

**CHAPTER TWO:
CLERICAL AND CONSECRATED LIFE AS FORMS OF EVANGELICAL LIFE**

Table of Contents

A: Jesus' Lifestyle, His Commendation of It, and Its Superiority 1

- 1) Jesus has a personal vocation, which he fulfills perfectly. 1
- 2) Jesus' commitment to his mission accounts for his lifestyle. 5
- 3) Jesus made many aspects of his lifestyle normative for the Twelve. 11
- 4) Jesus' teaching and example affected the lifestyle of the Church's early leaders. 20

B: The Essence and Excellence of Consecrated Life 26

- 1) Consecrated life is evangelical life that includes forgoing marriage. 26
- 2) Among forms of evangelical life, consecrated life has a certain superiority. 30
- 3) Some good characteristics of consecrated life are not peculiar to it. 37
- 4) Features of only some forms of consecrated life are mistakenly attributed to consecrated life as such. 45
- 5) Distinctive features of religious life benefit the Church and those called to it. 49
- 6) Some arguments for the superiority of consecrated life are unsound. 54

C: How Ordained Ministry and a Lifestyle Like Jesus' Are Related 68

- 1) Jesus continues his saving work through those he sends. 68
- 2) Clerics act in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*). 69
- 3) Acting in the person of Christ is not just serving as his agent. 74
- 4) In a special way, those ordained priests act *in persona Christi*. 76
- 5) Ordained priests sacramentally represent Jesus, the head and shepherd. 85
- 6) Representing Jesus, ordained priests also act in the person of the Church. 89
- 7) Episcopal and presbyteral office is multidimensional. 93
- 8) Ordained priesthood is subordinate to the common priesthood of the faithful. 96
- 9) It would be fitting to ordain only men with charisms for a lifestyle like Jesus'. 102
- 10) A cleric's vocation to holiness takes one of three forms. 107

Chapter II: Clerical and Consecrated Life as Forms of Evangelical Life

All specific responsibilities of clerics and those who undertake some form of consecrated life recognized by the Church flow from their voluntary commitments to provide certain sorts of service to the Lord Jesus and to people he is trying to save. This chapter will clarify the nature of clerical and consecrated life by examining those commitments. Subsequent chapters will treat their specific responsibilities.

Jesus calls all his disciples to holiness. Those who respond strive to shape their entire lives by his teaching and example, thus undertaking what may be called an “evangelical life.” Jesus practiced what he taught, and **A** concerns his unique evangelical life, many of whose features he commended to the Apostles and a few others who collaborated very closely in his own salvific service. In trying to embody those features in an evangelical life, many holy Christians have developed diverse forms of consecrated life. In **B**, I clarify what is common to the forms of consecrated life approved by the Church, what distinguishes all of them from other sorts of evangelical life, and what distinguishes them from one another. In **C**, I explain how deacons, presbyters, and bishops collaborate in Jesus’ ongoing service and argue that it would be fitting for the Church to ordain only men who have the charisms for a consecrated life dedicated to ordained ministry.

A: Jesus’ Lifestyle, His Commendation of It, and Its Superiority

1) Jesus has a personal vocation, which he fulfills perfectly.

In dealing with Jesus’ lifestyle, I shall treat any statement the evangelists seem to attribute to him as an accurate report of what he said, and ignore historical questions raised by Scripture scholars. Some of those questions presuppose the view, which I consider contrary to Catholic faith, that the authors of the Gospels assert some false propositions. Even if one assumes the inerrancy of Scripture, however, there still are legitimate historical questions that I cannot treat. But that need not undermine the theological views for which I argue. As John Paul II says: “The Gospels do not claim to be a complete biography of Jesus in accordance with the canons of modern historical science. From them, nevertheless, *the face of the Nazarene emerges with a solid historical foundation.*”¹ It therefore seems to me that, even if Jesus did not utter all the words the evangelists seem to attribute to him, anyone who accepts the inerrancy of Scripture ought to suppose that the Gospels do provide an adequate basis for what follows.

The Father certainly prepared in advance a life of good deeds for Jesus, and Jesus always did his Father’s will. But none of the evangelists uses the word *vocation* or

1. John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 18, AAS 93 (2001) 277, OR, 10 Jan. 2001, IV.

calling in referring to the Father's directing of Jesus' life. Instead, they speak of *sending*, for example: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work."² Similarly, in all the Gospels, Jesus speaks, not of what he was *called* to do, but of what he has *come* to do, for example: "I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If any one hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world."³ The language of sending and coming connotes the oneness of the Father and the Son in redeeming humankind, and sometimes is used in making Jesus' divine sonship explicit: "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me" (Jn 8.42).

Being truly human, Jesus "willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation" (CCC, 475; cf. DS 556-59). Jesus' human willing presupposed his human understanding of the Father's plan—the human experience of being called and sent. Thus, John Paul II, in a letter to priests, teaches that Jesus "too was *called to the priesthood*. It is the Father who 'calls' his own Son . . . The Son's vocation to the priesthood expresses the depth of *the Trinitarian mystery*."⁴ Again, in treating "The Church and the Gift of Vocation," the Pope says that "she guards within herself the mystery of the Son, who is called by the Father and sent to proclaim the kingdom of God to all."⁵ And under the heading, "The Vocational Dialogue: Divine Initiative and Human Response," John Paul teaches that Jesus' self-oblation to the Father is both the exemplar and the principle of Christians' response to their vocations:

The free oblation, which constitutes the intimate and most precious core of a person's response to God who calls, finds its incomparable model, indeed its living root, in the most free oblation which Jesus Christ, the first of those called, made to the Father's will: "Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me . . . Then I said, Lo, I have come to do your will, O God'" (Heb 10.5, 7).⁶

Thus, the Lord Jesus is preeminent, among other things (see Col 1.15-18), in responding to his human vocation. The Letter to the Hebrews uses Psalm 40.6-8 to express Jesus' basic commitment in undertaking that entire vocation. He implemented that commitment by further choices throughout his life, all of them informed by his fundamental, overarching commitment to do the Father's will in all things.

2. Jn 4.34; also see Mt 10.40, 15.24, 23.37; Mk 9.37; Lk 4.18, 43; 9.48; 10.16; Jn 3.17, 34; 5.23-24, 30, 36, 38; 6.29, 38-39, 44, 57; 7.16, 18, 28-29, 33; 8.16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9.4; 10.36; 12.44-45, 49; 13.20; 14.24; 15.21; 16.5; 17.3, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20.21.

3. Jn 12.46-47; also see Mt 5.17, 9.13, 10.34-35, 20.28; Mk 2.17, 10.45; Lk 5.32, 12.49, 19.10; Jn 5.43, 6.38, 6.51, 7.28-29, 9.39, 10.10, 18.37.

4. John Paul II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 1996, 1, AAS 88 (1996) 539-40, *OR*, 27 March 1996, 3.

5. *Pastores dabo vobis*, 35, AAS 84 (1992) 714-15, *OR*, 8 Apr. 1992, IX.

6. *Ibid.*, 36, AAS 718, *OR*, X.

What was the Father's plan for Jesus' life? What was his vocation? That question can be answered in different ways: to announce the reign of God in this world, to initiate that reign, to provide the way for fallen human beings to enter it and enjoy all its benefits. Or, again: to save fallen human beings from the power of Satan, and from sin and death both by establishing a new, permanent, divine-human, covenantal fellowship and by providing people with adequate incentives to repent, believe, and faithfully participate in that fellowship.

At the beginning of his public life, Jesus insists on being baptized by John, because "it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3.15). He began carrying out his vocation of salvific service to fallen humankind by placing himself in solidarity with penitent sinners: "The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (Jn 1.29; cf. Is 53.12)" (CCC, 536). The heavens open, the Spirit anoints Jesus for his unique, prophetic-priestly-messianic mission, and the Father's voice confirms him in it (see Mt 3.16-17, Mk 1.10-11, Lk 3.22).

The Spirit at once leads Jesus into the desert to fast and pray, and at the end of that time Satan tempts him. "Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him" (CCC, 540).

The struggle is precisely about the nature of Jesus' vocation and ministry. The pull of hunger, the lure of cheap and quick 'success', the desire to change the vocation to be the light of the world into the vocation to bring all nations under his powerful rule by other means—all of these would easily combine into the temptation to doubt the nature of the vocation of which he had been sure at the time of John's baptism. *If you are the Son of God . . . There are many different styles of career, ministry, and agenda that Jesus might have adopted.*⁷

But Jesus, citing Scripture, unhesitatingly rejects the threefold temptation (see Mt 4.1-11, Lk 4.1-12), for he intends to carry out the Father's plan, however it unfolds.⁸

Early in his ministry, Jesus preaches in the synagogue at Nazareth on the sabbath. He reads a passage from Isaiah (61.1-2) and declares that it has been fulfilled by his very reading of it (see Lk 4.21):

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,

7. N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 2, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 458.

8. Luke adds: "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time" (Lk 4.13). Luke may have in mind some or all of three later incentives to deviate from God's plan that Jesus resisted: people wanted him to become their kind of Messiah; he experienced agony in the garden; and he was challenged to prove his claims by coming down from the cross (Mt 27.39-44, Mk 15.29-32, Lk 23.35-37).

to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Lk 4.18-19)

This passage articulates the prophetic element of Jesus' mission: preaching and proclaiming the arrival of God's reign by indicating its benefits for various disadvantaged groups. Significantly, Jesus does not read the remainder of Isaiah 61.2: "and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."

Over and over, Jesus speaks of the prophetic element of his mission. When the people in one town want him to stay, he declares: "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose" (Lk 4.43). And when, near the end, Pilate asks him if he is a king, he does not deny it, but reaffirms his prophetic mission: "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18.37). While making it clear in preaching the good news that he does not judge and condemn anyone, Jesus also warns that those who do not receive what is being offered condemn themselves: "He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day." (Jn 12.48). Since the gospel requires a decision by those who hear it, he even says: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Mt 10.34).

But he is more than a prophet, and he also speaks about the priestly element of his mission: "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9.13; cf. Mk 2.17, Lk 5.31-32); "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19.10); and "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20.28; cf. Mk 10.45, 1 Tm 2.5-6, 1 Pt 1.18-19).

Being the Messiah, Jesus also speaks about his kingship: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mt 5.17). Jesus is God's good shepherd; displacing those who "steal and kill and destroy," he "came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10.10; cf. Ez 34.1-16). His kingdom, however, is not of this world (see Jn 18.36); he will raise God's people up in the kingdom on the last day:

All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (Jn 6.37-40)

Jesus also suggests that he has been called to exercise kingship in the new people of God by relating to them as bridegroom to bride: "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?"⁹ At Cana, when Mary says, "They have no wine" (Jn 2.3),

9. Mt 9.15; cf. Mk 2.19, Lk 5.34-35; also see Jn 3.29, where the same suggestion is conveyed in a different way: speaking of his relationship to Jesus, John the Baptist identifies himself as "the friend of the bridegroom."

Jesus' cryptic reply, "What to me and to you, woman? My hour is not yet come" (Jn 2.4, Greek), can be understood: *This is not yet my wedding feast; I do not have the bridegroom's duties*. Yet he performs a miracle that sets him on course to his own "hour"—his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension (see Jn 12.23, 27; 13.1; 17.1)—by which, as Paul teaches, Jesus prepares the Church to be his bride: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5.25-27).

Jesus' entire life simultaneously fulfills his prophetic, priestly, and messianic vocation. It was a vocation that also included frustration. Although his primary mission was to gather "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15.24), he encountered a great deal of resistance from his nation's leaders (see **1-C-3**, above). "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (Jn 1.11). Near the end, he grieved: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Mt 23.37, Lk 13.34). Like us in everything but sin (see 2 Cor 5.21), Jesus "in every respect" was "tempted as we are" (Heb 4.15), and this included experiencing frustration of his effort to bring all of Jerusalem's children into his new covenantal gathering—his Church.

2) Jesus' commitment to his mission accounts for his lifestyle.

Consecrated by the Father when he was sent into the world, Jesus consecrated himself so that his followers might also be consecrated (see Jn 10.36, 17.19). Being sinless, he perfectly fulfilled his human vocation, and so integrated every aspect of his humanity with his divine holiness. As man, Jesus loved the Father with his whole mind, heart, soul, and strength, and his human brothers and sisters as himself. Obeying the Father, he gave himself completely in service to others and thereby became, as man, all he was called to be. In teaching what he did and living as he did, Jesus as man cooperated with the Holy Spirit in creating a new kind of human life—evangelical life—as well as creating his own, unique evangelical life.

Jesus' vocation included more than the prophetic-priestly-messianic service he was sent to provide and undertook at the beginning of his public life. Insofar as he had any choice about what he did to increase in wisdom and in favor with God and his fellow human beings during his hidden life in Nazareth (see Lk 2.51-52), that long formation for service was part of his vocation. If the New Testament told us how he lived in those years, we would see what each element of his formation contributed to his subsequent service. For example, if we were told that, during his twenties, Jesus chose to spend some time each year living and working with a different set of his parents' relatives—one year during the grape harvest with a poor family that tended a vineyard, another year with a prosperous merchant-family during their busy season, and so on—we would readily understand that he was deliberately gathering diverse experiences so as better to understand diverse people and learn how to communicate effectively with them.

