herder, 1960. Quasten, J., Patrology. Westminster. Newman, 1950. Ancient Christian Writers. Westminster, 1948. For thorough references on editions, translations and studies.

THE DOCTRINE OF IGNATIUS

The doctrine of St. Ignatius of Antioch is simple and profound, full of rich implications. It is eminently realistic, in the sense that it flows from a divinely given experience of the inmost reality of the mystery of Christ in His Church. The key to that experience is Ignatius' faith in the reality of the body and spirit of the Incarnate Word, the reality of the passion and resurrection of Christ, and the reality of our sacramental communion in His body and blood in those sublime liturgical mysteries where the members of Christ are "Consummated in Unity."

The prayer for unity in the Gospel of St. John sums up this situation perfectly:

... All that is mine is yours, and yours is mine; and they are my crowning glory. I am not long for this world; but they remain in the world; while I am about to return to you. Holy Father! Keep them loyal to your name which you have given me. May they be one as we are one! (Jn. 17:10-11).

"However, I do not pray for them alone; I also pray for those who through their preaching will believe in me. All are to be one; just as you, Father, are in me and I am in

you, so they too are to be one in us. The world must come to believe that I am your ambassador. The glory you have bestowed on me I have bestowed on them, that they may be one as we are one, - I in them and you in me. Thus their oneness will be perfected. The world must come to acknowledge that I am your ambassador, and that you love them as you love me." (Jn. 17:20-23).

The oneness of the community of Christ could hardly be put more forcibly; not only this, but it is here that one can see the sense, so to speak, of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. God did these things in order that he might become his community and that the loving, redeeming, dialogue should be completed. The new Israel is a new showing forth of God, it has "put on Christ" in baptism (Gal. 3:27), and is sent out to proclaim the mystery of salvation to the community of the world, to show Christ to the world by showing itself in order that all men might be brought into this charismatic unity with the Father (Mt. 11:27; Mt. 28:19).

The Church to which St. Paul gives the name "body of Christ" (Eph. 1:22-23), has unity not as a "mark" by which it can be recognized as divinely ordained, but rather its unity simply exists because the Church is the body of

Christ through which he continues his perpetual revelation. The world knows that God has sent Christ (Jn. 17:23), because in his body they can see him, manifesting himself now, in us. This manifestation is only fully possible as long as we are open to it and permit it, through grace, to shine out. The Christ we make present to the world, and into whom we are baptized (I Cor. 15:17), is the risen Christ, for the completion of the revealing act of the Incarnation, the act that makes this revelation redemptive, is the Resurrection; this is in no way to detract from the passion and death, but merely to insist on the organic whole of our Lord's passion, death and resurrection. ⁵ By the Resurrection and Ascension Christ is present to God in heaven as a man, and in virtue of our oneness with Christ through baptism and the Eucharist, God knows us in him as risen with him. This is not to say that this is the only way God can know us, but it is a loving way. When we are known to him in this way we are of the elect; when we are known independently of the risen Christ it is because we have cut ourselves off from him by sin and are damnable.

⁵Durrwell, F. X., The Resurrection. New York, Sheed and Ward, 1960.

The dedication of the old Israel was, in a sense turned inwards; it was expressed in terms of the Mosaic law, the crown of which was the decalogue. The law delineated the nature of the old moral community; in the new Israel the dual function of the moral community is to love Christ and to carry him into the whole world so as to effect its transformation. The new Israel is also a dedicated community, but this dedication is not simply an inward thing, but a part of the expression of Christ. The law, like everything else, has been transformed, and now we can sum up all that is necessary in the two great commandments (Mt. 22:27-29; Mk. 12:29-31; Lk. 10:27). This love is an active thing and on what we make of our love of God, depends our salvation.

It is not only in terms of the law that the new situation differs radically from the old, but also in terms of the priestly function of the people. St. Peter repeats the promise in Exodus (I Pet. 2:9) that we are a priestly people, but in place of the burnt offerings of the old covenant, it is the Christ dead and risen whom we, as Christ, offer in our sacrifice of thanksgiving, and it is in that offering that we primarily perform our duty of making God present to our fellow men. The announcement of

the mystery of Christ, the mystery of salvation, the source of God's aid in our part in our own redemption, even the source of the seal that makes us free, baptism, is the Mass. It is even more than the redemptive act; our sacrifice of thanksgiving is also both the means of our present union with Christ and the actual showing forth of Christ in the liturgy of the word. The many activities of the Mass are inseparable, since each one depends upon the other, and our sacrifice as a priestly people is the summation of the whole dialogue between God and man on this earth. It is no exaggeration to say that the normal function of the Mystical Body is the sacrifice of the Mass, a sacrifice in which the whole community is the offering priesthood, the ministry of the new covenant. As the Mass is the source of life throughout the community so too is it the source of light and of our unity.

The Pauline comparison between the relationship of Christ and the Church and a man and his wife is constantly balanced by his insistence that the Church is Christ; this is no contradiction but simply the expression of related aspects of the Church as redeeming, as revealing Christ, and as the community of the faithful. With the unity given by Christ we can see the opening out of Israel. Our know-

ledge of God has all the elements contained in Jewish knowledge; God is numinous, destroying, fruitful, creating, omnipotent, loving, just and personal; but now we know so much more. God is a father with whom we can enter into a knowing and living relationship through his Son, which involves a share in his life inconceivable to the old Israel. Our community is bound together by a covenant as was the old community, but this time the dedication in the covenant is not in terms of the law and its observance, but membership of and commitment to the Son of God. To the extent to which we accept the share in God's life when we "put on Christ" in baptism we are members of Christ, we are the vehicle of God's new revelation. And in view of this, the Church is Christ revealing himself to us now, and we are part of the Church.

It is in the Church that has been called Ursakrament that we encounter God, but the Church is the body of Christ and it is clear that here we have the fulfillment of the words of our Lord in Jn. 14:6-7. Our encounter with God is

⁶Schillebeeckx, E., "The Sacraments: An Encounter With God," in Christianity Divided. New York, Sheed and Ward, 1961. p. 256.

always through the Son in the Church, that is to say that whatever the form of our encounter in terms of religious experience, it is subordinated to that meeting of the whole man sacramentally, and that the normal, even the best kind of meeting, is that experienced by Christians at the sacramental communal meal of Mass.

In the portrayal of the last judgement (Mt. 25:31-46) we see what it is we have to do to bring Christ to men; we must feed Christ, house him and comfort him. The unity with and in Christ that is consummated in the Eucharist breaks out as a lifegiving force in the double activity of the Word and works. The task of the united, loving community of God is to redeem by transformation the community of the world. We who are baptized in Christ are the new men (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:15; 4:24; Col. 3:10) renewed by the death and resurrection of our Lord. It does not do to try and inhibit the showing of Christ by with drawing into our own private religious world into which we want to draw all other men; rather we must take our mission as members of Christ seriously by exhibiting his justice in our actions as the new leaven in the community of the world.

Christ has sent us, to proclaim the mystery of salvation, but that proclamation is an affair of deeds as well

as of word, and what we have to convert is the community of the world, which is not in itself evil but simply awaiting transformation, the change that we are all waiting for as members of Christ's body (2 Pet. 3:10). Our task is not to substitute one community, that of Christ, for another, that of the world, but to make the first community present to the second in such a way that the community of the world is open to the transformation by the Spirit.

The community of God is to be saved as a community. God knows and loves us in Christ, knows us, in fact, as Christ; this is a knowledge of us which subsumes the knowledge of us as individuals. We are individuals, and always will be, but our individuality is made perfect in our integration into the community of Christ. The beginning of the process of priestly perfection is in this world when we are called upon to "put on Christ"; by living our lives fully in this world, which is God's world, as members of Christ, we bring Christ into the total human community. To do this successfully involves the recognition of the human community as good, and above all the realization that the Church too is a community.

In September 1950 the Holy Father, Pius XII, sent a long exhortation to all the clergy throughout the world on

"promoting the holiness of priestly life."⁷ This apostolic exhortation is particularly concerned with the modern training of the future priesthood, and that particular aspect of the Christian priesthood, no less than any other, is of importance to the people of the Church as well as to their ministers. For not only is the priest responsible for the means of sanctity which flow into the whole Church, but also every member of the Church is in some way responsible for the holiness of the priests who minister to them. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it not by constraint but willingly according to God ... being made a pattern of the flock from the heart" (1 Pet. 5). The pastors are to be among their flock and the pattern or "form" of those whom they feed.

Ignatius was fully aware that as a Christian, as a priest, and above all as a bishop, he was filled with the glory of the Risen Christ. His vocation to martyrdom was the pledge of the imminent revelation of that glory in him, consummated in perfect and even visible union. For Ignatius and his contemporaries were convinced that the moment the sacred passion and resurrection of the Lord were made

⁷Pius XII, Encycl. *Menti Nostrae*.

visible and manifest in His martyr, His witness, who entered, through the Pascha Christi, into perfect and undying union with the Risen Lord.