Similarly, insofar as elements of Jesus' lifestyle were either chosen by him or incidental to other choices he made, that lifestyle was included in his vocation. Salvific service was central to it, and his lifestyle was either part of or subordinate to his salvific service. Moreover, in making his human choices, Jesus must have had human reasons, and he always chose reasonably. So, his aim of serving others gave him good and understandable reasons for choosing or accepting every aspect of his lifestyle. Therefore, we should expect to understand Jesus' lifestyle by considering what each of its elements contributed to his salvific service.

As Paul VI points out, Jesus was totally focused on the kingdom: "Christ, as the herald of the gospel, announces first of all the kingdom, that is the kingdom of God, and to this he attributes such essential importance that all else becomes 'those other things which shall be yours without the asking' (see Mt 6.33). The kingdom of God is to be considered, therefore, as the absolute good so that everything else is subordinate to it."¹⁰ When Jesus visits friends, their learning about the kingdom is the one thing necessary, and preparing dinner is very secondary.¹¹ So is the politics of the present age, as John Paul II explains:

Jesus never wanted to be involved in a political movement and fled from every attempt to draw him into earthly questions and affairs (see Jn 6.15). The kingdom he came to establish does not belong to this world (see Jn 18.36). For this reason he said to those who wanted him to take a stand regarding the civil power: "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (Mt 22.21).¹²

The kingdom that matters is the reign of God that will be fully realized only in the age to come.

Jesus seems to have taken little or no time off from his work. All the evangelists describe him using meals and every other encounter with anyone to carry on his mission. Jesus' focus was so complete and his pace so frantic that people close to him worried about his sanity (see Mk 3.21). When crowds hounded him and the apostles so that they lacked time even to eat, Jesus did try to take the apostles, just returned from their successful mission, away for a rest (see Mk 6.30-32). But "when the crowds learned it, they followed him; and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing" (Lk 9.11; cf. Mk 6.34). As usual, Jesus was available to the people. He had come to serve rather than be served; being always ready to serve others, he strove to meet their genuine, urgent, and important needs (see Mt 9.35-36, 14.13-21).

Having no agenda of his own and always doing the Father's will, Jesus as man perfectly obeyed God. His obedience included fulfilling what God's word had predicted about him¹³ and reasonable conformity to the precepts of the Mosaic law.¹⁴ Being fully

10. Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 8, AAS 68 (1976) 10, Flannery, 2:714.

11. See Lk 10.38-42; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *The Gospel According to Luke*, Anchor Bible, 28 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 892-94.

12. John Paul II, General Audience (28 July 1993), 2, *Inseg.*, ???, OR, 4/11 August 1993, 7.

13. See Mt 4.14; 5.17; 8.17; 12.17; 13.35; 26.54, 56; Mk 14.49; Lk 4.21; 22.16, 37; 24.44; Jn 19.28.

committed to real goods rather than enmeshed in legalistic minimalism and self-centered concerns about appearances, he was meek and humble (see Mt 11.29) rather than rebellious and arrogant. He respected and obeyed legitimate human authorities. After unintentionally distressing his parents when he was twelve, something children that age often do, Jesus went home “and was obedient to them” (Lk 2.51)—that is, continuously obedient¹⁵—as adolescents and emotionally immature adults seldom are. Though insisting on God’s overriding claim on human beings, Jesus acknowledged the obligation to pay the Roman tribute.¹⁶ Similarly, while asserting the dependence of Pilate’s authority on God and implying that the governor was sinfully mistreating him, Jesus did not reject that authority (see Jn 19.8-11).

Besides submitting to legitimate authority, Jesus exercised authority reasonably.

He never tried to carry out his saving work alone, but from the start enlisted others’ collaboration. In leading and forming the Twelve, he was decisive and firm without being domineering. He asked nothing of them that he was not ready to do himself, and he showed them how to do what he would later direct them to do. He answered their questions and explained points they did not understand. Like a good father forming his sons, he pointed out the apostles’ shortcomings and corrected their mistakes, while assuring them of his love. Near the end, Jesus explained the relationship he had been developing with the Twelve. Though they rightly regarded him as their teacher and Lord (see Jn 13.13), he wanted them to be his close collaborators, who would not need to follow orders without knowing why: “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn 15.15). To the Twelve, Jesus communicated everything his Father had confided to him, so that they would fully understand their mission, commit themselves to it, and so share responsibility for it.¹⁷

Jesus did not treat those outside his circle condescendingly or as subordinates. He did not try to coerce them but sought to elicit their trust, faith, and love by understandably and cogently presenting his message, and by his works providing evidence of his good will and the truth of his message (see DH 11). He showed great understanding and gentleness to the humble and sincere—for example, the woman with a flow of blood (see Mk 5.25-34), the men who brought the paralytic (see Mt 9.2-

14. See Mt 5.17; divine law itself never was at stake in Jesus’ controversies with the scribes and Pharisees over sabbath observance and other matters; the issues concerned human traditions and legalistic applications of precepts: see Mt 12.1-13, 15.1-11; Mk 2.23-3.5, 7.1-15; Lk 6.1-10, 13.10-17, 14.1-6; Jn 5.5-17, 7.21-24, 9.1-34.

15. See Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, 445.

16. See Mt 22.15-22, Mk 12.13-17, Lk 20.21-26. Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, 1289-98, summarizes various interpretations of the Lucan version but briefly offers his own interpretation (1293): “The kingdom which Jesus preaches does not call in question Caesar’s rightful kingship; but that is not the all-important aspect of human life. A human being belongs to God, whose image he/she bears; God has not only a right of possession over human beings, but also a claim to a basic recognition of his lordship.” That seems to me sound except that God’s rights with respect to human beings as creatures and as his children in Christ are of a unique sort, in neither case a right of possession.

17. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Lectura super evangelium S. Ioannis*, xv, lect. iii.

8, Mk 2.3-12, Lk 5.18-26), the centurion with the sick slave (see Mt 8.5-13, Lk 7.1-10), the Samaritan woman at the well (see Jn 4.5-29). He straightforwardly challenged those who were unreasonably resistant—for example, his hometown people (Mt 13.53-58, Mk 6.1-6, Lk 4.16-30) and Nicodemus, the half-believing pharisee (see Jn 3.1-11). He severely reproved those who exhibited insincerity and created obstacles for others' faith by proposing sophistic arguments or trying to entrap him—for example, the Pharisees and Scribes who insisted on human traditions but provided dodges to evade divine commandments (see Mt 15.1-12, Mk 7.1-13) and the hypocrites who objected to his curing of a crippled woman in a synagogue on the sabbath (see Lk 13.10-17).

It appears that Jesus neither owned anything nor had a regular income during his public life. When a scribe enthusiastically offered to follow him anywhere, he warned that even the animals were better off: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head” (Mt 8.20; cf. Lk 9.58). Jesus and the Twelve apparently depended on voluntary donations; they received financial support from a group of women who were grateful to him for freeing them of evil spirits or curing their infirmities.¹⁸

Jesus had no children, but against his disciples' effort to exclude children from his ministry, he welcomed them, blessed them, and taught that they were especially suited for membership in the kingdom (see Mt 19.13-15, Mk 10.13-16, Lk 18.15-17).

Jesus did not marry, but he obviously was at ease with women and enjoyed close friendships with some, such as Mary and Martha (see Jn 11.5). He is as interested in gathering women as men into the kingdom, and he always treats women with understanding and respect. At least some of the women who had accompanied Jesus and the Twelve, and perhaps other female disciples, were present at his crucifixion (see Mt 27.55-56, Mk 15.40-41, Lk 23.49). Mary Magdalene, who accompanied Jesus and the Twelve and stood close to the cross with his mother and her sister (see Jn 19.25), was the first to see the risen Lord (see Mk 16.9, Jn 20.11-18); later he appeared again to her and another woman (see Mt 28.1-8, Lk 24.1-11).

Unlike many unmarried men, Jesus did not remain tethered to his family of origin. When told, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, asking for you” (Mk 3.32), he made it clear that his primary allegiance was to those who were entering into the new community he was gathering: “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Mk 3.34-35; cf. Mt 12.46-50, Lk 8.19-21, Jn 7.5). Thus, he subordinated even the most central, natural, human relationships to the relationship formed by revelation and faith, a point he again made

18. These women also accompanied Jesus and the Twelve as they spread the good news and ministered to them (see Lk 8.1-3; cf. Mt 27.55-56, Mk 15.41). Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, 696, comments that “the episode of [Lk] 8:1-3 does indicate . . . a recollection about Jesus which differed radically from the usual understanding of women's role in contemporary Judaism. His cure of women, his association with them, his tolerating them among his followers (as here) clearly dissociates him from such ideas as that reflected in John 4:27 or early rabbinical writings [reference omitted]. The women are depicted by Luke as ministering to Jesus and the Twelve in roles surprising for their day: providing for them, and from their own means; at least one of them was a married woman (Joanna); how many among the ‘many others’ were so too?”

clear when a woman said to him: “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!” and he answered: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Lk 11.27-28).

Although Jesus’ lifestyle was unusual, it is easily explained by his commitment to his unique mission.

It has parallels. Confronted with a great emergency in which many people’s lives are at stake, for instance, dedicated and capable rescue workers and health care personnel put everything else aside and work long stretches without rest to save as many as possible. Again, convinced that their nation’s vital interests are gravely threatened, patriotic citizens leave everything behind and courageously risk their lives to defend their homeland.

Jesus is confronted with a world where people’s souls, immeasurably more important than their mortal lives, are at stake; he knows, too, that no one else can preserve Israel’s identity as God’s people. He is totally selfless and very able, and nothing is or could be so important and urgent for him as carrying out the Father’s plan. So, he is totally focused on the kingdom. Shunning involvement in earthly questions and affairs, which would not further the cause to which he has committed himself and would waste his time and energy, he spends all his time and puts all his strength into announcing and promoting the kingdom as effectively as he can. Taking vacations, owning property, earning a decent living, marrying and having children—in Jesus’ life there simply is no time and no room for those normal human concerns.

John the Baptist’s understanding of his own mission gave him a similar sense of urgency but shaped a lifestyle in some ways even more austere than Jesus’ (see Mt 3.4, 9.14, 11.7-19; Mk 1.6, 2.18; Lk 3.2-20, 5.33, 7.24-35; Jn 3.23-30). Their lifestyles differed because their missions did. Neither is called to carry out a merely human response to the crisis that they both recognized or to lead the people in carrying out such a response. But Jesus, unlike John, is sent not only to announce but to mediate God’s response to the crisis and to enable people to accept and cooperate with the divine plan.

Thus, Jesus speaks for God: “I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak” (Jn 12.49). He announces the arrival of God’s reign. But for him merely talking about the kingdom would not provide an adequate incentive for reasonable people to believe; by deeds, therefore, he verifies what he proclaims. By casting out demons, he shows that Satan’s reign is ending and God’s reign arriving (see Mt 12.22-29, Lk 11.14-22). By healing infirmities, raising the dead, and miraculously feeding thousands, he shows that he is speaking for God: “The testimony which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me” (Jn 5.36).

Exorcisms and miraculous works, however, are not the only deeds by which Jesus clarifies and confirms his words. His parables of the kingdom give powerful verbal expression to its present availability, transcendent importance, and its difference, insofar as it is still to come, from the present age. Some of Jesus’ actions also are parabolic—for example, his washing of the apostles’ feet (see Jn 13.3-15). So were some actions of Old

Testament prophets—for example, Isaiah’s walking naked and barefoot (see Is 20.2-4). Jeremiah’s lifestyle also was parabolic: as a symbol of impending disaster, he neither married and raised children nor mourned or celebrated with others.¹⁹ Similarly, Jesus’ lifestyle manifests in action the kingdom’s present availability. His complete absorption in his work indicates that no one should put off seeking the kingdom and points to its transcendent importance; his setting aside normal human concerns—leisure, work, property, family, and marriage—underlines their comparative insignificance.²⁰ It also manifests the difference between the present age and the coming kingdom: a realm free of scarcity and property, social insecurity and family clannishness, and the cycle of death and birth.

Jesus’ way of exercising authority and of treating people in general also is a prophetic sign of the kingdom. People find themselves subject to thisworldly kingdoms without making any choice, and rulers’ commands are backed up by force. Jesus not only talks about faith and love, but shows by his way of acting that God’s kingdom is a gift to be accepted by faith and a fellowship constituted by mutual love. He also manifests the kingdom’s inclusiveness by his treatment of little children, women, social outcasts, Samaritans, gentiles, and sinners.

His way of treating people also facilitates acceptance of his message. He wins people’s trust and draws them to himself by showing his genuine concern for them. He persuades those open to the gospel to repent and believe by offering to serve people, treating them as friends rather than as subordinates, teaching clearly, and providing adequate incentives to believe.

Other aspects of Jesus’ lifestyle also make him attractive to others. His detachment from everything but his mission on behalf of the kingdom makes him extraordinarily available. Having no property or public status, he is not separated by wealth and position from the poor and other outsiders, and they can experience his solidarity with them. At the same time, he receives invitations, hospitality, and financial support from people who are better off, then uses his contacts with them to evangelize them. Since he has no wife and family of his own, his little flock is his family, and he is free to lay down his life for it. He does this definitively on Golgotha but throughout his public life, as he gathers up his Church, undertakes to be its good shepherd, and prepares to be its bridegroom.

Jesus never disparages enjoying leisure, working for a living, owning property, marrying and raising children, or any other legitimate element of others’ vocations. But in committing himself to the demands of his vocation, he freely gives up all those human goods just as he freely accepts death. His unique service to others leads him to lay down his entire life, not just its end. That entire life thus is the sacrifice he offers the Father: “When Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not

19. See Jer 16.1-9; Lucien Legrand, M.E.P., *The Biblical Doctrine of Virginity* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 25-30; cf. 1 Cor 7.29-31.

20. In Jesus’ case, though, lifestyle is not merely a symbol corresponding to the message of his parables of the kingdom. Rather, his lifestyle, fully warranted by the realities he faced confronted and the mission that was his, was, as I already explained, part of his reasonable response to the crisis confronting him.

desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me . . . Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God” (Heb 10.5, 7). In sum, Jesus’ peculiar lifestyle not only is demanded by his very urgent and overridingly important mission in service to his fellow human beings in general and his fellow Israelites in particular, not only appropriately and powerfully prophetic, not only appropriate and effective for gathering up his little flock and preparing it to be his espoused Church—it also is an essential component of his total self-giving to the Father for our salvation. The years from Jesus’ infancy until he began the Last Supper may well have cost him more than the horrible price he paid from that moment until he said, less than twenty-four hours later: “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!” (Lk 23.46).

Jesus was no well-rounded man. Not seeing what he saw and misunderstanding what he comprehended, people close to him naturally were anxious about his sanity, since he seemed to have lost touch with the realities of daily life and become obsessed with the idea of the kingdom: He appeared to be afflicted with a sort of monomania. Note, though, that the ideal of the well-rounded human being, in any of its many variations, is radically unsound. People are not cogs in a vast machine or cells in a great social body, but neither are they complete in themselves. No one of the divine persons can be himself without the others, and there is a likeness “between the union of the divine persons and the union among themselves of God’s children, in truth and charity” (GS 24). “This likeness shows that a human individual—the only creature on earth that God willed for itself—cannot fully find himself or herself except through the sincere gift of himself or herself (see Lk 17.33)” (GS 24). Thus, no human individual can fulfill himself or herself independently. Jesus’ total self-giving was necessary for him fully to find himself, to become all that he was to be, according to the Father’s plan: “the Perfect Man, the perfection of the Messiah who is the standard of manhood.”²¹

Jesus’ human life, whose many particular choices and acts implemented his overarching commitment of lifelong obedience to the Father, was the greatest and best of all good human lives. Of themselves, other good human lives safeguard and promote some human goods in a limited group of people in this passing world, but Jesus’ human life, lived in perfect cooperation with the Holy Spirit in the carrying out of the Father’s plan, saves and restores in the eternal and universal kingdom all human goods promoted on earth in the human lives of all the blessed. His overarching commitment determined a lifestyle whose elements either implemented that commitment or were side effects, freely accepted, of making and carrying out its implementing choices. Jesus’ peculiar lifestyle, therefore, was the greatest and best of all good human lifestyles.

3) Jesus made many aspects of his lifestyle normative for the Twelve.

Jesus made his own way of relating to people and treating them normative for the Twelve and also, probably, for others who accompanied them.

During the Last Supper, according to John’s account, Jesus rose “and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet,

21. Eph 4.13 in Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, Anchor Bible 34 (Garden City, N.Y.; Doubleday, 1974), 425; see his comment, “VII Meeting the Perfect Man,” 484-96.

and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded” (Jn 13.4-5). Having performed a service a slave might have provided, he explains why:

Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (Jn 13.12-17)

Having prepared his disciples truly to cooperate with him, Jesus does not treat them as servants but friends (see Jn 15.15). Their mission, like his, will be to serve others by making God’s gifts available to them: saving repentance and faith, and the love that constitutes the fellowship of the new and everlasting covenant. This parabolic act of footwashing calls the Twelve’s attention to Jesus’ self-giving on their behalf, soon to culminate in his passion and death. Taking the part of a slave, he points out that slaves are not greater than masters, nor are those sent—that is, apostles, which they are to be—greater than the one who sends, Jesus himself. Finally, he makes it clear that the norm of selfless service he is giving them is not an imposition. If they understand their role and fulfill it, they will be blessed: in sincere self-giving they will truly find themselves.

According to Luke’s account of the Last Supper, Jesus gives the norm of selfless service *after* he has consecrated the Eucharist and commissioned the apostles to do the same in remembrance of him. First he says that the one who will betray him is among them, and they question which of them that might be. Then:

A dispute also arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves. (Lk 22.24-27)

Jesus links ambition for higher status and the exercise of the “lordship” that superiority confers and forbids both. Christian leaders are to serve as he has: “Those directed to repeat the rite of the Lord’s Supper are now exhorted not to lord it over the community, but to serve it.”²² Pagan authority figures make their power felt, but the fellowship of the new covenant is to be an entirely different sort of community, in which leadership must take an entirely different form: “Thus for the Christian disciple the roles are reversed; they *may not* conduct themselves as do pagan kings and lords.”²³ Rather, they must serve as Jesus did, thereby winning people’s faith and love and enabling them to receive and enjoy the gift of divine-human communion he makes available, especially in the Eucharist. Finally, Jesus goes on to promise the Twelve a share in his future kingship: “You may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve

22. Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, 1412.

23. *Ibid.*, 1415.

tribes of Israel” (Lk 22.30). It is another reminder that self-giving in the present age will lead to genuine self-fulfillment in the age to come.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus gives the Twelve the norm of selfless service shortly before they reach Jerusalem (see Mt 20.20-25, Mk 10.35-42). He has just predicted his passion for the third time when James and John (or their mother on their behalf) request the places closest to him in the kingdom. Jesus asks if they can share his cup; they say yes. He tells them they will, but the two places of honor are not his to assign. Overhearing, the other ten are angry; they obviously share the same ambition for high places. As in Luke, Jesus uses Gentile rulers to illustrate what would be an abuse of authority for the Twelve to do, then enjoins them: “But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10.43-45, cf. Mt 20.26-28).²⁴

Slaves must do as they are told, but Jesus does not mean the Twelve should do whatever they are told by those they serve. Like Jesus, they are to obey the Father and the legitimate directives of those to whom the Father gives authority. But like slaves responsible for children who have been entrusted to their care, leaders in Jesus’ Church are to serve as if they had no interests or rights of their own, even to the laying down of their lives. “Only this startling denial of self for the sake of others, and not power-politics, can effectively win mankind to the gospel. Church leaders who derive their tools and signs of power from this world betray the gospel of Jesus. This is the basic rule of Church order.”²⁵

Earlier in the Synoptics, there is another, closely related norm bearing on how to relate to others and treat them (see Mt 18.1-5, Mk 9.33-37, Lk 9.46-48). The details differ, but the three accounts plainly refer to the same incident. The starting point is the disciples’ concern about their status. Jesus brings into their circle and draws to himself a little child—small, weak, socially insignificant²⁶—and says they are to become lowly like the child (see Mt 18.3-4); they are to put themselves last and serve *everyone*, including the child (see Mk 9.35-36). They are to receive the child, and in doing so they will receive Jesus himself. Those with little or no status in the world are no less important to

24. In Matthew alone, Jesus also warns his disciples against allowing themselves to be set above those they are to serve, as the scribes and Pharisees are, by titles of honor; instead, he insists, they are to gain status precisely by humble service (see Mt 23.1-12). Having reviewed the preceding passages on service from the four evangelists only briefly, I recommend a rich exegetical study: Louis John Cameli, *Ministerial Consciousness: A Biblical-Spiritual Study*, Analecta Gregoriana, 198 (Rome: Università Gregoriana, 1975), 37-173.

25. John P. Meier, *Matthew* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1980), 228-29.

26. See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: 8-20* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 426-30, for a cogent argument that these are the features of the child most relevant to Jesus’ point. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1997), 391, explains: “Children, whose place of social residence was defined at the bottom of the ladder of esteem, might be called upon to perform acts of hospitality (e.g., washing the feet of a guest), but normally they would not themselves be the recipients of hospitable behavior.” To this he attaches fn. 133, which begins: “Children were the weakest, most vulnerable among the population. They had little implicit value as human beings.”

the kingdom. Since the Twelve will serve Jesus by serving others, they are to serve everyone with the respect and care he deserves.

In Matthew, Jesus immediately reinforces that norm with a dire warning: “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Mt 18.6; cf. Mk 9.42, Lk 17.1-2). Then he adds: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones” (Mt 18.10). He clarifies the point with the parable of the lost sheep—here, the sheep that has *gone astray* (see Mt 18.12-13). He then concludes: “So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Mt 18.14). Since salvific service is to be provided to believers on Jesus’ behalf, not serving any of them as they ought to be served is likely to lead them into sin (which may be the sin of failing to repent). The teaching implies that when it is a question of serving others, it is a very grave matter to discriminate against or neglect small children, poor people, recent immigrants, racial minorities, troublemakers, certain types of sinners, separated brethren, the fallen away, the uncooperative, the mentally ill, the retarded, the handicapped, the repulsive, the uneducated, the elderly, or any other group.

Since Jesus tells the Twelve that they must serve selflessly as he does, it is not surprising that he also directs, or at least encourages, them to accept other aspects of his lifestyle.

In remarks recorded only by Luke, Jesus reminds the crowd accompanying him that anyone will count the costs before undertaking a building project, in order to avoid the embarrassment of having to abandon it midway, and before going into battle any king will calculate the odds and, if they are too great, negotiate a settlement (see Lk 14.28-32). The conclusion: “So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14.33). The essential resource for successful discipleship is, paradoxically, renunciation of one’s possessions.

If that is necessary for disciples in general, what must be necessary for those called to collaborate most closely in Jesus’ mission? His first close collaborators—Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, and John—left their work, families, and homes when he called them; as Luke puts it, “they left everything and followed him” (Lk 5.11, cf. 5.1-10; Mt 4.18-22, Mk 1.16-20). Of course, given his constant traveling about, they had to leave everything, at least temporarily, if they were to follow him. But in sending the Twelve out to do their part in his mission of proclaiming the kingdom, healing, and exorcising, Jesus enjoins them to take no money, no bag of food, and no extra tunic (see Mt 10.7-10, Mk 6.7-9, Lk 9.1-3); according to Matthew, he also forbids them to take either sandals or staff (see Mt 10.10); while according to Luke, he forbids a staff (see Lk 9.3). Accept hospitality from only one host in each town, he tells them, and, if a town is unreceptive, leave and shake its dust from your feet (see Mt 10.11, 14; Mk 6.10-11, Lk 9.4-5). His instructions to the seventy as he sends them out are similar: no purse, no bag, no sandals; greet nobody along the road; remain in one house, eating and drinking what is offered; if a town is unreceptive, wipe off its dust (see Lk 10.1-11).

The instructions reflect the mission’s urgency and importance, as Jesus’ own lifestyle always did: travel light and waste no time. The intention plainly is to give a sign

of the kingdom's coming: material things are no longer important, God will provide what is needed. With no provisions on which to subsist and no staff to defend themselves against attackers, those Jesus sent out manifested "shocking poverty and defenselessness that is appropriate to the kingdom of God. It is a confirming sign for the proclamation and is best understood as analogous to prophetic symbolic actions."²⁷ To accept hospitality from only one host ruled out seeking better quarters and food, thus subordinating any benefits to be received from the host to the opportunity to offer him or her the benefits Jesus wanted made available.²⁸

Sincerely wanting Jesus' advice, a man asked what he had to do to share in eternal life. Obey the commandments, Jesus told him, and listed those that bear upon love of neighbor (see Mt 19.16-19, Mk 10.17-20, Lk 18.18-21). In Matthew, the man then asks what he still lacks, and Jesus begins his reply, "If you would be perfect . . ." (Mt 19.20-21). He begins in Mark and Luke by saying only that the man still lacks one thing (see Mk 10.21, Lk 18.22). What? He should sell what he has and give the proceeds to the poor—he will then "have treasure in heaven"—and follow Jesus. The man goes away sad, because he is very wealthy (see Mt 19.20-22, Mk 10.20-21, Lk 18.22-23).

This incident, usually with a focus on Matthew's "If you would be perfect . . .," was long used to argue for a counsel of self-improvement, beyond anything morally obligatory for anyone, that supposedly had to be accepted by those wishing to grow toward perfect holiness. True, Jesus did ask of the wealthy man something more than keeping the commandments that bear upon the neighbor. However, since not all the baptized are called to self-improvement but all are called to perfect holiness and effectively pursue it by undertaking their personal vocations, whatever they may be, Jesus' advice to the wealthy man must have been intended for him and others similarly situated. Jesus sees in this earnest man a potential close collaborator, whom he wishes to call just as he had called the Twelve.²⁹ But the man's attachment to his wealth was incompatible with undertaking that vocation and effectively sharing in Jesus' mission.

27. Luz, *op. cit.*, 78 (his footnotes omitted).

28. Green, *op. cit.*, 359-60, comments on seeking better accommodations: "Not only would this practice call into serious question one's narrow focus on faithfulness to one's commission, not only would this indicate concerns counter to a faith in the ability of the gracious Lord to provide, it would also constitute a serious breach of conventions governing the social role of the guest that would bring the mission unnecessarily into disrepute."