His famous prayer (Ad Rom. 4,1), "... God's wheat I am, and by the teeth of wild beasts I am to be ground that I may become pure bread of Christ." This is not only the voice of the martyr and witness to the Risen Christ, but also the voice of the bishop and witness to Christ living in the Mystery of His Church. It is the voice of a high priest, a man of the Church, a man of sacrifice, who clearly realizes that the Eucharist is the living and radiant center of the Mystery of the Church, for there Christ gathers the faithful about the bishop to unite them with His sacrifice and share with them the fruit of His glorious victory.

CHAPTER II

TEXT ANALYSIS

ON

THE EPISTLES OF IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

I. To The Ephesians

"Ignatius, also called Theophorus, sends heartiest good wishes for unalloyed joy in Jesus Christ to the Church at Ephesus in Asia ... forever united and chosen, through real suffering, by the will of the Father and Jesus Christ our God."

1. "With joy in God I welcomed your community, which possesses ... a right disposition, enhanced by faith and love ... Being imitators of God, you have, once restored to new life in the Blood of God, perfectly accomplished the task so natural to you." The Greek wording allows of another interpretation: the Ephesians owed their reputation to "a natural disposition, a constitutional trait, made right," or to "a temperament rectified (that is, supernaturalized) by faith and love through Jesus Christ." This tallies well with what follows: because they had been "restored to new life in the Blood of God" (that is, had become Christians), they were enabled to change their natural

benevolence into the Christian virtue of charity.⁸

"... I might ... obtain the favor of fighting wild beasts at Rome and through this favor be able to prove myself a disciple ..." In the idea of becoming a true disciple we are introduced to one of the characteristic thoughts of these epistles. For Ignatius the essence of discipleship is to suffer with Christ (Mk. 7:34), and therefore the seal that one has indeed consummated discipleship is to come to the Martyr's death.⁹ To be a true disciple and to lay down his life for Christ was one and the same thing.

"... I have received your numerous community in the person of Onesimus, a man of indescribable charity and your bishop here on earth. I pray you ... to love him, and wish all of you to resemble him. Blessed, indeed, is He whose grace made you worthy to possess such a bishop." The bishop is the gift of God to the Church. Onesimus was their visible bishop, in contrast with their invisible bishop, Christ.¹⁰ (Cfr. 1 Peter 2:25).

⁸Kleist, J. A., op. cit., p. 119.

⁹Lawson, J., A Theological and Historical Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers. New York. The Macmillan Company, 1961, p. 107.

¹⁰Kleist, J. A., op. cit., p. 120.

2. "... glorify Jesus Christ who has glorified you, so that you, fully trained in unanimous submission, may be submissive to the bishop and the presbytery, and thus be sanctified in every respect." The principle of sanctity is unity in the Church, and the principle of unity is obedience to the bishop and presbytery. This is the thought characteristic of Ignatius, and is constantly reiterated.
3. "... I am not yet perfected in Jesus Christ. Indeed, I am now but being initiated into discipleship, and I address you as my fellow disciples." The due goal of Christian discipleship is martyrdom "... live in harmony with the mind of God... Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, for His part is the mind of the Father, just as the bishops ... represent for their part the mind of Jesus Christ.
4. "... act in agreement with the mind of the bishop; and this you do ... your presbytery ... is a credit to God; for it harmonizes with the bishop as completely as the strings with a harp. It profits you, therefore, to continue in your flaw-

less unity, that you may at all times have a share in God." The unity of the Church is likened to harmony in music. The principle of unity, both among presbytery and people, is obedience to the bishop.

5. "... I ... became so warmly attached to your bishop - an attachment based not on human grounds but on spiritual - how much more do I count you happy who are as closely knit to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ; and as Jesus Christ is to the Father! As a result, the symphony of unity is perfect. ...Unless a man is within the sanctuary, he has to go without the Bread of God. (Jn. 6:33). Assuredly, if the prayer of one or two has such efficacy, how much more that of the bishop and the entire church!" Every believer, and every group of believers, can pray with power. There is a priestly character inhering in the whole body of the Church (1 Pet. 2:9). "... therefore, not to oppose the bishop, that we may be submissive to God." The priestly principle is not limited exclusively to the ordained Ministry. However, it is the disciplined and ordered prayer of the whole

corporate body of the Church which is the most prevailing prayer, which is Christian prayer in the fullest and proper sense of the word. And the eminent mark of this prayer incorporate is that it is led by the bishop. The supreme prayer of the Church, in which prayer comes to its full power, is the Eucharist. The eminent mark of a Eucharist celebrated in due and proper order is that it is presided over by the bishop. Those, and only those, who are in fellowship with the Church incorporate, presided over in due order by the bishop, have a share in the Christian altar, and partake of the bread of God. The bishop is an absolutely essential limb of the body, for his presence and presidency enshrine the principle of discipline and unity. Yet what is accomplished at the Christian altar is by no means something done to or for the congregation by the bishop. It is done by God through the whole body of the Church, as and when that corporate principle is duly expressed by the presidency of the bishop, in his

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presbytery.

Ignatius' concern that the Christian should not oppose the bishop and be submissive to God, indicates, that man in humility must accept his utter need of what God can do for him before he will yield himself up to God, for God to do for him what only God can do. The earthly lesson in humility is submission to the discipline of the Christian community, symbolized in the person of the bishop. Conversely, self-sufficient and self-opinionated pride, which causes one to forsake the disciplined fellowship, is eminently the sin which separates man from God. (Prov. 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

6. "Furthermore: the more anyone observes that a bishop is discreetly silent. The more he should in fear of him." The bishop is a Father-in-God, not a master; obedience due to him is that of a son, not a servant. Obedience is to be willing, not constrained. ¹² "Plainly, then, one should

¹¹Lawson, J. A., op. cit., p. 109.

¹²Ibid., p. 110.

look upon the bishop as upon the Lord Himself.

8. "Your lowliest servant, (i.e. I devote my life to you; or, I offer myself as a ransom for you; or, I am the meanest among you.)¹³ I also consecrate myself to you Ephesians - that Church whose renown will go down the ages.
11. "... let us be found in union with Christ Jesus so as to possess the true life. Thus I shall be found in the ranks of the Christians of Ephesus, who have ever been of one mind with the Apostles through the power of Jesus Christ."
13. "... meet more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to offer praise... the forces of Satan are overthrown, and his baneful influence is neutralized by the unanimity of your faith."
Ignatius recommends concord and frequent eucharistic gatherings as a safe means of undoing the machinations of the enemies of the Church, whether these are "the forces of wickedness on high" (Eph.¹⁴ 6:12), or earthly powers.

¹³Kleist, J. A., op. cit., p. 122.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 123.

14. "Here is the beginning and the end of life: faith is the beginning, the end is love, and when the two blend perfectly with each other, they are God. ...what matters now is not mere profession of faith, but whether one is found to be actuated by it to the end."
15. "It is better to keep silence and be something than to talk and be nothing. Teaching is an excellent thing, provided the speaker practices what he teaches." (i.e.) The eloquent silence of the believer who lives the Gospel.
20. "... show obedience with undivided mind to the bishop and the presbytery, and to break the same Bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, and everlasting life in Jesus Christ."
21. "I offer my life as a ransom..."

II. To The Magnesians

1. "When I learned of your well-ordered God inspired love..." Their love was "well-ordered because they were "submissive to authority." The lack of order in the community is destructive of a truly Christian life. I am privileged to bear a name

radiant with divine splendor, and so in the chains which I carry about on me I sing the praises of the Churches, and pray for union in their midst, a union based on the flesh and Spirit of Jesus Christ, our enduring life; a union based on faith and love, the greatest blessing; and most especially a union with Jesus and the Father. If in this union we patiently endure all the abuse of the Prince of this world and escape unscathed, we shall happily make our way to God." Ignatius writes in the full consciousness of the splendor of the Christian vocation, the splendor of the Church of Christ. His was a profound experience of the mystery of Christ, an experience of a bishop and a martyr. From this full experience the ecclesiology of Ignatius was born. Not a theory, not a doctrine only; this is the holy, solemn and hieratic proclamation of the greatest of all realities; the mystery of Christ in His Church. His theology of the Church is a theology of praise. It is not a collection of theses but a liturgy, a hymn of thanksgiving surrounding an act of Sacrifice. He sings the praises of the Church,

the body of Christ, born from His true body in His true passion. For Ignatius emphasizes repeatedly the reality of Christ, flesh and spirit, in His historical presence, in His eucharistic presence, and His real presence in His Body The Church. His theology is at the same time a hymn in honor of unity and a prayer for the confirmation of unity. By unity and solidarity in faith and love, the Church sustains all the attacks of the enemy, and all the faithful members of Christ make their way securely out of this world to the Father. Ignatius glories first of all in the privilege that is given to him, the place assigned to him in the Church and designated by a "glorious name." He was acutely conscious of the profound importance of his episcopal task. The unity of all races in Christ must manifest God to the world. The walls separating men on the basis of racial, national and social distinctions must be torn down, Jew and Gentile must be one in Christ. His function as bishop is then twofold: to break down the walls of division and to maintain unity in truth and charity. It is above all in, the

liturgical mystery that Christ is present and acts upon the faithful gathered in the sacred assembly. It is there that He sanctifies and unites them, drawing them closer in the bonds of Christian agape, and thereby strengthening them with supernatural energy to resist the attacks of the enemies of unity.