29. Leopold Sabourin, S.J., *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Bombay: St. Paul, 1982), 2:739, "Jesus' concluding words, 'and come, follow me,' have to be understood in the physical sense. To this rich young man is offered a particular vocation, that of collaborating directly with Christ in his ministry . . . , which implied, as for the apostles that he would actually abandon his present way of life and his possessions, to take the way of complete detachment, the way of the cross." Meier, *op. cit.*, 220: "Mt, with his OT background, understands *telios* [perfect] in terms of whole-hearted, complete dedication to God (cf. 5:48). . . . In the case of this particular man, God's good will is that he sell all, express his love for his neighbor by giving the proceeds to the poor (assuring him the heavenly treasure or life he seeks), and then literally follow Christ."

So, for him and those with wealth and a vocation like his, self-impoverishment was and is necessary to set out on the way toward perfect holiness.³⁰

When the wealthy man rejects his vocation, Jesus observes that it will be hard for the rich to enter the kingdom. Assuming that the wealthy should be able to do that if anyone can, the listeners ask: Who then can enter? Jesus replies that it is impossible for people—it would be easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye—but possible for God (see Mt 19.23-26, Mk 10.23-27, Lk 18.24-27). The point seems to be that, though wealth gives power in this world, sharing in the kingdom is a gift only God can give, and he can enable even the rich, who are ill-disposed by their wealth, to enter.

No doubt expressing the concern about this teaching’s implications for themselves felt by the Twelve and perhaps others traveling with Jesus, Peter points out that they had left behind everything (see Mt 19.27, Mk 10.28) or their homes (see Lk 18.28). According to Matthew, Jesus begins his reply by assuring the Twelve that they will share in his power and glory—they will “sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19.28). In all three Synoptics, Jesus makes a general statement about all his future disciples: *all* who have left homes and family members for the sake of Jesus’ name (see Mt 19.29) or for his sake and the gospel (see Mk 10.29) or for the sake of the kingdom of God (see Lk 18.29)³¹ will receive far more homes and family members, and also eternal life. Mark and Luke make it explicit that the homes and family members will be received *in the present age* and eternal life in the age to come. Mark includes persecutions among the things to be received in the present age (see Mt 19.29, Mk 10.29-30, Lk 18.29-30).

In this exchange, Jesus holds out the prospect of benefits that will more than compensate for the burdens associated with his lifestyle. This reassures the Twelve and others then accompanying him. But he also commends similar sacrifices to future disciples, who will consider spending their entire lives collaborating closely in his mission of service. For all who undertake such collaboration, authentic self-giving will lead to self-fulfillment. And unlike the wealth some refuse to give up, compensations received in the present age will not be an obstacle to receiving God’s gift of eternal life in the coming age.

Other passages especially emphasize detachment from family. Having pointed out that he and his message will divide families, Jesus teaches that his disciples must prefer him to their parents and children: “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt

30. See Luz, *op. cit.*, 509-23. Though Luz does not employ the notion of personal vocation, he provides a balanced reading of the passage—including the subsequent discussion of wealth in general and of the renunciation the Twelve had made—and the history of its interpretation; he also suggests a resolution somewhat similar to the one I have drawn from Vatican II.

31. Here in Lk alone (though arguably implicit in Mt and Mk), *wife* is listed among the family members given up: “wife or brothers or parents or children.” Legrand, *op. cit.*, 53-61, plausibly argues that Jesus was not recommending that those already married abandon their wives but that those not married forgo marriage. Legrand reads (57-58) Paul’s indication (see 1 Cor 9.5) that Peter and some other Church leaders were accompanied by “a woman/wife, a sister” to mean that those men’s wives, who had embraced the faith, accompanied and assisted them.

10.37).³² Detachment from family, which Jesus requires of all disciples, makes special demands on those called to help him proclaim the kingdom.

Jesus called someone to follow him.

But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."³³

Burying one's father and taking leave of one's family are duties so exigent that only something truly extraordinary could justify going off without fulfilling them.

Jesus wants to share his mission of proclaiming the kingdom only with those who share his vision of its urgency and his love for souls, a love ready to sacrifice everything else. Others need not apply.³⁴ Yet Jesus values companionship not only for himself but for his associates, whom he sends on mission two by two (see Mk 6.7, Lk 10.1).

Jesus commends forgoing marriage for the kingdom's sake. When some Pharisees challenged him about divorce, he answered that divorce and remarriage lead to adultery (see Mt 19.3-9; Mk 10.2-12). Matthew's narrative alone continues:

The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry." But he said to them, "Not all men can receive this precept [literally: word/saying], but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it." (Mt 19.10-12)

Eunuchs of the third type, commended by Jesus, traditionally have been understood as those who enjoy the charism of celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake and commit themselves to that element of Jesus' lifestyle. Although some exegetes and theologians now suppose that eunuchs for the kingdom are divorced people who live chastely rather than "marrying again," that interpretation is implausible. For making oneself a eunuch for the kingdom's sake can be recommended for voluntary acceptance by some as part of

32. In this case, Luke, who often prefers milder language, expresses the same thought more harshly: "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14.26).

33. Lk 9.59-62; cf. Mt 8.21-22. Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, 835-36, discusses various interpretations of "Leave the dead to bury their own dead" and concludes that the most likely is: Leave the spiritually dead (that is, those who do not follow Jesus) to bury the physically dead.

34. John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 60, AAS 84 (1992) 763, OR, 8 Apr. 1992, XVI, teaches that a major seminary should provide "those called by the Lord to serve as apostles the possibility of reliving the experience of formation which our Lord provided for the Twelve. In fact, the Gospels present a prolonged and intimate sharing of life with Jesus as a necessary premise for the apostolic ministry. Such an experience demands of the Twelve the practice of detachment in a particularly clear and specific fashion, a detachment that in some way is demanded of all the disciples, a detachment from their roots, from their usual work, from their nearest and dearest (cf. Mk 1.16-20; 10.28; Lk 9:23, 57-62; 14.25-27)."

their vocations, whereas living chastely is morally required of everyone and cannot be recommended for anyone's voluntary acceptance.³⁵

When Jesus described forgoing marriage for the kingdom's sake as making oneself a eunuch, he made two things clear. First, he does not mean merely being detached from marriage or merely leaving one's family behind temporarily. He means forgoing marriage permanently. Second, just as he does not regard the death he will freely accept, considered in itself, as something good but as the deprivation of the good of life, so he does not regard voluntary celibacy, considered in itself, as something good but as a serious deprivation of the good of marriage and fatherhood: "By pointing to a privation that inflicts suffering, the word 'eunuch' shows that Jesus does not recommend celibacy out of contempt for sexuality. He regards sexuality as a human value whose renunciation hurts."³⁶

Though Jesus commends this element of his own lifestyle, he does not say it is *required*, even of the Twelve.³⁷ By contrast, as we have seen, he very clearly and forcefully prescribes that the Twelve relate to and deal with others as he himself does: as a selfless servant with no ambition for status. By prescribing that they be servants without ambition, he implies that all of them can receive his precept and fulfill it by their self-giving. Not all, however, can receive the word that it is better to forgo marriage for the kingdom's sake; and Jesus commends this sort of self-giving only to those who can receive this word.

Sadducees believed neither in angels nor in the resurrection of the dead (see Acts 23.8). Some of them challenged Jesus with the case of a woman who had successively married seven brothers: Whose wife would she be in the resurrection (see Mt 22.24-28, Mk 12.19-23, Lk 20.28-33)? According to Matthew (22.29-30) and Mark (12.24-25), he replied that the questioners were ignorant of the scriptures and of God's power, for those who rise from the dead "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." Luke reports a fuller explanation: "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (20.34-36). According to all three versions, Jesus went on to argue that God raises the dead, because he identified himself to Moses as the God of the long-dead patriarchs—

35. *The Catholic Study Bible: The New American Bible*, ed. Donald Senior et al. (New York: Oxford, 1990), note to Mt 19.12: "Some scholars take the last class [those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom] to be those who have been divorced by their spouses and have refused to enter another marriage. But it is more likely that it is rather those who have chosen never to marry, since that suits better the optional nature of the decision: 'whoever can . . . ought to accept it.'" Also see Jean Galot, S.J., *Theology of the Priesthood* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984), 233-34, who offers a similar explanation (234-35).

36. Galot, *op. cit.*, 235.

37. Sabourin, *op. cit.*, 2:757: "Jesus apparently has in mind those among his disciples who like him have opted to stay unmarried or to live as if they were celibate. He does not propose celibacy as an abstract ideal or as a requirement of the kingdom."

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—yet is the God of the living, not of the dead (see Mt 22.31-32, Mk 12.26-27, Lk 20.37-38).

Jesus does not commend remaining unmarried in this exchange; on the contrary, he says that in the present age people marry. His point is that children of the resurrection will be free of the cycle of birth and death, and marriage and procreation will no longer be necessary for the continuation of the human race.³⁸ Reflecting on what is said, however, Pius XII uses it to argue for the superiority of virginity/celebrity for the kingdom's sake; he approvingly quotes St. Cyprian's words to virgins: "What we are to be, you have already commenced to be. You already possess in this world the glory of the resurrection; you pass through the world without suffering its contagion. In preserving virgin chastity, you are the equals of the angels of God."³⁹

In fact, though, nobody possesses the glory of the resurrection in this world, and spouses who engage in chaste marital intercourse do not thereby suffer the world's contagion. Developing received teaching, Vatican II avoids those errors. Alluding to Jesus' exchange with the Sadducees, the Council does teach that the religious state "makes more evident to the faithful the heavenly goods already present in this world, gives greater witness to the new and eternal life acquired by Christ's redemption, and more firmly foretells future resurrection and the heavenly kingdom's glory" (LG 44). Citing Lk 20.35-36, it says that by virginity or celibacy for the kingdom's sake priests "are made a living sign of that world to come, already present through faith and charity, in which children of the resurrection will neither marry nor be given in marriage."⁴⁰ But rather than asserting that those who remain unmarried for the kingdom's sake already possess the glory of the resurrection, Vatican II affirms celibate chastity "foretells" or is "a living sign" of the resurrection and life to come. John Paul II similarly teaches that celibate chastity "makes evident, even in the renunciation of marriage, the 'nuptial meaning' of the body through a communion and a personal gift to Jesus Christ and his Church which prefigures and anticipates the perfect and final communion and self-giving of the world to come."⁴¹

In sum, simply being unmarried has no human value. As has always been taught, celibate chastity's sign value and anticipation of the kingdom lie not just in forgoing marriage but in doing that *for the kingdom's sake*—to focus on the things of the Lord and collaborate closely with him. Giving oneself entirely to Jesus and his Church points to

38. See Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, 1305.

39. Pius XII, *Sacra virginitas*, AAS 46 (1954) 173, *PE*, 248:29; St. Cyprian, *De habitu virginum*, 22; *PL* 4:462.

40. PO 16; in note 41, which refers to Lk 20.35-36, the Council also refers to Pius XII, *Sacra virginitas*, AAS 46 (1954), 169-72; but, significantly, the cited passage stops just short of Pius XII's quotation from St. Cyprian. Still, in note 21 to a statement in OT 10 that celibates "bear witness to the resurrection in the age to come," the Council cites the passage in St. Cyprian quoted by Pius XII.

41. John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 29, AAS 84 (1992) 703, *OR*, 8 Apr. 1992, VII. In the Latin text, *prefigures* is qualified by *somehow*: "quae omnia praefigurant quodammodo et antevortunt." See also *Vita consecrata*, 32, AAS 88 (1996) 406, *OR*, 3 Apr. 1996, VI, where John Paul teaches that "the consecrated life proclaims and in a certain way anticipates the future age (*praenuntiat consecrata vita et quadamtenus praeripit futurum illud tempus*)."

and anticipates the inclusivity of heavenly fellowship gathered into him. That new and unending covenantal fellowship includes union in one flesh with Jesus and one another, a union that, anticipated sacramentally in the Eucharist, will be perfectly realized in the coming age. Sacramental marriage also signifies and somehow anticipates that perfect union of Christ and his Church. Thus, celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake and sacramental marriage provide mutually complementary signs and anticipations of heavenly communion.⁴² The former points to and anticipates heavenly communion's inclusivity and the latter its bodily realism. Yet neither by itself adequately signifies and anticipates heavenly communion, in which there will be neither marrying and being given in marriage nor celibate living. Rather, all the blessed will live in bodily communion with Jesus and, in him, with one another. That blessed communion will differ from both celibate living and marital intimacy while possessing in a more eminent way the personal and interpersonal goods inherent in both.

4) Jesus' teaching and example affected the lifestyle of the Church's early leaders.

The book of Acts describes an infant Church focused on carrying out the commission Jesus gave before his ascension (see Mt 28.18-20, Mk 16.15-18, Lk 24.44-49; Acts 1.7-8). With the coming of the Spirit, the leaders cooperate with and are guided by him. Previously ambitious and frightened disciples now risk their lives in the service of evangelization (see Acts 4.5-22, 5.17-42), and soon the Church's leaders begin to follow Jesus' example by laying down their lives (see Acts 6.8-7.60; 12.1-3).