What is this name "radiant with divine splendor"? Perhaps the name of bishop, for Ignatius was more deeply conscious than perhaps any other sainted bishop, of the true meaning of the episcopate. Perhaps the name of martyr, though he was not yet sure that this name would be his, and he prayed earnestly that it might be granted to him. Perhaps his name of "Ignatius", the man of fire." Most probably his cognomen of Theophorus, the man who bears in himself God.

2. "He is obedient to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbyters as to the of Jesus Christ." The bishop is here thought of as the

¹⁵Merton, T., "Church and Bishop", Worship Vol. XXXVII:11 (January, 1963), pp. 110-112.

dispenser of "God's grace," the presbyters as enforcing the "the law of Jesus Christ." There is, evidently, a reference to the sacraments in the former expression, and one to preaching in the latter.¹⁶

3. "... it is fitting not to take advantage of the bishop's youth, but rather, because he embodies the authority of God the Father, to show him every mark of respect - and your presbyters, so I learn, are doing just that: ... they are wise in God and therefore defer to him - or, rather, not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, the bishop of all men. ...It is not really that a man deceiving this particular bishop who is visible, but tries to over-reach Him who is invisible. When this happens, his reckoning is not with man, but with God who knows what is secret." The bishop is here described as the representative of God the Father in the Church.
4. "...those who style a man bishop, but completely disregard him in their conduct. Such persons do

¹⁶Kleist, J. A., op. cit., p. 127.

not seem to have good conscience, inasmuch as they do not assemble in the fixed order prescribed by him." A company of Christians meeting apart from the rule of the bishop is not in proper order.

6. "... I have with the eyes of the faith looked upon your whole community and have come to love it. I exhort you to strive to do all things in harmony with God: the bishop is to preside in the place of God, while the presbyters are to function as the council of the Apostles, and the deacons, who are most dear to me, are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ ... Conform yourselves, then - all of you to God's ways, and respect one another, and let no one regard his neighbor with the eyes of the flesh, but love one another at all times in Jesus Christ. Let there be nothing among you tending to divide you, but be united with the bishop and those who preside - serving at once a pattern and as a lesson of incorruptibility." The perfume of incorruption. The fact that St. Ignatius identifies holiness with "incorruption" shows that he is, in this and in everything else, profoundly realistic. His notion of holiness is

first of all ontological. The holiness of the Christian is a participation in the life and holiness of God, through Christ. But since Christ is one with the Church, holiness for the Christian consists in union with God through the Church.

"It profits you therefore to continue your flawless unity that at all times you may have a share in God (AD Ephes. 4,2).

Participation in the life and grace of Christ is described in very concrete terms by St. Ignatius. To share in the life and light of the Risen Savior is to share in His incorruption, and thus to have in oneself no part of death, of error, of hatred, of conflict. The sacred newness of life in Christ manifests itself through the unity of the faithful as a sublime "perfume of incorruption."

Here we are reminded that Ignatius is a true Oriental and that he loves the symbolic language of the "spiritual senses." Nor are they purely and simply symbolic to him. One feels that this "good odor of Christ" was something truly objective, that could be perceived by the baptized soul. He says, in any case, that the presence of Christ in

the unity of the faithful is as a "good odor of incorruption" while disunity and wrangling over suspicious doctrines make the assembly smell of corruption.

"The Lord permitted myrrh to be poured on His head that He might breathe incorruption upon the Church. Do not let yourselves be anointed with the malodorous doctrine of the Prince of this world" (AD Ephes. 17,1).

When they are united with the bishop and presbyters, the faithful present to the world a "pattern and lesson of incorruptibility" (AD Magn. 6,2). What is this pattern and lesson? It is a revelation of the archetypal unity in the divine nature itself, the union of the Father with the Son. It is a manifestation of the inner mystery of God, through the unity of the Church in Christ (Cf. Ad Ephes. 3,) It is a manifestation of divine life in unifying charity, that overcomes all conflicts and establishes peace. They are indeed the same thing. The power of Christ's victory is manifested in the way in which the Church brings peace and reconciliation to elements which,

naturally speaking, cannot be reconciled. The divine and supernatural mission of the Church is above all a mission of peace.

Hence it follows that the moral life of the Christian must be built solidly upon the foundation stone of unity and peace. The most important Christian virtues are those which contribute most to peace. They are above all charity, self-sacrificing humble submission, obedience, meekness, and of course at the root of all is that faith which keeps us in constant contact with Christ "our inseparable life."

When the faithful live in unity and peace, overcoming evil with good and disarming violence with meekness and submission to Christ, then they cannot help but be holy, for they are "steeped in God" (AD Magnes. 14,1). How can they be anything but incorruptible? How can they help filling the whole world with the perfume of incorruption?

It is in the light of this that we see the full meaning of St. Ignatius famous description of the Eucharist as the "Medicine of immortality." Not only does it in some mysterious way predispose the

bodies of the Christians for a risen life in the new creation, after the parousia: but it is a medicine of immortality here and now, a source of incorruption, precisely because it is the sacrament of unity and of charity.

It is the sacrament which deepens and matures our union with one another in Christ, which sanctifies us yet further, all together, in the one Christ.

It is the sacrament by which the one and only Church herself grows constantly in sanctity and incorruption. By uniting us more perfectly in the true Body of Christ, this immortality, His purity, His incorruption.

"For my drink," cries Ignatius, "I want the blood of Christ which is incorruptible love" (AD Rom. 7,3). This wine of incorruption leads to the noblest inebriation - that of martyrdom. For the martyr in laying down his life for Christ, the Church, attains to an incorruptible love, a love that is purely of God, unmixed by any appetite for
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 the things of the world or of the flesh.

¹⁷Merton, T., op. cit., pp. 117-118.

7. "Just as the Lord, therefore, being one with the Father, did nothing without Him, either by Himself, or through the Apostles, so neither must you undertake anything without the bishop and the presbyters; ... there must be one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope in love, in joy that is flawless, that is Jesus Christ, who stands supreme."
13. " ... that in all things whatsoever you may prosper ... together with your most reverend bishop and with your presbytery - that fittingly woven spiritual crown - and with your deacons, men of God. Submit to the bishop and to each other's rights, just as did Jesus Christ in the flesh to the Father, and as the Apostles did to Christ and the Father and the Spirit, so that there may be oneness both of flesh and of spirit.
14. "Knowing that you are steeped in God..." As land is soaked with water, so these Christians were "absorbed or steeped in God." Not only were their minds continually occupied with God, but their whole way of life was divine; they were "full of

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God."

III. To The Trallians

1. " ... I was informed of it by Polybius, your bishop, ... that in his person I beheld your whole community.
2. "Surely, when you submit to the bishop as representing Jesus Christ ... It is needful then ... that you do nothing without your bishop; but be subject to the presbytery as representing the Apostles of Jesus Christ...
3. "Likewise, let all respect the deacons as representing Jesus Christ, the bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as God's high council and as the Apostolic college...I am convinced that such is your attitude; for I have received, and have with me, the embodiment of your affection in the person of your bishop. His very demeanor is a powerful sermon, his gentleness a mighty influence - a man whom even the unbelievers, I am sure, respect."

¹⁸Kleist, J. A., op. cit., p. 129.

4. "Many thoughts are mine when I take God's view of things; ... True I am in love with suffering, but I do not know if I deserve the honor." Here is the mind of the martyr. He does not count it a misfortune that he must suffer, but, a privilege.
5. " ... it does not immediately follow that I am a disciple. Plainly, we are yet short of much if we are not to be short of God." Ignatius has received visions from God and honors from the Church, but he knows that he assailed by fear within, and he cannot feel sure that he will stand firm, even to the martyr's death until the moment has actually come. So he will not dare to claim that he is yet fully and truly a disciple. The one great thing yet to be accomplished by Ignatius was to die for Christ.
7. " ... cling inseparably to God Jesus Christ, to the bishop, and to the precepts of the Apostles. ... he that does anything apart from bishop, presbytery, or deacon has no pure conscience." The bishop and the Apostolic ministry is a safeguard of orthodoxy, as well as a guarantee of discipline and unity.

12. " ... It is certainly fitting for you individually, but especially for the presbyters, to give comfort to the bishop in honor of the Father and Jesus Christ and the Apostles.
13. "Be obedient to the bishop as to the commandment, and so, too, to the presbytery."

IV. To The Romans

1. "The truth is, I am afraid it is your love that will do me wrong. ... for me it is difficult to win my way to God, should you be wanting in consideration for me." The farther westward Ignatius travelled, the more his mind was occupied with the scenes that would await him in the Amphitheatre, and the more his heart would throb with the prospect of at last becoming a true disciple of Christ. He was concerned with martyrdom both as a duty and a privilege of a Christian. But there was a tiny cloud looming on the Western horizon. He feared that the Roman Christians, some of whom were prominent in public life, would use their influence and obtain for him a stay of the capital sentence or even its complete revocation. Such a calamity must be prevented! And so,

Ignatius resolved to write to the Romans, not to strengthen them in the faith, as he did the Asiatic Churches, but to beg them not to intervene in his behalf through "unseasonable kindness."¹⁹

2. "For, if you quietly ignore me, I am the word of God; but if you fall in love with my human nature, I shall, on the contrary, be a mere sound. Grant me no more than that you let my blood be spilled in sacrifice to God, while yet there is an altar ready." The conversion of the world was the work of God, through His faithful witnesses. Their sole qualification was their faithfulness, their preparedness to be used by God according to His counsel. Human talents, exerted in the arts of persuasion, would never suffice. Thus even a preacher of commanding personality like Ignatius, if he be guided by counsels of human wisdom, is a mere "voice crying in the wilderness." If in obedience to God's plan his physical voice is silenced for ever in death, he becomes a pre-

¹⁹Ibid., op. cit., p. 133.

vailing word from God, and a testimony to the divine logos. Thus if the Roman Christians remain silent, and drop no word in his behalf, Ignatius will be enabled to utter God's word in the arena.²⁰ i.e. "I shall become a martyr and thus proclaim the glory of God.

3. " ... that I may be a man not merely of words, but also of resolution. In this way I shall not only be called a Christian, but also prove to be one. ... Whenever Christianity is hated by the world, what counts is not power of persuasion, but greatness." The convincing power of Christianity is not so much in what its defenders may say about it, as in its inherent greatness, which cannot fail to make an impression on outsiders. Christianity wins more adherents by the life of the faithful than by a discussion of its merits.²¹
4. " ... I die willingly for God, ... Suffer me to be the food of wild beasts, which are the means of my making my way to God. God's wheat I am,

²⁰Lawson, J., op. cit., p. 129.

²¹Kleist, J. A., op. cit., p. 135.

and by the teeth of wild beasts I am to be ground that I may prove Christ's pure bread. ... Then only shall I be a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ when the world will not see even my body ... But once I have suffered, I shall become a freedman of Jesus Christ, and united with Him, I shall rise a free man. Just now I learn, being in chains, to desire nothing."

5. " ... At last I am well on the way to being a disciple."

6. "Once arrived there, I shall be a man. Permit me to be an imitator of my suffering God." Literally, "Suffer me to copy the Passion of my God." The sentiment expressed in the preceding sentence is at first sight strange: "Once arrived in the pure light of the beatific vision, I shall be a man, i.e., he shall have reached the perfection of human nature. In the present economy of salvation man is not "man" in the full sense of the word until he reaches his eternal salvation.

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7. "But there is in me a Living Water, which is

²²Ibid., p. 136.

eloquent and within me says: "Come to the Father"
I have no taste for corruptible food or for the
delights of this life. Bread of God is what I
desire; that is, the flesh of Jesus Christ, who
was of the seed of David; and for my drink I
desire His Blood, that is, incorruptible love."
The principle of Baptism is that of self-
identification with Christ, to suffer with Him
so as to triumph with Him. Therefore one who
has been baptized can look to martyrdom as the
consummation of his baptism." "I desire the
bread of God:" The Eucharist expresses the same
principle of self-identification with Christ, to
suffer with Him so as to triumph with Him.
Therefore one going to martyrdom desires to
receive the Eucharist, as the most fitting
preparation.

9. "Remember in your prayers the Church in Syria,
which now has God for her Shepherd in my stead.
Jesus Christ alone will be her Bishop, together
with your love."

V. To The Philadelphians

" ... a church which has found mercy and is irrevocably of one mind with God, which unwaveringly exults in the Passion of Our Lord, and firmly believes in His Resurrection through sheer mercy. This Church I salute in the Blood of Jesus Christ. She is a source of everlasting joy, especially when the members are at one with the bishop and his assistants, the presbyters and deacons..."

1. "Regarding this bishop I am informed that he holds the supreme office in the community not by his own efforts, or by men's doing, or for personal glory. No, he holds it by the love of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am charmed with his sweetness of manner. He more by his silence than others that talk to no purpose. No wonder; he is as perfectly in accord with the commandments as strings are with a harp. With all my heart, therefore, I laud his disposition to please God, a disposition virtuous and perfect, as I am very well aware; his unshaken constancy, too, and his passionless temper,

modelled on the transcendent gentleness of the living God." We have here the ideal of a Christian bishop. He is to rule by love. He has divine authority, but he is not an authoritarian.

2. " ... Where the shepherd is, there you, being sheep, must follow." That is, unity under the bishop is the key to orthodoxy.
3. " ... Surely, all those that belong to God and Jesus Christ are the very ones that side with the bishop; ... return to the unity of the Church, ... and, thus lead a life acceptable to Jesus Christ. ... If a man chooses to be a dissenter, he severs all connection with the Passion."
4. "Take care, then, to partake of one Eucharist; for one is the Flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with His Blood, and one altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the Presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants. Thus you will conform in all your actions to the will of God." To observe one Eucharist, this is the eminent mark of that unity under the bishop which is the key to orthodoxy.

5. " ... I take refuge in the Gospel, which to me is Jesus in the flesh, and in the Apostles, as represented by the presbytery of the Church." Ignatius never tires of laying his finger on the hierarchical constitution of the Church. The function which by Christ's institution belonged to the distinct group called "the Apostles" passed on in due time to another distinct group called "the presbyters of the Church." The gospel is called "the flesh of Jesus" because it is the record of His earthly life, etc. In the first and the second century the term "presbyters" often included bishops.
7. " ... I cried out, while in your midst, and said in a ringing voice - God's voice: "Give heed to the bishop and to the presbytery and to the deacons." Some, however, suspected I was saying this because I had previous knowledge of the division caused by some; but He for whose sake I am in chains is my witness, that I had not learned it from any, human source. No, it was

²³Ibid., pp. 137-138.

the Spirit who kept preaching in these words:

"Apart from the bishop do nothing; preserve your persons as shrines of God; cherish unity, shun divisions; do as Jesus Christ did, for He, too, did as the Fathers did." The scene at Philadelphia is symbolical of what was happening in the Church at large. The less formal and disciplined forms of Ministry which existed in the primitive Church were at this time abdicating in favor of the regular and disciplined Catholic Ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons. Nor was this to be regarded as the decay of the work of the Spirit in the Church. To Ignatius this change of emphasis in the Lord's Ministry was itself the guidance and the work of the Spirit.²⁴

8. " ... Acting as a man trained to cherish unity. Where there is division and passion, there is no place for God. Now, the Lord forgives all if they change their mind and by this change of mind return to union with God and the council of the bishop." The mark of divine forgiveness medicated

²⁴Lawson, J. op. cit., p. 134.

to men, is obedience to the bishop. It is through such obedience that those who are penitent will be found to return to the unity of the people of God.

9. "Good, too, are priests; but better is the High Priest who was entrusted with the Holy of Holies, who alone was entrusted with the hidden designs of God."

VI. To The Smyrnaens

8. "You must all follow the lead of the bishop, as Jesus Christ followed that of the Fathers; follow the presbytery as you would the Apostles; reverence the deacons as you would God's commandment. Let no one do anything touching the Church, apart from the bishop. Let that celebration of the Eucharist be considered valid which is held under the bishop or anyone to whom he has committed it. Where the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholics Church. It is not permitted without authorization from the bishop either to baptize or to hold an agape; but whatever he approves is

also pleasing to God." This is the earliest occurrence in Christian literature of the expression "the Catholic Church". "Catholic" means, of course, "universal," as opposed to "individual," "particular." The context in which it appears elucidates its meaning. Ignatius is convinced that in the Church the presbytery follows the Apostles, just as the Apostles followed Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ followed the Fathers. "I count you happy," he says (Ad Ephes. 5,1), "who are so closely knit to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Fathers." Drop a link in this chain---people, presbytery, bishop, Apostles, Jesus Christ, the Fathers-- and Ignatius argues there is no Catholic Church. (AD Philad. 3,2). This "following" or "union" has to do both with doctrine and government.²⁵ To him the guarantee of orthodoxy and the token of Christian love is the sense of disciplined corporate solidarity uniting all the local congregations in every place, of which

²⁵Kleist, J. A., op. cit., pp. 141-142.

solidarity the bishop is the symbol and instrument.