The Church's communal and collegial aspects were prominent. So, for instance, the important issue about what was to be required of Gentile converts was resolved by a gathering of apostles and presbyters who collegially discerned God's will as manifested by events considered in the light of the Scriptures; the leaders then acted on what they had discerned (see Acts 15.6-29, Gal 2.1-10).⁴³ And the whole

42. John Paul II, General Audience (14 Apr. 1982), 4, *Inseg.*, ???, OR, 19 Apr. 1982, 10: "It seems then that the complementarity of marriage and continence for 'the kingdom of heaven' in their significance and manifold importance adequately corresponds to Christ's words recorded in Matthew (19.11-12). In the life in an authentically Christian community the attitudes and values proper to the one and the other state—that is, to one or the other essential and conscious choice as a vocation for one's entire earthly life and in the perspective of the 'heavenly Church'—they complete and in a certain sense interpenetrate each other. Perfect conjugal love must be marked by that fidelity and that donation to the only Spouse (and also of the fidelity and donation of the Spouse to the only Bride), on which religious profession and priestly celibacy are founded. Finally, the nature of one and the other love is 'conjugal,' that is, expressed through the total gift of oneself. Both types of love tend to express that conjugal meaning of the body which 'from the beginning' has been inscribed in the personal make-up of man and woman."

43. The later confrontation between Peter and Paul (see Gal 2.11-14) concerned a subordinate issue: what should Gentile converts (who need not observe Jewish laws regarding eating) and Jewish Christians (at least some of whom believed they were still bound by those laws) do when they eat and, perhaps, participate in the Eucharist together? Peter did not consider himself bound by the Jewish laws but wanted Gentile members of the mixed group to defer to the Jewish Christians who believed they were bound by them; Paul thought that the truth of the gospel precluded requiring the Gentile converts to conform to the Jewish laws. Thus, the issue was one of principle for Paul and of prudence for Peter, and we do not know how it was resolved: see J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, Anchor Bible, 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 228-45. However, it undermined neither Peter's special authority nor Paul's mission: see Salvatore Alberto

community shared property, apparently by members' voluntary contributions (see Acts 2.44-45; 4.32, 34-37; 5.4).⁴⁴

The First Epistle of Peter includes an exhortation handing on Jesus' emphatic command to the Twelve to serve unselfishly and avoid domination:

I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. (1 Pt 5.1-3)

The faithful are to be led by example rather than by imposition. Leadership should be for their sake, not a means to the leaders' own ends.

Since the New Testament tells more about St. Paul than any other disciple, his manner of sharing in Jesus' lifestyle is the most significant evidence we have of its impact on the infant Church. Having become a Christian and discerned his vocation, Paul had no agenda of his own. Like Jesus, he totally dedicated himself to his mission and carried it out with tightly focused drive.

His teaching makes it clear that the freedom most people crave and some think they now have is an illusion. In reality, everyone is a slave either to sin or to righteousness—that is, to God (see Rom 6.15-23).⁴⁵ Paul not only teaches the faithful to imitate the complete selflessness of Jesus, who took the form of a slave and became obedient unto death on the cross (see Phil 2.3-8), but regards himself as a slave of Jesus Christ.⁴⁶ He urges the Corinthians to prefer others' spiritual welfare to the exercise of their own freedom and points out that, in dealing with them, he has forgone many things to which he had a right and made himself their slave: “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. . . . I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (1 Cor 9.19, 22-23). In giving himself completely to others' service, Paul hopes only to share with them in the ultimate fulfillment the gospel promises.

Panimolle, “L’Autorité de Pierre en Ga 1-2 et Ac 15,” in *Paul de Tarse: Apôtre du notre temps*, ed. Lorenzo de Lorenzi (Rome: Abbaye de S. Paul, 1979), 269-89.

44. The story of Ananias and Sapphira (see Acts 5.1-11) makes it clear that the practice of sharing goods extended to the community as a whole, not just to a special group, and that it was voluntary. The couple's fault was not in violating a requirement to contribute but in lying to the community, and thus to the Holy Spirit, about the extent of their self-sacrifice.

45. Translations of the Bible often use *servant* to translate the Greek “*doulos*,” but Ceslas Spicq, O.P., *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. James D. Ernest (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:380, says: “It is wrong to translate *doulos* as ‘servant,’ so obscuring its precise signification in the language of the first century. In the beginning, before it came to be used for slaves, *doulos* was an adjective meaning ‘unfree,’ as opposed to *eleutheros*.” It might be jarring to hear the Virgin Mary say: “Behold the slave girl of the Lord” (Lk 1.38), but as Spicq indicates (383, fn. 14) that would make clearer than *handmaid* does her total “consecration to the work of salvation, conformably to the will of God.”

46. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *Romans*, Anchor Bible, 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 228-29; Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, and the prophets also were slaves of God.

He did not try to exercise lordship over anyone. He regularly manifested his affection and gratitude toward fellow workers, and his concern for Christians who were troubled or suffering. His fruitful service in leading those who had worked with him and would carry on his work is beautifully manifested in his farewell address to the presbyters of Ephesus and their response to him (see Acts 20.17-38).

Paul proclaimed the message he was sent to deliver and did all he could to motivate people to believe it, to love the Lord Jesus, and to live in the Spirit. He answered questions and objections with great care, and in doing so clarified fundamental truths of faith. He searched for things to praise in his converts and showed his delight in their progress. While often very firm, he always manifested deep and tender love, like the tough love of the devoted and wise parent of a young adult involved in gravely self-destructive misbehavior. Sometimes he pleads:

Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return—I speak as to children—widen your hearts also. Do not be mismated with unbelievers. . . . What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . .

. . .

Open your hearts to us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. (2 Cor 6.11-14, 16; 7.2-3; cf. 1 Thes 2.5-8)

Paul did not want to control others; he wanted them to let themselves be led by the Holy Spirit, and to live the truth of faith in love.

As to material goods, Paul declares: “To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands” (1 Cor 4.11-12). He seems to have had no savings or other source of income, since he worked part time to support himself when it was necessary or prudent to avoid imposing on others (see Acts 18.1-4, 1 Cor 9.13-15, 1 Thes 2.9). Considering that he obviously was educated and must have been well connected before becoming a Christian, conversion undoubtedly required him to give up some economic assets or sources of support; these appear to have been among the things referred to when he writes: “Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him” (Phil 3.7-9). When Paul sought financial support from the churches he had planted, it was not for himself or his own projects but for the poor of the church at Jerusalem; and he called for donations not only to alleviate material needs but to build up the communion of the universal Church.⁴⁷

47. See 2 Cor 8-9; Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, Anchor Bible, 32 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 398-453; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 720-23.

Nothing in the New Testament suggests that leadership in the Church was limited to men who remained unmarried. Instructions in the pastoral epistles make it clear that married men were chosen to become clerics.⁴⁸

In dealing with issues about sex and marriage in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul begins: “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman” (1 Cor 7.1). That second sentence often has been taken to be Paul’s assertion, as the principle for the rest of the chapter, that complete sexual abstinence is good in itself. More likely, however, it is the slogan of those who had written to Paul.⁴⁹ For he goes on at once to explain that married Christians ought to give themselves to their spouses in marital intercourse and abstain only at times by mutual agreement (see 1 Cor 7.2-6). Paul was celibate (see 1 Cor 7.8, 9.5) and wished every Christian were, yet he realized that was not God’s plan: “I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another” (1 Cor 7:7). For Paul, then, both celibate chastity and Christian married life are the Spirit’s gifts for building up the Church,⁵⁰ and he affirms the importance of accepting, faithfully persevering in, and fulfilling one’s personal vocation, whatever it is: “Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him” (1 Cor 7.17).⁵¹

48. See 1 Tm 3.2, 12; Tit 1.5-6, which specify that the married man chosen to be a cleric must be “the husband of one wife.” Christian Cochini, S.J., *Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy*, trans. Nelly Marans (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), 8-13, quotes fourth-century decrees of Pope Siricius and the Roman Synod requiring married clerics to abstain permanently from marital intercourse. One of those documents invokes the authority of the apostles and interprets the requirement that the married man be the husband of one wife to imply that, if ordained, he would permanently forgo marital intercourse. Today, however, the Catholic Church very often chooses married men to be deacons or, often in the East (and occasionally in the West), to be presbyters, without expecting them to forgo marital intercourse. Vatican II (PO 16, fn. 35) cites Tm 3.2-5 and Ti 1.6 for its teaching that celibacy was not required by the practice of the early Church. Plainly, then, the fourth-century decrees, as well as others excluding marriage or marital intercourse for clerics, are disciplinary, not doctrinal. While only propositions believed to be true ought to be employed as premises in arguments to support disciplinary decrees, a proposition is not authoritatively taught by being used as a premise in such a decree. The meaning of a scriptural phrase is, I believe, more likely to be discovered by competent, faithful, Catholic exegetes than by earlier popes and others arguing in support of a disciplinary norm, and a more trustworthy interpretation of “the husband of one wife” is provided, in my judgment, by Ignace de la Potterie, S.J., “‘Mari d’une seule femme’: Le sens théologique d’une formule Paulinienne,” in De Lorenzi, op. cit., 619-38; and Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, Anchor Bible, 35 (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 85-87. Neither understands “the husband of one wife” as prohibiting marital intercourse for clerics; both understand it to exclude anyone in a second marriage from public ecclesial ministry and to forbid remarriage by any married man engaged in such ministry whose spouse dies.

49. See Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina, 6 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 251-54, 257-58; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 267-77.

50. See Collins, op. cit., 260-61; Fee, op. cit., 284-86.

51. See Collins, op. cit., 274-77, 282-83; Fee, op. cit., 309-11. While Paul focuses here and in the following verses on elements of the personal vocations of adults who were already settled at the time they were converted, it is reasonable to apply what he says also to young people raised in the faith who must discern God’s call to celibate or marital chastity: Accept the Lord Jesus’ assignment to a role in his Church

Paul specifies one sure sign that the charism for celibate chastity is lacking: “To the unmarried and widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion” (1 Cor 7.8-9). *Unmarried* here perhaps refers to widowers.⁵² But since many Christians who have never married or who are not living with their spouses also are aflame with passion, one wonders about those who lack the charism for celibate chastity yet cannot marry soon, if ever. Paul surely knew of such people, yet he insists that Christian life has no place for sexual sins (see 1 Cor 6:9-20, 7:1, 9; Eph 5:3-12; 1 Thes 4:1-8) and teaches that Jesus’ grace liberates Christians from sin’s slavery (see Rom 5:2; 6:12-14, 22; cf. Tit 2:11-14; 1 Jn 5:3). It follows that even those aflame with passion *can* be continent without marrying. Evidently, then, the charism for holy single life that Paul has in mind involves something more: being able to deal rather easily with sexual temptations so that one is seldom seriously anxious about them or distracted by them, and thus is peacefully chaste. But since even continent Christians who are troubled by frequent and persistent sexual temptations are not peacefully chaste, they are advised to marry, assuming they can.

At the same time, Paul, like Jesus himself, advises those who enjoy the charism for celibate chastity to embrace it. He articulates reasons of two sorts.

First, while saying he received no command from the Lord concerning the unmarried (see 1 Cor 7.25, 28) and repeating that marrying is no sin, Paul remarks that “those who marry will have earthly troubles, and I would spare you that” (1 Cor 7.28). His basis for saying this is that he foresees a time of great distress and thinks it best that everyone, whether married or single, remain as he or she is (see 1 Cor 7.26-27).

Second, and more important, the charism for celibate chastity allows devout Christians who embrace it to avoid a certain inner division:

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. (1 Cor 7.32-35)

The words “interests are divided” translate a single Greek word that literally means *has been divided*. This indicates that it is the man himself, not his interests or something else, who is divided. Thus, commentators offer more precise translations: *he is torn* or *and is divided*.⁵³ The word “girl” in the phrase “the unmarried woman or girl” is better translated *virgin*, and may well suggest that Paul has in mind women who have chosen to

(when he ordains, consecrates, or sacramentally joins them in marriage); then persevere in that as in other lasting elements of their personal vocations.

52. See Collins, *op. cit.*, 268-69; Fee, *op. cit.*, 287-90.

53. See Collins, *op. cit.*, 296; Fee, *op. cit.*, 343.

remain unmarried.⁵⁴ The words “but to create good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord” translate Greek phrases literally meaning *but for what is seemly and constant to/for/before the Lord in an undistracted way*.⁵⁵ Lacking the connotations of “order” and “devotion,” the phrases seems to be better translated “but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction” (NAB) or “but so that everything is as it should be, and you are able to give your undivided attention to the Lord” (NJB).

Many Christian spouses and parents who work outside the home experience tensions between work and family life. Although the two sets of responsibilities are not inherently incompatible, a person has only so much time and energy; so, such people often ask themselves: Am I doing enough here? Am I cutting too many corners there? They are pulled this way and that, torn; they have been divided. And the more devoted to family and committed to work they are, the greater the tension and sense of being divided. Devout married Christians’ relationships with their spouses and with Jesus generate similar tensions: At any given moment, one cannot focus on both relationships and be preoccupied both with worldly affairs and the Lord’s affairs.⁵⁶

Paul no doubt observed that devout married Christians experience tensions if they try to evangelize the non-Christians they know, undertake demanding ministries when called on to do so, and regularly help other Church members bear their burdens. Serious involvement in such activities inevitably competes with supporting a family, making a home, and caring for children. By contrast, Christians who have been blessed with the charism for celibate chastity and embraced it keep the time and energy spent on secular matters to an unavoidable minimum. Without a spouse and children to claim their attentive care, they can focus entirely on pleasing Jesus. Rather than divided or torn, they can be “holy in body and spirit”—that is, “especially and exclusively belonging to the Lord, being at his disposal.”⁵⁷

54. See Collins, *op. cit.*, 296.

55. See Fee, *op. cit.*, 347.

56. See Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians* 7 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 197-205.