9. "... It is well to revere God and bishop. He who honors a bishop is honored by God. He who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop worships the devil."
11. "... Not that I deserve to belong to that community, being the least of its members... No, not because of any conscious deed, but because of the grace of God."
12. "... Burrus ..., for he is a pattern of what a minister of God should be. God's grace will reward him in every way. Greetings to the bishop, that man of God, to the God-minded presbytery, to the deacons my fellow servants.

VII. To Polycarp

"... to Polycarp, who is bishop of the Church of Smyrna, or rather has for his bishop God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

1. "I am so well pleased with your God-mindedness ... (more literally, "Your mind fixed upon, absorbed in, united with God.") Do justice to Do justice to your office with the utmost solicitude, both physical and spiritual. Be concerned

about unity, the greatest blessing. Bear with all, just as the Lord does with you. To Prayer give yourself unceasingly; beg for an increase in understanding; watch without letting your spirit flag. Speak to each one singly in imitation of God's way. Bear the infirmities of all, like a master athlete. The greater the toil, the greater the reward." Ecclesiastical superiors should not only exact obedience from their subjects, but also treat them with due charity in imitation of Gods way.

3. " ... Increase your zeal. Read the signs of the times."
4. "Widows must not be neglected." They, along with orphans, and slaves have always been objects of special care on the part of ecclesiastics. The care for "the poor" is a sign of a Christlike attitude. " ... Seek out all by name."
6. "Heed the bishop, that God may heed you, too. My life is a ransom for those who are obedient to the bishop, presbyters, and deacons..."

7. " ... God-blessed Polycarp, to convene a council invested with all the splendor of God and to appoint someone who is dear to you and untiring in his zeal, one qualified for the part of God's courier; then confer on him the distinction of going to Syria and extolling, for the glory of God, the untiring charity of your community." The ideal bishop rules by consultation and persuasion, as did the greatest of the Apostles themselves (I Peter 5:3).

CHAPTER III

THE THEOLOGY OF ST. IGNATIUS

I. The Mystery Of The Church

The Epistles all share a common structure. They were written as a series of letters to Ignatius' parishioners and fellow churchmen, and each one begins with a salutation of the Church to which it is addressed. These greetings are anything but the pompous and formal salutations of official Roman letters: they are lyrical improvisations, prophetic hymns in honor of the Mystery of Christ in the Church - not just Christ in the Church as a whole, but also Christ in each local Church, gathered around its bishop, as a witness to God's merciful and salvific love for men.²⁶

Ignatius' chief concern, as he faced his own death, was to strengthen, build up, the Church, and this not because he had an overwhelming interest in administrative matters but because his whole concern is to safeguard the deposit of faith against the inroads of Judaism and Docetism. It is for this reason that he warns against the teachers of false doctrine, and urges submission to deacons and presbyters and bishop. He tells Polycarp to keep before men's eyes the goal of salvation (Poly. 1,2) pre-

²⁶Merton, T., op. cit., pp. 112-113.

cisely because he knows so well that inside the Church as well as outside it men may be led astray by factionalism or pride, and hence lose sight of the end. He saw the Church realistically in sober colors, and yet he held that it was more than a human institution.²⁷

For Ignatius each Church is a living being, or rather a part of the great living organism which is the body of Christ. It is not just a social organization, it is a mystical person, alive with the presence of Christ. The Church is the manifestation of Christ who, in turn, is the revelation of the Father. By the mystery of the Church the invisible God makes Himself known to the world.²⁸

After greeting the various communities, Ignatius usually goes on to exhort the faithful to reverence and obedience to their bishop, the visible representative of the invisible Christ present in their midst. He then outlines his teaching on the unity of the Church in Christ, the Church as the body of Christ, united in one faith, one hope, one charity gathered about the bishops, presbyters and deacons in eucharistic celebration. (Cf. Eph. 1,3; 2,2; 3,2; 4; 5; 6,1)

²⁷Corwin, V., St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1960.

²⁸Merton, T., op. cit., p. 113.

Ignatius places a good amount of emphasis on his own martyrdom as a witness to the reality of Christ, the reality of the flesh and sufferings of Christ, the reality of the Eucharist. It is in martyrdom that Ignatius hopes to become a Christian in the full sense of one who has "found Christ" and become perfectly "united to Christ and to the Father." The Martyr is in all the truth the complete Christian. (Cf. Rom. 2; 4; 5,3; 9)

Central to this emphasis on Christian Martyrdom is ecclesiastical obedience. Humble and faithful union with their bishop and presbyters will be their guarantee against error and dissension. ²⁹ (Cf. Smyrn, 8,2; Magn. 6, 1 - and 3,1; Trall. 6; Phil. 3; Eph. 4)

It is interesting to note that Ignatius' point of view on the principles involved in ecclesiastical obedience parallels that of our Lord Himself, St. Paul and the ³⁰ Popes.

²⁹ Quasten, J., Patrology, Vol. I, "The Beginnings of Patristic Literature." Westminster, Maryland. The Newman Press, 1950.

³⁰ Instructive Studies dealing with this view are: Pepler, C., The Priest of The People. A symposium. London, Blackfriars Publications, 1956. Prat, F. The Theology of St. Paul. Vols. 1 & 2, Westminster, Maryland. Newman, 1961. Leo XIII, Sapientiae Christianae. Pius XII, Mystici Corporis.

From the salutations with which the epistles open, we can draw a fairly accurate perspective of Ignatius' ecclesiology.

Each Church is worthy of all praise, each is blessed, splendid, glorious, the "pleroma" of the divine love, predestined from all eternity, the object of an admirable choice made in Christ, by the Father. More particularly each church is "chosen in the passion." Each Church was the object of Christ's love of predilection as He died on the cross, and hence is called to an ineffable dignity. Each must concentrate entirely on a worthy response of love, a deep realization of the loftiness of this calling, in the mystery of the passion of the resurrection. (Cf. Eph. Prol.; 1; Rom. Prol.; Phld. Prol.; Smyr. Prol.)

Because each Church is so chosen, it also illuminated, filled with a special light of its vocation, and it must be purified by that light, it must cooperate too in its own purification by the light. Cooperation consists in eliminating everything that brings about disunity in thought, in worship, and in love.

In proportion as each Church responds to this call, advances toward the light, dwells in unity in the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, it becomes a hymn of joy and

praise, glorifying the Father by union with Him in Christ (Cf. Phil., Prol.).

If anyone seeks Christ, if anyone seeks holiness, the way is clear. He must make his way to the community of the faithful. He must enter into the agape, the community of love, which is his local Church.

Of the four notes of the Church given in the Nicene Creed, "one, holy, catholic and apostolic," three are clearly developed by St. Ignatius. Apostolicity is to be sought in him implicitly rather than explicitly. He was too close to the apostles to develop this note in detail and in perspective. His letters are full to overflowing with doctrine taught by St. John and St. Paul. His life itself, all his words, his actions and his death are a living witness to the apostolicity of the Church.

St. Ignatius is the very first to make use of the word "Catholic" in reference to the Church (Smyrn. 8,2). The universal Church, which is the unity of all the Churches, unites in itself all races and all peoples, for all are called to unity and peace in Christ. To exclude anyone is to strike at the living unity of the body of Christ. This living unity is presided over by Christ Himself, who also presides over each local Church. Christ is the Bishop of

the whole Church, and the Bishop of each local Church. But each Church also has its "visible bishop" who is simply the representative of Christ, invisibly present wherever the bishop himself is. (Eph. 1,3; Mag. 3)

The unity and holiness of the church are expressive in Ignatius' thought. They are the heart of his whole teaching. He calls himself "a man made for unity." (Phld. 8,1)

In particular he makes quite clear that unity and holiness go together. They are in direct proportion to one another. The more a Church is one with the Father and Jesus Christ, the more it shares their holiness, by participating in the source of all holiness which is the passion of Christ.

However, the invisible and spiritual unity of the faithful in Christ is inseparable from their union in the visible order established by Him. There is no contradiction between the "spiritual" and the "institutional" aspects of the Church. The reality of unity in Christ must be proved and verified by unity with the bishop and presbyters in belief, in worship, in love, for where the bishop is, there is Christ.

Ignatius strongly affirms the hierarchical structure of the visible Church, and this is essential to his

uncompromising self-sacrifice of the martyrs, particularly of the bishop-martyrs, that cements the unity of the Church in the fulfillment of the eucharistic participation in which the passion is represented by the community of the faithful. (Cf. Eph. 11,2; Rom. 2,2; 4,1; 4,2; 6,1)

We respond to the call issued to us by Christ in His passion. We come to unity in the Church, in obedience to the bishop; The more perfect this unity is, the more redolent it is of the odor of incorruption and immortality, the very presence of the Risen Christ. And this is dem-
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 onstrated by the joyous sacrifice of the martyrs.

II. The Eucharistic Sacrifice

The Church is called "the place of sacrifice" (Eph. 5,2; Trall. 7,2; Phil. 4). It seems that the conception of the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the Church suggested this
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 designation. Ignatius calls the Eucharist, "the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death, and everlasting life in Jesus Christ" (Eph. 20,2). He admonishes: "Take care, then, to partake of one Eucharist; for one is the Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us

³¹Merton, T., op. cit., pp. 116-117.

³²Quasten, J., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 66.

with His Blood, and one altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants." (Phil. 4) - "The Eucharist is the Flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father in His loving-kindness raised from the dead (Smyrn. 7,1).

It is here that Ignatius' thought shows forth as simple yet profound, full of rich implications. It is eminently realistic, in the sense that it flows from a divinely given experience of the inmost reality of the Mystery of Christ in His Church. The key to that experience where the members of Christ are "consummated in unity" is the action of liturgical worship, our sacramental communion in His body and blood. It is characteristic of Ignatius to stress repeatedly that Christians are united with Christ only when they are one with their bishop through faith, obedience and particularly through participation in divine worship. He does not recognize individual independence in the spiritual life or in the mystical union with Christ, but acknowledges only one divine union with the Savior, namely that accomplished through liturgical worship, i.e. the community of the faithful functioning as a liturgical body offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

There is one thing which will constitute the community as one, and that is the Eucharistic Christ's sacrificing action continuing in the Mass. It is an understanding of the Eucharistic action as sacrifice which will give depth of understanding to Ignatius' view of the Church.

The Mass is actually the sacrifice of Christ; it is a commemoration of the redemptive actions of Christ and also the actual continuation of these redemptive actions. Christ began these actions at the Last Supper almost two thousand years ago; these actions have gone unbroken and will continue to go on without ceasing until the Parousia. Central to obtaining a growing understanding of this mystery lies in realizing that the key to Christ's sacrificial action is his internal attitude of accepting his death. Christ's action of obedience and love constituted Him a victim, a freely willed victim. This attitude flows in unbroken fashion through the Supper, Calvary and Resurrection, making of them one unified Action. Christ continues to have this sacrificial action, for the Resurrection is a continuing and present mystery. Christ as he is present in the Eucharistic action of the Mass continues that same internal attitude which was the heart of his sacrifice at

the Supper and Calvary. However, in the Mass, not only is the attitude of Christ involved, but there is joined to it the attitude of ourselves. Therefore, the Mass is Christ's continuing sacrifice, but it is also the sacrifice of the Church - his Mystical Body.

The Mass is the sacrifice of the Church in which the community, the people of God, have assembled to proclaim their unity in love. This is done through the action of offering, dedication and consecration, in which the Community is continually passing over into the sphere of the sacred.

Christ's passing over from the world of corruptible flesh to the risen world is his sacrifice. The Church's sacrifice is her participation in the passing over of her Head. In the Eucharistic action of the Church, the Sacrifice of the Church becomes identical with the sacrifice of Christ and in doing so becomes fully itself.

In Ignatius' view of Martyrdom, his whole effort as another Christ was not as offerer of his sacrifice merely, but as victim of it also. For the martyr in laying down his life as priest and victim, for Christ, the Church, attains to incorruptible love, a love that is purely of God, unmingled by any appetite for the things of the world or

of the flesh. The decisive moment for Ignatius will come if He persists to the point of death, for then, as He says frequently, He will "attain unto God," or "unto Jesus Christ." (Eph. 12,2; Mag. 14,1; Tral. 13,3; Rom. 1,2; Smyr. 11,1)

This is the task of us priests, sealed with the character of his priesthood, to conform ourselves in all things to the Head. Christ is the apt instrument for the divine action of sanctifying the human race. Christ is an apt instrument by offering sacrifice, but by offering a sacrifice of which he was not only the priest but also the victim. The gift he offers to his Father is none other than himself. His life is a continual holocaust by which everything that is in him is burnt up in the consuming fire of self-immolation. To do the will of his Father is his very meat, the food that sustains him. It is for this only that he came, to do the will of the Father who sent him; it is the sole meaning and purpose of his life and mission.

Ignatius' Martyrdom is witness to the Priest who is our model; this is the Head to whom we must be likened; not merely priest, but victim, of his sacrifice. That Christ should be victim as well as priest of his sacrifice

was the price the Father asked for redemption in actu primo; and the symmetry of the divine plan surely shows that the price God now asks for the accomplishment of that work in actu secundo is that we, priests after the likeness of Christ shall be victims also, victims completely self-immolated, of the sacrifice we offer in his name.

In the sacrifice of the Church, Christ is priest and victim. Ignatius' emphasis on Martyrdom as the climax of the Christian life bears the mark of the Christian accepting the life and that destiny which God the Father has given. All of us in the Sacrifice of the Mass are exercising our various degrees of the priesthood of Christ in proportion as we accept victimhood. That is, our priestly functions orientate us to accept that which life is doing to us. It is in the action of continually accepting all this from the Father that constitutes a reliving and reduplicating of Christ's action of obedience and love. This acceptance is expressed above all in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

CHAPTER IV

PRIESTLY SANCTITY AND SACRAMENTAL GRACE

From the profound experience of the mystery of Christ, a priestly experience, Ignatius spoke in the full consciousness of the Christian vocation, the splendor of the Church - the Mystery of Christ in His Church. His theology is a theology of praise, a hymn of thanksgiving surrounding an act of Sacrifice. He sings the praises of the Church, the Body Christ. He emphasizes repeatedly the reality of Christ, flesh and spirit, in His historical presence, in His eucharistic presence, and His real presence in His Body the Church.

In Ignatius' letters we will not find a collection of theses but a liturgy pointing to one spirituality of the priesthood through which all priests must find their sanctification. It seems that we can view Ignatius' Christology of grace and his Ecclesiology of grace to structure a point of view on the theology of what the priesthood is. To the extent that a theology of the priesthood in the Christian context is conceived, then can we appreciate the personal sanctity of the priest as an instrument of grace where the members of Christ are "consummated in unity."

The theology of the priesthood which is being developed today seems to be veering away from that individualistic

theology which has tended to regard the priesthood as consisting solely and essentially in the communication of sacramental powers. We are now witnessing the gradual disappearance of a theology which also in the ability to consecrate the Eucharist and to confer absolution powers that were held and exercised by the priest independtly of any bishop, except perhaps were the niceties of jurisdiction were concerned.

Contemporary theologians have gone about combatting this individualistic theology of the priesthood and the consequences it has fostered. Their procedure has been a return to the historical origins of the priesthood in apostolic times and to rediscover its fundamental conception. The Apostles had received their priesthood from Christ. They had received the powers of their priesthood from Christ to be exercised in complete dependence on Him. They had been incorporated into a share of His universal and unique Priesthood. Thus they possessed a priesthood, or perhaps better, they were possessed by a priesthood

³³ Baum, W., The Theology Of The Presbyterate. Toledo, Ohio. West and Midwest Diocesan Directors of Vocations, 1961. Cf. Appendix for a list of Contemporary Studies either for or against this concept of priesthood.

which it was possible for them to exercise only in union with and in dependence upon Christ, who is the sole Priest of the New Law and the unique Mediator between God and men. Even after the ordination of the Apostles, there was still only one Priest. As Mersch puts it: "Others have had some participation of the priesthood: He has it in its entirety, or rather, He does not so much have it as be it. He is all the priesthood... Besides He is not a priest among priests, greater than the others or holier. He is the unique Priest ... He exhausts in Himself... All priesthood."³⁴

The priesthood of the Apostles, precisely because it was a share in the Priesthood of Christ, did not consist, solely or essentially in their participated power to offer the Sacrifice of the New Law, that is, to change the bread and wine at Mass into the sacrificed Body and Blood of Christ. For Christ Himself was Priest not merely by His redemptive sacrifice upon the Cross, indeed He could not even have offered such a sacrifice if He had not already been Priest first and essentially by His Incarnation. As Cardinal Suhard has phrased it:

³⁴Mersch, E., Morality and The Mystical Body, p. 141, (Quoted By Suhard, Priests Among Men, p. 10).