57. This happy paraphrase is provided by Eugen Walter, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 13, *New Testament for Spiritual Reading*, ed. John L. McKenzie, S.J. (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 84.

B: The Essence and Excellence of Consecrated Life

The diverse forms of consecrated life have common features that define it. Compared with other sorts of evangelical life, such as that of married couples who undertake to respond wholeheartedly to the call to holiness, consecrated life enjoys a certain superiority. However, some features and properties of consecrated life supposedly essential to it are not in fact characteristic of it as such but of certain forms of it or of evangelical life in general. Moreover, some ways of characterizing consecrated life or some forms of it are mistaken, and some purported reasons for its excellence are unsound.

1) Consecrated life is evangelical life that includes forgoing marriage.

In speaking of consecrated life here, I mean all those Catholic ways of life, apart from that of diocesan clerics, that include permanent celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake. Only in recent years has the expression, *consecrated life*, been used with that specific meaning, but vocations that include permanently forgoing marriage always have had a special status in the Church, because of the teaching and example of Jesus and Paul (see Mt 19.10-15; 1 Cor 7.32-36).

Some Christian families mirror many aspects of Jesus' lifestyle in a splendid way. Consider a young man and woman who, discerning and responding to their vocations, regularly make their choices in accord with God's will. On that basis, they marry for the kingdom's sake. Neither of these devoted spouses thinks about his or her own rights as they strive to please each other and support each other's better impulses. Since they are patient and gentle, their cooperation is motivated by mutual love. The husband makes an honest and adequate living at truck gardening, and the wife devotes herself to homemaking and caring for the children. Though surrounded by affluence and consumerism, the family lives simply and readily shares what it has with the needy. The parents' main concern is the Christian education of their children, especially their formation to live holy lives, and the children, closely attached to Jesus, are eager to learn how to help him build up his heavenly kingdom. At odds with the surrounding secularized culture in many ways, the family is never at home in the world through which it travels on. In a manner recalling the primitive Christian community described in Acts, it follows Christ in a way that witnesses powerfully to God's love and is an extraordinary sign both of the Church's unbreakable communion with Christ and of the heavenly kingdom in which that communion will be consummated.

Still, because that holy couple did not forgo marriage for the kingdom's sake, their evangelical life cannot be called "consecrated life" in the sense the Church gives that expression. In *Vita consecrata*, dealing with new forms of evangelical life, John Paul II mentions certain communities that include married couples who intend to pursue the perfection of charity. He says:

Worthy of praise are those forms of commitment which some Christian married couples assume in certain associations and movements. They confirm by means of a vow the obligation of chastity proper to the married state and, without neglecting their duties toward their children, profess poverty and obedience [note omitted]. They do so

with the intention of bringing to the perfection of charity their love, already “consecrated” in the sacrament of matrimony (see *Gaudium et spes*, 48). However, by reason of the above-mentioned principle of discernment, these forms of commitment cannot be included in the specific category of the consecrated life. This necessary clarification regarding the nature of such experiences in no way intends to underestimate this particular path of holiness, from which the action of the Holy Spirit, infinitely rich in gifts and inspirations, is certainly not absent.⁵⁸

The “above-mentioned principle of discernment” is the theological description of consecrated life introducing that topic in both the Latin and Eastern Churches’ canon law codes (see *CIC*, c. 573, §1; *CCEO*, c. 410). The context of John Paul’s statement makes it clear that only the absence of a commitment to *celibate* chastity excludes forms of commitment “in certain associations and movements” on the part of spouses intent on bringing their love “to the perfection of charity” from “the specific category of the consecrated life.”⁵⁹

The nature of consecrated life can be further clarified by distinguishing other ways in which a Catholic can be celibately chaste.

People naturally are single when they are young and after spouses die. Some remain single because they consider marriage undesirable and reject it—for example, they fear intimacy or shrink from the risks, burdens, and responsibilities of family life. Some experience the natural inclination to marry but prefer self-centered activities incompatible with marriage or think nobody could be good enough to be their spouse. Renouncing marriage, which is good in itself, with such unreasonable motives cannot pertain to a person’s vocation. Yet such people can be chaste.

Many Catholics who strive to discern and follow God’s plan for their lives are called to marry and do so. Some, however, lack the capacity to marry, and some think they are called to marry but have found no suitable partner. In either case, they remain unmarried by default, not due to any commitment, and being unmarried pertains to their vocations only as a condition to be accepted in faith from the hand of God. Other Catholics think they eventually might be called to marry but avoid romantic relationships while addressing other responsibilities pertaining to their vocations. Some expect to marry—for example, after they save some money, deal with health problems, or complete their professional training; but some indefinitely postpone marrying—for example, while

58. *Vita consecrata*, 62, AAS 88 (1996) 436, *OR*, 3 Apr. 1996, XI. The expression translated “consecrated” is “uti consecrata” in the Latin of *Vita consecrata* and in that of GS 48 “veluti consecrata”—“as it were consecrated.” Because a vow must promise God a “possible and better good” (see *CIC*, 1191, §1), some argue that spouses cannot really vow marital chastity. But insofar as married couples undertake a possible and better service to the kingdom by their profession in an association or movement (or by undertaking to accept and carry out their entire personal vocation, whatever it might be), and insofar as that undertaking specifies the responsibilities pertaining to marital chastity, requiring certain choices and precluding others that otherwise would not have been morally required or excluded, they do promise a possible and better good, and that promise really is a vow.

59. John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 32, AAS 88 (1996) 406; *OR*, 3 Apr. 1996, VI, teaches that the Church “rightly considers” living out the counsel of chastity to be “the ‘door’ of the whole consecrated life.” Thus, the whole consecrated life is closed to married couples, no matter how holy.

caring for an elderly or disabled family member. In either case, being single is due to their commitment to carry out an element of their vocation that, at least for now, precludes marriage; they are unmarried due to an upright commitment, but the commitment does not permanently preclude marriage.

Catholics who in those ways or others accept or choose being unmarried as part of their vocations will receive the grace necessary to live chastely, even though they may be aflame with passion—that is, troubled by temptations, so that they must regularly struggle to remain pure.⁶⁰ Even if such a Catholic is peacefully chaste, however, his or her celibately chaste life does not constitute consecrated life, since it does not fulfill a vocational commitment that precludes eventual marriage.

In other cases, though, peacefully chaste Catholics who have never married or whose spouses have died discern that, although capable of marrying or marrying again, they have received a gift that they can use in some worthwhile way that will permanently preclude marriage. In so discerning, they identify an element of their vocation incompatible with their ever, or ever again, fulfilling the responsibilities of a spouse. If they commit themselves to accept God's plan for their lives in its entirety and faithfully fulfill that commitment, they forgo marriage for the kingdom's sake.

Even before Christians are peacefully chaste, however, many who thus forgo marriage are attracted by the prospect of collaborating closely with Jesus or by other aspects of what may be a vocation that precludes marriage. They pray for the charism they lack, cultivate their intimacy with Jesus and their interest in serving others in a way to which they think they are called, and receive the grace they seek.

But no matter how the process preceding commitment unfolds, when someone discerns that God's plan for his or her life entirely precludes marrying and makes a firm commitment to live out that plan throughout the course of his or her life, that person undertakes not only an *evangelical life* in the sense defined in **1-G-10**, above, but *consecrated life* in the sense used by John Paul II in *Vita consecrata*.

Pius XII teaches that lay people can be truly consecrated by responding to God's call by private and secret vows to live according to the evangelical counsels.⁶¹ Since consecrated virgins need not make an explicit commitment with respect to obedience and poverty, and their commitment to virginity need not be a vow,⁶² those elements cannot be

60. The Council of Trent definitively teaches that it is possible to observe God's commandments, so that Christians in grace can altogether avoid mortal sin (and, of course, a Christian not in the state of grace can repent and be reconciled): "If anyone says, 'Observing God's precepts is impossible for a human being, even one justified and in the state of grace,' anathema sit" (DS 1568/828); for the explanation of the grounds for the definition, see DS 1536-37/804.

61. Pius XII, "Address to the Second World Congress of the States of Perfection" (11 Dec. 1957), AAS 50 (1958) 36, *The Pope Speaks*, 4 (1957-58): 266.

62. After publishing the rite of consecration of virgins, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship received and answered several questions. The third question was: "Is a vow required for consecration or does any commitment, like a promise, accepted by the Church suffice?" The Congregation replied: "Strictly speaking, for consecration a vow is not necessary, in the technical sense that 'vow' has taken on in the last centuries. Rather the essential requirements are the person's intention of self-offering to God in a total and perpetual way and the Church's acceptance of that intention. That seems to be the criterion behind

essential to the consecrated lives of those who privately and secretly undertake an evangelical life, including permanent celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake. Therefore, any evangelical life that permanently precludes marriage is a consecrated life.

According to his providential plan, God has set such people apart by choosing and preparing them for the role he offers them; by accepting God's offer, they also set themselves apart from devout people whose vocations do not permanently exclude marriage. Calling such people's lives "consecrated" signifies that twofold *setting apart*. The Church also cooperates in the consecration of many such individuals either by receiving the sacred bonds by which they undertake their vocations or by solemnizing their commitment by a rite, such as the consecration of virgins. When the Church participates, she does several things: publicly recognizes the charism such individuals have received from the Holy Spirit, welcomes their readiness and undertaking to serve, and prays that God will grant them the graces faithfully to fulfill their commitment.⁶³

Two closely related considerations show that all who embrace any form of consecrated life must undertake it as a form of evangelical life in the sense defined above (in **1-G-10**).

First, as John Paul II teaches, every authentic form of consecrated life involves the pursuit of perfect charity. Despite their great diversity, he explains, all forms of consecrated life respond to "the one call to follow Jesus—chaste, poor and obedient—in the pursuit of perfect charity. This call, which is found in all the existing forms of consecrated life, must also mark those which present themselves as new."⁶⁴ Again, most forms of consecrated life are undertaken by profession of the evangelical counsels, and about these John Paul II teaches: "The Church has always seen in the profession of the evangelical counsels a special path to holiness. The very expressions used to describe it—the school of the Lord's service, the school of love and holiness, the way or state of perfection—indicate the effectiveness and the wealth of means which are proper to this form of evangelical life, and the particular commitment made by those who embrace it."⁶⁵ Now, those who perfectly love God fully conform their wills to his plan and will. Therefore, the commitment made by those who embrace any form of consecrated life must be an undertaking to live an evangelical life as defined above.

Again, the paradigm of consecrated life is the Father's consecrating his Son by sending him to save fallen humankind, and Jesus' consecrating himself by his total

the OCV [*Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity*], Introduction, no. 5 c" (*Documents on the Liturgy*, fn. R3, p. 1027). The cited passage reads: "(c) that they be admitted to this consecration by the bishop who is the Ordinary of the place" (*The Rites*, vol. 2, 133).

63. Sharon Holland, I.H.M., *The Concept of Consecration in Secular Institutes* (Rome: CMIS, 1981), 210-16, shows how the need to explain consecration in a secular institute separated off what was proper to religious institutes, with the good result that the essence of consecration by profession of the counsels became clear. Similarly, the need to explain consecration of virgins separates off what was proper to profession of the counsels, with the good result that the essence of consecration by God's gift and a Christian's undertaking of any vocation that permanently precludes marriage becomes clear.

64. *Vita consecrata*, 12, AAS 88 (1996) 385; *OR*, 3 Apr. 1996, II.

65. *Ibid.*, 35, AAS 409; *OR*, VII; to this statement is appended fn. 76, which refers to St. Thomas, *S.t.*, 2-2, q. 184, a. 5, ad 2; q. 186, a. 2, ad 1.

self-oblation—his perfect and lifelong obedience, which culminates in his freely accepting death in Gethsemane: “not my will, but thine, be done” (Lk 22.42; cf. Mt 26.39, Mk 14.36). Those undertaking many forms of consecrated life explicitly offer themselves totally to God. Vatican II affirms that intention by teaching that one who professes the evangelical counsels “is completely handed over [totaliter mancipatur] to God supremely loved, so that he or she is dedicated to the service and honor of God on a new and distinctive ground” (LG 44). Having no rights, slaves own no property and have no spouses or children.⁶⁶ Like slaves, whose entire lives are at their master’s disposal, those who rightly profess the counsels put themselves entirely at God’s disposal. In doing so, they undertake to do his will in all things and to accept from his hand whatever befalls them.

2) Among forms of evangelical life, consecrated life has a certain superiority.

While every kind of evangelical life is a divine gift by which some Christians respond to the universal call to holiness, consecrated life is in important respects superior to kinds of evangelical life that do not involve a commitment to lifelong celibate chastity for the kingdom’s sake.

With the gospels and Vatican II, John Paul II teaches that consecrated life originated with Jesus:

The consecrated life, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, “constitutes a closer imitation and an abiding re-enactment in the Church” (LG 44) of the way of life which Jesus, the supreme Consecrated One and missionary of the Father for the sake of his Kingdom, embraced and proposed to his disciples (see Mt 4.18-22, Mk 1.16-20, Lk 5.10-11, Jn 15.16).