"Christ, did not only fill the function of a priest, He was
 Priest. He is essentially, Priest."³⁵ And this by virtue
 of His Incarnation. Masure has supplied us with the neces-
 sary distinctions:

"The sacrifice of Jesus is an act, both on Calvary and
 at the Last Supper. His priesthood, however, is a state,
 since it springs from His nature, from His twofold nature
 in the unity of His Person. Christ is still a Priest, and
 He always will be. As Mediator, He never ceases acting to
 reconcile and unite His Father and Men. Never during His
 mortal life did He interrupt the exercise of His functions
 as an intermediary, required for the glory of His Father
 and for the spiritual needs of men."³⁶

To say that Christ was Priest by His Incarnation is to
 say that He was Priest by His every action as man, by His
 prayer, His study of the Scriptures, His teaching, by His
 compassion, His healing of the sick, His forgiveness of
 sins, by the love of the Good Shepherd for His sheep, as
 well as by the sublime act of His suffering and death in
 which He offered all that He had been and done in a climax

³⁵ Suhard, E., op. cit.

³⁶ Masure, E., Parish Priest, Chicago, Ill., Fides Pub-
 lishers Association, 1955, p. 120.

of obedience to His Father. Christ, in passing on to His Apostles a share in His Priesthood, was passing on to them a share in all that His Priesthood was: namely, a labor of apostolic and redemptive love culminating in the sacrifice of Himself, henceforth to be immemorially presented by the ritual sacrifice of bread and wine.

"Just as the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Redemption, but is not itself the Redemption and does not constitute it, so the power to celebrate the Eucharist is the sacrament of the priesthood that it confers, but it does not exhaust the notion of the priesthood. Our Lord instituted His Apostles priests when He said: "Hoc facite in meam commemoration". But actually their priesthood is defined by their participation in the priesthood of Christ, that is, in His universal function as Mediator:"³⁷

If it is true that the priesthood of the Apostles did not consist solely in the sacramental powers conferred on them by Christ, but was rather a participation in His total Priesthood, it is equally true that the priesthood of those whom the Apostles appointed and ordained in their place was not confined to these sacramental powers either. The

³⁷ Masure, E., op. cit., p. 54.

considerations above give us a basis for affirming just what its extension was. Like the priesthood of the Apostles, it could only be a share in the total Priesthood of Christ. But since it was the unique Priesthood participated precisely through the communication to others by the Apostles of functions which were theirs directly from Christ, the priesthood of these others was destined to be both originated and exercised in dependence upon the Apostles, and not simply in dependence upon Christ. It was the inspired decision of the Apostles to invite and ordain others into a share of their priestly labors and powers. But the whole point is that this was from the beginning a limited share; that is the origin of the first deacons, and later of the presbyteri-episcopi, who were simple priests, and finally of bishops, like Timothy or Titus. These men were to exercise their priesthood under the authority and direction of the Apostles. And this was more than a matter of jurisdiction. The current canonical notion of jurisdiction has been sharply criticized as not taking "Sufficient account of the dominion of the priesthood of some over the priesthood of others." It was a

³⁸ Ibid., p. 123.

matter of Order as well. For if these men shared a priesthood by grace which was Christ's by nature, it was nevertheless a grace received through ordination from someone who possessed it more fully, and who was ordaining only to communicate a share of what he himself possessed in full.

The consequences of these facts for the theology and sanctity of the priest today are significant.

"There is not only a hierarchy of jurisdiction, but also a hierarchy of Order. This does not mean merely that the inferiors have fewer powers than the superiors, but it signifies that the inferiors exercise their powers only in dependence upon their superiors. Strictly speaking, even if they had the same powers of Orders, as is the case today of the auxiliary bishop by the side of the Titular bishop, that would not lessen their dependence in the exercise of their powers. In fact, so great is their dependence with respect to certain of these powers, that they would cease to be valid if the superiors so decided."³⁹

"The presbyteral priesthood is therefore a partial and subordinate participation in the episcopal priesthood. It is conferred by a partial and subordinate participation in

³⁹ Ibid., p. 63.

the Eucharistic powers of the bishop. The priest participates, under the direction of and within the limits fixed by the bishop, in the sacerdotal duties of the latter, which are, as we have said, holy and sanctifying. Inasmuch as the priest participates only partially and in a discontinuous way in these episcopal functions, he can seek means of sanctification elsewhere, as for example in the ascetic state of life of the religious. But he will first of all make use of these means that flow from his own state, which is that of the participated and subordinate exercise of the sacerdotal charity of the bishop.⁴⁰

We need to consider now the essential principle of the bishop's priesthood in which the priest shares. Insofar as the priesthood of the bishop is itself a share in the total priesthood of Christ, it consists essentially in Apostolic and pastoral charity, that is, in perfect love of God and men precisely as exercised through the pastoral care of God's people. It is, in fact, this "Apostolic and pastoral charity which defines the episcopal state of perfection⁴¹ proper to the bishop." Does this mean that the Mass and

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 63, note 1.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 56.

the Sacraments, then, become no more than the means through which this pastoral charity is exercised? Have they no more intrinsic relation to the priesthood than that? Indeed they have, and they are far more than an extrinsic, but perhaps dispensable, expression of this pastoral charity. Masure would say that the Eucharist is, in fact, the efficacious sign in which this pastoral charity is at once represented, contained and realized.

"The Eucharist contains charity and creates unity, because it is the body of Christ Himself, who reconciled God with Man, and men among themselves... When the bishop celebrates the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, therefore, he does not interrupt this apostolic activity that requires him to spread the kingdom of God, everywhere, to disseminate the knowledge of the Father and of the Son, in which eternal life consists. But he concentrates this unity and charity which are in his care in an eminently efficacious as well as symbolic rite. Without ever ceasing to be a bishop, he is never more a bishop, at least on the level of efficacious sacramental signs, than when he mounts the altar steps to begin once again the eternal mystery of charity, and to renew, thanks to the unique sacrifice, the

unity of the mystical body, in the image of and through the virtue of the unity of the Eucharistic body. The bishop must be holy and filled with charity everywhere and always.. But he demonstrates ritually that he is holy, and he performs the sacramental act that makes him holy when he celebrates the mystery of the death of the Lord, the death that saved and sanctified us, - when he offers up the sacrifice that reconciles us to God and unites us to our brothers. In this sense the Eucharist, regardless of how many definitions can be given of it, is the efficacious and exacting sign of the holiness of the bishop, who must be holy because he is heir to the redemptive charity of Christ."⁴²

This conception of the Eucharist in relation to the total priesthood of the bishop is at once profound and fundamental to the theology and sanctity of the priesthood. For what is here said of the bishop holds also to a lesser and participated extent of the simple priest. If the simple priest has been ordained to a share in the essential grace and office of the episcopacy, then the essence of his priesthood, too, will be a participation in the pastoral

⁴²Ibid., p. 56-57.

charity of Christ. And if the efficacious sign of this participation for the bishop is the Eucharist, it will also be so for the simple priest, who has been ordained to share in the sacramental power and grace of the episcopacy.

"It no longer makes any sense to ask...whether a man is a priest by reason of the power to celebrate or by participation in the mediatory functions and graces of Christ. For a man is a priest by reason of both, in two different senses, on two parallel levels, the level of sign and that of its content. Consequently, a man who has received the power to celebrate the Eucharist can and even must ipso facto regularly exercise all the apostolic functions of Christ. Conversely, no one can legitimately take Christ's place in His ministry of mediation unless he has received the power to consecrate the Eucharistic body... We might even dare to say that each day the priest... exercises the priesthood of Christ in two ways. He exercises the priesthood once ritually, and indeed really, when he celebrates Mass. He exercises it another way the rest of the day, as he accomplishes the works of his ministry of priestly charity...These two modes cannot be added together, nor do they replace one another. The celebration of the

Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the sacramental sign of the apostolic ministry, the latter being normally and necessarily the principle as well as the consequence of the former."⁴³

This theology of the priesthood has brought us to see that the essential principle of sanctity for the priest, as for the bishop in whose priesthood he shares, is the exercise of pastoral charity.

The first and most important consequence of this may be stated in the form of a principle: the priest is to sanctify himself in and through his priestly and apostolic duties of state. This, however, is a principle which calls for immediate clarification, since it is open to so much misunderstanding. It is the whole question of a "spirituality of action" which has caused so much discussion. Possibly in rather violent reaction to the suggestion that the perfection of the priest will consist simply in his adopting the regime of religious life as his own, some authors have rejected all the traditional means of sanctification and insisted that the priest's sanctity lies only in the

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

specific occupations of his ministry: sacraments, breviary, preaching, direction of souls. The priest, they explain, should find his sanctification solely in the duties of his state, i.e. "in" and through the apostolate; sanctity is not to be found except in the punctual accomplishment of his duties of state.⁴⁴

But such a position is guilty of grace oversimplification in supposing that a life of apostolic activity is self-sanctifying because priestly action is of itself a principle of perfection. One cannot find support in tradition of Christian spirituality for an exaggeration of this sort, and the Church has justly condemned similar views for their inadequacy. Nevertheless, it would be an equally serious mistake to conclude from this that action has not an essential part in the sanctity of the priest. It is indeed an essential component of that sanctity, and there is a very valid sense in which we can speak of a spirituality of action. To structure it quite simply: action is of value only insofar as it expresses that theological charity which is the essence of priestly sanctification and all other perfection. Such action is absolutely

⁴⁴Holleran, W. J., Diocesan Spirituality: Toward A Theology. Toledo, Ohio. West and Midwest Diocesan Directors of Vocations, 1961.

necessary to the exercise of pastoral charity, the offering of sacrifice and the administration of sacraments, which are the essence and embodiment of his priesthood. But what is finally needed to insure that this necessary action is really an expression of theological charity, and therefore a true principle of his spiritual perfection, is that the priest have some set of means at his disposal for the constant purification of his intention. For whether action is an expression of charity or not is determined ultimately by its intention. Now there are a multitude of means open to the priest for the purpose of purifying his intention; in fact, all the traditional means of spirituality proposed by the Church down the centuries can fill this role: principal among them are personal prayer, mortification, the spirit of the evangelical counsels.