Hence, consecrated life is “a living tradition of the Savior’s life and message.”⁶⁷

Of course, those who undertake consecrated life usually have reasons over and above Jesus’ for committing themselves to celibate chastity and, more or less, to the rest of his lifestyle: their affection for him moves them to imitate him, while contrition for past sins and recognition of their moral vulnerability motivate them, for the sake of their own salvation, to nurture their relationship with Jesus, serve others, and deny themselves (see Phil 2.12-13, 3.12-21). At the same time, to the extent they imitate not only Jesus’ outward behavior but his human motivations, in adopting his lifestyle they will share most of his reasons (see **A-2**, above). Undertaken and faithfully fulfilled for those reasons, consecrated life will participate in a special way in the unique nobility of Jesus’ human life. He saves and restores in the kingdom all human goods promoted on earth in all human lives; by their collaboration with him, they help him do this in respect to the goods promoted by those to whose salvation their service contributes. Jesus’ personal lifestyle is unique in its excellence, but the lifestyle of his *holy* close collaborators, which

66. Spicq, op. cit., 1:382, fn. 10: “The slave has no family, having been deprived of the right to marriage (*conubium*); his conjugal union is only a de facto union (*contubernium* . . .); even his children ‘born to the household’ belong to his owner. The slave has no country . . .”

67. *Vita consecrata*, 22, AAS 88 (1996) 395, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, IV.

more or less completely mirrors his way of life, is superior to lifestyles of holy Christians that do not mirror his.

This superiority has three aspects: greater intimacy with Jesus, more important benefits for those served, and more perspicuous witness. Each is worth considering.

All Christians are devoted to Jesus' humanity. Motivated by admiration and gratitude, we rejoice in his human goodness and the glory he attained by it; we trust him and wish to imitate and please him. Love for Jesus, like our love for other human beings, has both volitional and emotional elements. The volitional component leads to sharing his love for other people, not as other, but as actual or potential members of his body. Its emotional component focuses upon Jesus' individual humanity and can be more or less intense.

Those whose emotional love for Jesus is very intense can let themselves be moved by it, along with the reasons underlying their volitional love, to forgo, set aside, and subordinate other legitimate human relationships so as to respond to Jesus' invitation to enjoy greater intimacy with him. John Paul II speaks of this motivation for undertaking consecrated life:

In the countenance of Jesus, the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) and the reflection of the Father's glory (see Heb 1.3), we glimpse the depths of an eternal and infinite love which is at the very root of our being [note omitted]. Those who let themselves be seized by this love cannot help abandoning everything to follow him (see Mk 1.16-20, 2.14; 10.21, 28). Like Saint Paul, they consider all else as loss "because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ," by comparison with which they do not hesitate to count all things as "refuse," in order that they "may gain Christ" (Phil 3.8). They strive to become one with him, taking on his mind [Latin: *affectus* = feelings, disposition] and his way of life. This leaving of everything and following the Lord (see Lk 18.28) is a worthy program of life for all whom he calls, in every age.⁶⁸

Again, John Paul speaks to religious about their experience of Christ's love, "directed towards" each of them as a "particular person." He calls it a "love of choice" with a "spousal character" and explains that it "embraces the whole person, soul and body, whether man or woman, in that person's unique and unrepeatable personal 'I.'" Having become aware of the "loving look" of Jesus, he tells religious: "You replied to that look by choosing him who first chose each one of you, calling you with the measurelessness of his redeeming love."⁶⁹

Leaving father and mother without cleaving to husband or wife, those who undertake consecrated life need not abide in self-absorption; rather, as "brides of Christ,"⁷⁰ they can

68. John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 18, AAS 88 (1996) 391; *OR*, 3 Apr. 1996, III; note that other Vatican translations of *affectus* are: Italian, *sentimenti*; French, *sentiments*; Spanish, *sentimientos*; German, *Gefühle*.

69. John Paul II, *Redemptionis donum*, 3, AAS 76 (1984) 515-17, *OR*, 2 Apr. 1984, 1-2.

70. To express the insight that forgoing marriage for Jesus' sake is not some sort of pagan or inhuman renunciation but an authentic gift of self and a special way of uniting one's soul with the Lord, early Christians began to call both male and female virgin ascetics *brides of Christ*—see Karl Baus, *From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, vol. 1, *History of the Church*, ed. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (New York: Seabury, 1980), 295-97.

cleave to Jesus as their significant other.⁷¹ Friendship is good in itself, and Jesus is the most perfect of all possible friends. Thus, their relationship with him will be better than other Christian relationships that, though carried on with similar devotion and fidelity, are with imperfect spouses, relatives, and friends. So, the intimate and lasting friendship with Jesus available to those who receive his call to consecrated life is reason enough for them to forgo marriage.

I turn now to the second aspect: more important benefits to those served.

Every Christian is called to keep the faith and to spread it by bearing witness to its truth by deeds and words. But not all are called to collaborate so closely with Jesus that their apostolic responsibilities preclude marriage and parenthood. As St. Paul points out, every charism is for building up Christ's body (see 1 Cor 12.4-7), and celibate chastity frees those who receive it to collaborate more closely with Jesus.

In his apostolic exhortation, *Vita consecrata*, John Paul II repeatedly stresses the duty to provide apostolic service. The first article, "Consecrated for mission," of chapter three, "*Servitium Caritatis*: Consecrated Life: Manifestation of God's Love in the World," begins:

In the image of Jesus, the beloved Son "whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world" (Jn 10.36), those whom God calls to follow him are also consecrated and sent into the world to imitate his example and to continue his mission. Fundamentally, this is true of every disciple. In a special way, however, it is true of those who, in the manner that characterizes the consecrated life, are called to follow Christ "more closely," and to make him the "all" of their lives [their significant other]. The task of *devoting themselves wholly to "mission"* is therefore included in their call; indeed, by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, consecrated life itself is a mission, as was the whole of Jesus' life. The profession of the evangelical counsels, which makes a person totally free for the service of the Gospel, is important also from this point of view. It can therefore be said that *a sense of mission is essential to every institute*, not only those dedicated to the active apostolic life, but also those dedicated to the contemplative life.⁷²

In another passage, John Paul explains that the basis in the gospel for consecrated life is Jesus' calling of some "not only to welcome the Kingdom of God into their own lives, but also to put their lives at its service, leaving everything behind and closely imitating

71. In popular use, the expression "significant other" usually connotes sexual intimacy. But I use it as some psychologists and sociologists do to refer to the person or persons with whom an individual's close relationship constitutes an essential part of his or her self-identity—e.g., an infant's mother, a young child's parents, a married person's spouse, but also in some cases a best friend or even an employer or employee to whom an individual is devoted but with whom he or she has no romantic relationship. Peoples' self-respect and normative judgments are greatly affected by significant others' evaluations, and these can enable them to resist powerful social pressures. Harry Stack Sullivan, the psychiatrist some credit with having originated "significant other," used it in a still narrower sense to describe a property of psychologically mature adults, who are able "to establish relationships of love for some other person, in which relationship the other person is as significant, or nearly as significant, as one's self" (*The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1953], 34).

72. *Vita consecrata*, 72, AAS 88 (1996) 447-48; OR, 3 Apr. 1996, XIV.

his own *way of life*.⁷³ Recalling St. Paul's teaching, and speaking of those who belong to institutes of consecrated life, the Pope also asserts "that the manifold charisms of their respective institutes are granted by the Holy Spirit for the good of the entire Mystical Body, whose upbuilding they must serve (see 1 Cor 12.4-11)."⁷⁴

Christians know by faith that nothing is more important than sharing in God's kingdom and no service more important than helping others share in it. Therefore, the various apostolic services facilitated by forgoing marriage for the kingdom's sake promote more important benefits than other good services; thus, in respect to the potential benefits to those served, the gift for a life devoted to such sorts of apostolic service and the calling to that kind of life are objectively superior.

The greater intimacy with Jesus available in consecrated life and its capacity for benefiting others more significantly are inextricably linked. Those who undertake consecrated life either will realize both aspects of its potential superiority or they will realize neither.

Some who undertake consecrated life are motivated from the start by intense love for Jesus and the appeal of some kind of apostolic service requiring a commitment to celibate chastity, but the main motive of others is either one or the other, not both. In the passages from *Vita consecrata* quoted above, John Paul II addresses those whose primary motivation is love for Jesus and explains why they are called to apostolic service as well. In practice, of course, genuine love for Jesus leads a person to share his thirst for souls and work to build up his body.⁷⁵

Speaking of those who have undertaken consecrated life "for the sake of carrying out different forms of apostolic service to the People of God," John Paul says they must bring "anew to their own times the living presence of Jesus" and "continue to be images of Christ the Lord, fostering through prayer a profound communion of mind with him (see Phil 2.5-11), so that their whole lives may be penetrated by an apostolic spirit and their apostolic work with contemplation."⁷⁶ Only those who love Jesus intensely can make him a living presence and share his outlook and attitude. In definitively commissioning Peter to feed his lambs and sheep, therefore, Jesus three times required that "Rock" to reaffirm his love and implicitly commit himself to loving Jesus "more than these."⁷⁷ Those who undertake celibate chastity primarily for apostolic service must similarly cultivate their

73. *Vita consecrata*, 14, AAS 387; OR, III.

74. *Ibid.*, 47, AAS 420, OR, VIII.

75. Brian Kolodiejchuck, M.C. (postulator of the cause of Mother Teresa), "The Soul of Mother Teresa, Part 1, Hidden Aspects of Her Interior Life," <http://zenit.org/English>, Archive, 28-29 November 2002, quotes from Mother Teresa's letters her own account of how Jesus used her love for him as a motive to bring her to accept his call to found the Missionaries of Charity. What about members of institutes focused entirely on contemplation? John Paul holds that "they offer the ecclesial community a singular testimony of the Church's love for her Lord, and they contribute, with hidden apostolic fruitfulness, to the growth of the People of God (see PC 7, AG 40)" (*Vita consecrata*, 8, AAS 88 [1996] 383, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, II).

76. *Vita consecrata*, 9, AAS 88 (1996) 383, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, II.

77. See Jn 21.15-17. Jesus then (18-19) intimates the death by which Peter will glorify God and says "Follow me," in other words: Devote yourself to serving others and lay down your life for them.

own intense love for Jesus. Such love, together with freedom from the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood, will enable them to share Jesus' salvific love for human persons of every kind and condition.

The superiority of consecrated life to other forms of evangelical life lies not only in potential intimacy with Jesus and benefits of service but effectiveness of witness.

Everyone living an evangelical life bears witness to the gospel's truth and the hoped-for kingdom's consummate goodness. But the lifestyle of those who faithfully live consecrated lives makes their witness especially perspicuous. Their outward behavior, like that of martyrs, differs very markedly not only from that of people without faith and hope but even from that of most good and holy Christians (see LG 42). Moreover, the consecration that constitutes this specific kind of life is of itself a special and powerful sign of the reality and importance of the kingdom, simply because it includes forgoing, for the kingdom, a basic good of human persons in which most people seek an important aspect of their self-realization: marriage and family—*my* husband or wife and *our* children.

John Paul II affirms that celibate chastity's perspicuous witness to the definitive value of the kingdom and to the Church's holiness grounds the teaching regarding the superiority of that charism to the grace of marriage:

[Celibate chastity] bears witness that the Kingdom of God and his justice is that pearl of great price which is preferred to every other value no matter how great, and hence must be sought as the only definitive value. It is for this reason that the Church, throughout her history, has always defended the superiority of this charism to that of marriage, by reason of the wholly singular link which it has with the Kingdom of God.⁷⁸

Again, he teaches: "As a way of showing forth the Church's holiness, *it is to be recognized that the consecrated life, which mirrors Christ's own way of life, has an objective superiority.*"⁷⁹

Because the cogency of this witness is undermined by infidelities on the part of those who undertake consecrated life, John Paul also teaches:

The first duty of the consecrated life is *to make visible* the marvels wrought by God in the frail humanity of those who are called. They bear witness to these marvels not so much in words as by the eloquent language of a transfigured life, capable of amazing the world. To people's astonishment they respond by proclaiming the wonders of grace accomplished by the Lord in those whom he loves.⁸⁰

78. *Familiaris consortio*, 16, AAS 74 (1982) 98-99, OR, 21-28 Dec. 1981, 4. The point that this has been constant Church teaching is supported by a footnote referring to Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, II, AAS 46 (1954) 174ff.; PE, 248:32ff.

79. John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 32, AAS 88 (1996) 406, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, VI. But note that superiority in respect to witness does not entail unqualified superiority. Dennis J. Billy, C.Ss.R., "'Objective Superiority' in *Vita Consecrata*," *Review for Religious*, 55 (1996): 640-45, concludes (645): "A contextual reading of the document shows that the phrase 'objective superiority' is used to delineate the consecrated life's specific task of offering radical, eschatological testimony of the coming of the kingdom."

80. *Vita consecrata*, 20, AAS 88 (1996) 393, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, IV.

Truly holy consecrated lives are, as it were an ongoing miracle, which, joined with appropriate verbal testimony, is very like martyrs' blood in being the seed of faith.

The perspicuous witness of consecrated persons who faithfully fulfill their commitments serves others by exemplifying hope for the kingdom and detachment from everything short of it, love for Jesus and his Church, and the practice of discerning God's call and responding to it.⁸¹ Even hermits like St. Antony, who wanted nothing but solitude with God, served the Church by such witness. They became mothers or fathers of spiritual children, who were inspired by their example, nurtured by their teaching, and, in many cases, assisted by their friendship, advice, and prayer.