However, whatever means are used, all must develop in the priest an inner consciousness of that redemptive love which Christ continues to carry on in his Church. Namely, that work of redemptive love which is a priestly one of mediating his own divine life to men. At the very heart of this work is the act of sacrifice; and the heart of the act of sacrifice is the redemptive intent of Christ. To enable his Church to participate in this redemptive sacrificial

intent, Christ has communicated to his followers that share in his own priestly power that we call the sacramental character. Situated by rather common agreement in the area of operative power, the sacramental character is a germinal assimilation to Christ in his redeeming sacrificial attitude that is meant to come to actuation in the Christian's conscious participation in sacramental life. It is obvious how prominent finality is in the notion of the character: as an operative power it is orientation to action, and the very action in question is the entry into communion with Christ's salvific intent. Since it is the character that incorporates us into the Mystical Body, it is clear that Christ's causing of this character in his members gives to his Church an essentially apostolic orientation. The causal finalization of the character is directed towards man's two final goals: towards his internal final goal of unending possession of supernatural life in glory, towards his external final goal, the Father, through an act of sacrificial worship in this life and through beatific vision in the next. By virtue of this character, the members of the Church are able to speak the effective words of Christ, to impart his transforming influence to the world in which they are situated, to

mediate the finality of the created universe in an act of worship of the Father. Or, to put it another way, by virtue of the character members of the Church are rendered apt instruments in and through whom Christ can continue those salvific actions he began two thousand years ago, and the precise acts of the Church in which Christ's continuing activity finds highest expression are the sacraments. In this process the human intent of the Church is the instrument of the human intent of Christ which is in turn the instrument of the divine creative intent; the sacramental words that the Church uses to express this intent are the words that Christ is speaking through his Church, and are also the words that the Father is speaking to men in his Son. It is above all in the Eucharistic sacrifice that the Christian community encounters the Word that the Father is speaking to it and through it; but it is also in the Mass that the Christian community speaks the Word back to the Father in worship.

As the priest intensifies his consciousness of mediating Christ's redemptive love in and through Eucharis-

⁴⁵ Cooke, B. J., "The Sacraments as the Continuing Acts of Christ.", Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America, pp. 58-66.

tic action, this becomes the most effective factor in his own personal sanctification. His spirituality is then based on the exercise of perfect charity, not simply on its acquisition.

In summary, the priesthood of the Apostles, and therefore of the bishops who succeed them, is a participation in the total unique Priesthood of Christ. Christ's priesthood followed from His Incarnation, finding its perfect expression in His pastoral charity for His flock and its efficacious sign in His redemptive sacrifice. The essence of the priesthood of the bishop is a participation of the pastoral charity of Christ and its efficacious sign is the Eucharistic sacrifice. The same can be said of the priesthood of the simple priest to a lesser and participated extent, since his share in the Priesthood of Christ is communicated to him precisely as a participation of the priesthood of the bishop. But this pastoral charity of its very nature demands action, and conversely, the apostolic action of the priest must be in every instance an expression of pastoral charity. The link between charity and action is intention. And therefore the crucial key to the sanctification of the priest in practice is purity of intention and the means to achieve it.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Ignatius was fully aware that as a Christian, as a priest, and above all as a bishop, he was filled with the glory of the Risen Christ. His vocation to Martyrdom was the pledge of the imminent revelation of that glory in Him, consummated in perfect and even visible union. Martyrdom is the climax of priestly sanctification, and at that moment the sacred passion and resurrection of the Lord were made visible and manifest in His priest, His witness, who entered through the Pascha Christi, into perfect and undying union with the Risen Lord.

Priestly sanctification flowing out of victimhood because Christ is both priest and victim! To be essentially what Christ is means essentially that the priest's personal sanctity develops out his acceptance of that life and that destiny which God the Father has given to him. To accept all aspects of his personal living as the Father doing what He wills to that life, is a most profound priestly action which the priest exercises in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Thus daily Mass is indeed a "difficult action." The likeness of Christ as priest is stamped indelibly on a person when the bishop imposes his hands in ordination;

that likeness came easily, as a necessary effect of the valid sacrament. And it is a likeness nothing can efface. A priest forever; forever Christ's act of offering when the words of consecration are pronounced in the Mass. But his victimhood does not come so easily, nor does it remain so indefectible. "It means entering on a new life," says the Holy Father in *Menti Nostrae*, his charge to priests, a life which will become radiant with the glories of Thabor only when it has first been sealed with the sufferings of our Redeemer on Calvary; and this calls for hard and unremitting toil."

The host on the corporal, the blood in the chalice, hold a new message. The host speaks a bloodless body, a sacred body drained of every drop of blood in complete acceptance of the Father's will; the chalice of blood speaks to me of the man of Sorrows who became obedient to the death of the cross. The contrast between the priest and the divine model immediately springs to mind. The disproportion, the lack of balance, becomes apparent. The priestly power, the power of offering the divine victim, so unailing and so perfect - as perfect as God can make it; and victimhood, so imperfect, perhaps non-existent. The priest is perfectly likened to Christ as priest, because

that does not depend on the person of the priest at all - and so imperfectly likened to him as victim, because that does depend on the priest and on his co-operation with the grace of Christ. "My meat is to do the will of the Father; The zeal of God's house has eaten me up; my life has no other purpose or meaning but to do God's will - not my will, but thine be done."

This is the significance of the Eucharistic action so far as the personal life of the priest is concerned. The Mass is a reminder of the real aim of priestly life: he has to ensure with the help of God's grace, that his life of complete self-dedication shall liken him as perfectly to Christ the victim as the sacramental character of holy orders has likened him to Christ the priest.

This attitudes gives real meaning to what is called offering the Mass with dedication that continually fuses sanctity and sacrifice into a constant contact with Christ "our inseparable life." Seen in this light, priestly sanctity is not any merely affective joy we may feel in celebrating the sacred mysteries; not that sense of exhilaration which may, or may not, experience in performing so sublime a function. Priestly holiness becomes literally self-giving, utter and complete self-dedication;

which means to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice in the firm purpose and consciousness that, by God's grace life will be as wholly devoted, as unreservedly dedicated, to the work unifying the community of the faithful as was the life of that divine victim now present on the altar and offered to the Father. Such action means to equilibrate the status of victim with the character of priest.

"I am the wheat of God: may I be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, so that I may become pure bread of Christ." (Rom. 4,1). This is the priest witnessing to the Risen Christ, but also witnessing to Christ living in the Mystery of His Church. A man of the Church, a man of sacrifice, who clearly realizes that the Eucharist is living and radiant center of the Mystery of the Church, for there Christ gathers the community of love about the priest to unite them with His sacrifice and share with them the fruit of His glorious victory.

For in holy orders the character brings with it a sacramental grace; the sacramental grace of the priesthood that is a supernatural stimulus to become more perfectly victims of the sacrifice which the character empowers us to offer.

In the world community there is a hardness, a lack of unity which only the burning and heroic Charity of Christ's servants will melt. This heroism is demanded of priests whose whole hearted acceptance of sacrificial sanctification will render the people of God holy as he leads them into the realm of the sacred. There the community of God freely accepts the redemption at the hands of the Father in the action of utterly giving itself to the Father through the reality of the body and spirit of the Incarnate Word, through the reality of the passion and resurrection of Christ, through the reality of our sacramental Communion in His body and blood in those sublime liturgical mysteries where the members of Christ are "consummated in unity".

Therefore, priestly sanctity is a source of grace in proportion as the priest accepts his sublime call to victimhood and gives witness to the community of the faithful.. Whereby the community will grow in grace in proportion as it responds to its call to victimhood in the action of determining the measurement of the effects flowing into its sanctification through the Pascha Christi. Ignatius, without doubt, is a witness to the interaction between personal victimhood and its effect within the community of Christ. A community "Consummated in Unity."

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