Some magisterial documents adopt the view of several Church Fathers that the superiority of a lifestyle including permanent, celibate chastity is a truth affirmed by the human author of Revelation and therefore by the Holy Spirit.⁸²

Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste [Greek: *parthenoi* = virgins]; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless. (Rev 14.1-5)⁸³

If the Church Fathers' view is sound, the 144,000 men would be that whole set of Christians, of both sexes and however numerous, who not only undertake celibate chastity but remain lifelong virgins, entirely avoiding actions that would defile them *just as they defile other unmarried people who engage in them*.⁸⁴

81. For a fuller articulation of this point, see *ibid.*, 103, AAS 479, OR, XX.

82. *Ibid.*, 23, AAS 396-97, OR, IV, cites this passage, assuming the view of the theological tradition. For an interpretation of it in accord with that view, see E.-B. Allo, O.P., *Saint Jean L'Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1921), 196-97; he cites, among others, Tertullian, Augustine, and Jerome.

83. While this enigmatic passage can be interpreted plausibly in various ways, most modern commentators proceed on the highly questionable assumption that only one interpretation can be sound. Most recent Catholic commentators dismiss the Church Fathers' view; see, for example: J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, Anchor Bible, 38 (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1975), 232-35; Séan P. Kealy, C.S.Sp., *The Apocalypse of John* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1987), 181-84; Alfred McBride, O.Praem, *The Second Coming of Jesus: Meditation and Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1993), 113-16. Some Protestant commentators consider but reject the Church Fathers' view but most entirely ignore it, as does the note to 14.4 in Donald Senior et al., eds., *The Catholic Study Bible: The New American Bible* (New York: Oxford, 1990), *New Testament*, 414: "**Virgins:** metaphorically, because they never indulged in any idolatrous practices, which are considered in the Old Testament to be adultery and fornication (2, 14-15.20-22; 17, 1-6; cf Ez 16, 1-58; 23, 1-49). The parallel passages (7, 3; 22, 4) indicate that the 144,000 whose foreheads are sealed represent all Christian people." The first reading in Year II on Monday of the 34th week of the year is Rev 14.1-5 except that the following words are omitted: *These are they who were not defiled with women; they are virgins and . . .*

84. Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Apocalypse* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1979), 98-100, does not mention the Church Fathers' view, but partly shares it. That the new song is not quoted and that only

Assuming the soundness of the Church Fathers' view, the ways in which a holy life that includes celibate chastity is superior to other sorts of holy evangelical life can be discerned in the passage. Those who undertake and faithfully fulfill a commitment to celibate chastity are a special group. Jesus' and the Father's names are inscribed on their foreheads because they belong to God in a special way, thanks to their fidelity despite adversity and temptation.⁸⁵ For them to follow the Lamb wherever he goes expresses their especially intimate relationship with Jesus and their readiness to follow him even to death. Their loud singing of a new song that only they can learn is the perspicuous and distinctive witness of their lives, which will forever glorify God and proclaim his grace. Their redemption *as first fruits* is God's saving them not for their own sake alone but in order to use them to save others. Finally, since the 144,000 faithfully fulfilled their commitments for the kingdom's sake, their lives were truly evangelical: they not only remained virgins but were purified in every respect, so that they conformed entirely to the truth of Christ.

the 144,000 could learn it give and reinforce the "impression" that this "is an exclusive group," and "the following verses imply that the 144,000 are indeed a special group, probably limited to those who die for their faith" (99). It is possible to interpret metaphorically the statement, *these have not defiled themselves with women for they are virgins*, "but the very concrete language used here makes it more likely that actual sexual practice is meant," and "celibacy may have been encouraged by John as a symbolic expression of worthiness to participate in Christian life" defined as an ongoing holy war and exercise of priesthood (100). The vision presents a "model of ideal Christianity, involving not only celibacy but voluntary, violent death. The wording of the vision implies that it is not an ideal which all Christians are expected to fulfill" (100). Kealy, *op. cit.*, 182, does not name but disagrees with Collins regarding v. 4a: "Because of the concrete language involved here, some scholars conclude that John means literal celibacy from conversion till death. Both Jesus and Paul clearly praised the virgin lifestyle (1 Cor 7:25ff; Mt 19:12), an option stressed also at Qumram. However, the reference to 'defiling' is never used in the New Testament of marriage, which is quite clearly exalted in the New Testament (Heb 13:4; Eph 5:21ff)." But even if John did not mean literal celibacy, 'defiling' remains. If John is not referring to marital intercourse, he must be referring to infidelity outside marriage. The referent could be the nonsexual infidelity of worshipping the beast. But even so, it might well *also* be the infidelity of those who fornicate or commit adultery despite having made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom's sake.

85. The 144,000 in Rev 14.1 probably belong to Jesus as comrades in arms and to God as pillars in his temple due to their special fidelity despite temptation. Many commentators on 14.1 refer to Rev 7.2-3, where the 144,000 from the twelve tribes are sealed by angels with God's seal while the winds are restrained. They suggest that the names inscribed on the foreheads of the 144,000 in Rev 14.1 are that seal. But in the letter to the church in Philadelphia (Rev 3.7-13), the glorified Jesus promises to save from the coming trial those who "have kept my word of patient endurance" (10), exhorts them to hold fast and keep their crown (11), and promises those who conquer: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name" (12). There are three similarities between 3.12 and 7.2-3: (i) 144,000 (ii) who will be kept from the coming trial (iii) are marked; but there also are three differences: the one writing or sealing (Jesus vs. angels), the point of the writing or sealing (to mark them as pillars of the temple in recognition of their victory after perseverance vs. to mark those saved before the angels who have the power to harm proceed), and what is written or sealed (names, including God's name and Jesus' new name, vs. God's seal). But in common with those in 3.12, the 144,000 in 14.1 have the Lamb's and his Father's names written on their foreheads. Probably, therefore, the Lamb himself has marked the 144,000 in 14.1 for their fidelity despite temptation, much as a leader decorates heroic followers after a battle.

Consecrated life is superior in ways that distinguish its excellence from the excellence of other kinds of evangelical life. Devout and prudent unmarried Christians who reflect clearly upon that distinctive excellence and measure themselves by it are likely to judge themselves unfit to undertake consecrated life and to conclude that they could not be called to undertake it or to regret having *already* done so. But even though their self-appraisal may well be sound, the conclusion need not follow, and the regret of those who have already undertaken consecrated life should be considered a temptation.

True, celibate chastity is a grace God gives only some. But even those given it are not fully prepared to undertake their vocations, as Mary was, before they begin to hear God's call. Even though they are conscious of their defects and weakness, they must begin to hear God's call and discern it. To discern it; and to do that they must clarify the conditions under which they could rightly undertake a form of evangelical life involving celibate chastity and must ask God to show them what he wants them to do. Rather than testing God or demanding a charism to which nobody has a right, their prayer must remain conditional, along the following lines: *Jesus said that only those to whom it is given can accept his saying about making oneself a eunuch for the kingdom's sake. Please, Father, either give me that gift and make me morally certain I have received it or show me what other gifts you have given me and how you want me to use them.*

Those who have undertaken celibate chastity, even with mixed motives and/or imprudently, are bound by their commitment. The Council of Trent makes that clear in condemning the proposition that “all those who think they lack the gift of chastity, although they vowed it, can marry” (DS 1809/979). Feelings of regret should be regarded as the beginning of temptations to infidelity—for example, by a hypocritical compromise that maintains the outward appearance of celibate chastity while rationalizing discreet sins against it. Instead of yielding, they should bear in mind that God calls even the worst sinners to holiness and never asks anything of anyone without making it possible. For that reason, Trent also teaches that those who have undertaken celibate chastity can fulfill their commitment: “For God does not refuse the gift [of celibate chastity] to those who rightly ask, ‘nor allow us to be tempted beyond our strength’ (1 Cor 10.13)” (ibid.).⁸⁶

3) Some good characteristics of consecrated life are not peculiar to it.

The preceding section shows that other kinds of evangelical life are inferior in important respects to consecrated life, but consecrated life often has been extolled for properties it shares with other kinds of evangelical life. Although these characteristics make consecrated life superior to the lifestyles of Christians who do not respond consistently to their personal vocations, *this* superiority is one it has in common with the

86. The grace to resist temptation need not include peaceful chastity, which is the charism that warrants undertaking permanent, celibate chastity. Therefore, those who wrongly but validly commit themselves to celibate chastity may well be called to a lifelong struggle against severe temptation. Although aflame with passion, they are not free to marry; they must take extraordinary measures to avoid occasions of sin and strengthen themselves; often they will experience distractions that impede their apostolic effectiveness. Nevertheless, faithfully carrying on such a struggle can be their way of holiness.

lifestyles of Christians living out personal vocations that do not include a permanent commitment to celibate chastity.

Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite—who wrote around 500 AD but pretended to be St. Paul’s disciple, was greatly influenced by Neo-Platonism. According to him, clerics form all other Christians: deacons form those who still need purification; priests form the laity who have been cleansed of impurity but still need illumination; and bishops form monks who have been illuminated and are ready to live a unified life and reach perfection in divine love. In the ecclesiastical hierarchy assumed by this writer, monks stand below the clergy and above the nonconsecrated laity: though not ordained, they are consecrated. Because they should be united with the One, they are forbidden many things permissible for the laity. Unlike even the laity who have been cleansed of impurity, monks renounce everything that detracts in thought and affection, as well as deed, from their single focus. The priest who consecrates a monk cautions him that he must rise above mediocrity and replaces his common clothing with the monastic habit to signify the change from a life of common mediocrity to a more perfect life.⁸⁷

The Pseudo-Areopagite considers the gift for consecrated life to be a grace given the few; it enables them to reach perfect holiness by rising *almost to the clerical order*. He was right in holding that consecrated life responds to God’s call to the perfection of holiness, but wrong in consigning the nonconsecrated laity, including those cleansed of impurity, to mediocrity. Yet his view of consecrated life colored almost all theological reflection on the subject until recently, because, until the late nineteenth century, most Catholic theologians took his claim to be St. Paul’s disciple at face value.

Vatican II’s first treatment of consecrated life is in its document on the Church. Having introduced the evangelical counsels toward the end of its discussion of the universal call to holiness, the Council begins its consideration of religious life by treating the counsels as God’s gift—to the Church, primarily, rather than to individuals—and dealing with the state of the counsels. Then, before taking up profession, the Council rejects the Pseudo-Areopagite’s view without mentioning him:

Considered in reference to the divine and hierarchical constitution of the Church, the religious state is not intermediate between the clerical and lay. From both, some of the Christian faithful are called by God so that they may enjoy a distinctive gift in the Church’s life and contribute, each in his or her own way, to the Church’s salvific mission. (LG 43)

At last, consecrated life is removed from the Pseudo-Areopagite’s ecclesiastical hierarchy. His view that the gift proper to consecrated life is specifically necessary for an individual to attain the perfection of holiness is finally replaced with the authentically Pauline teaching: The grace proper to consecrated life is one among many kinds of charism that the Spirit gives the Church to build up the one Body.

87. See Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, trans. Thomas L. Campbell (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1981), 73-76 (ch. 6). The status below clerics and above the nonconsecrated laity is made very clear (76): Monks are to be “fashioned to the priestly life as far as permitted. Since they have an affinity to it on many counts, they are closer to it than the rest of the orders of the initiated.”

Other elements of the Pseudo-Areopagite's view and many of its underlying assumptions also are contradicted by Vatican II's teaching on the universal call to holiness. While the Church's holiness is manifested in a special way in the practice of the evangelical counsels, the Council teaches it also "is expressed in many different ways in individuals who by their plan of life tend toward the perfection of charity and thus edify others" (LG 39). No one has to be mediocre: "It is obvious that all Christians of every state and order are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG 40). Christians follow different ways to holiness, but the holiness to which they are called is one: "In the various kinds and duties of life, one holiness is cultivated by all, who are led by the Spirit of God" (LG 41). The Council concludes that the program for growth in holiness is common to all, not proper to a particular condition or state of life:

Therefore, all the Christian faithful in—and through—the conditions, duties, and circumstances of their lives will be more sanctified day by day if they accept everything with faith from the heavenly Father's hand and cooperate with the divine will by manifesting to everyone in their temporal service itself the love by which God has loved the world. (LG 41)

After briefly treating various Christian states of life—including ordained ministry, marriage and parenthood, and consecrated life—the Council sums up: "All the Christian faithful, therefore, are called and held to pursue holiness and the perfection of their own state" (LG 42).

The Pseudo-Areopagite also believed that everyone is in a sense called to the one holiness of union with God; yet he thought there is only one way of perfection, which implied that marriage and parenthood could not be a vocation and way of holiness. Vatican II clearly taught that there are as many ways of perfection as there are personal vocations. Developing the Council's teaching, John Paul II made it absolutely clear that each and every one of the faithful can respond to the universal call to holiness by giving up whatever he or she must, rather than turning away as the young man did, and following Jesus by accepting his or her unique vocation and faithfully persevering in it (see **1-G**, above).

Yet more than ten years after Vatican II, Hans Urs von Balthasar reaffirmed the preconciliar view:

No sound and balanced Christian will ever say of himself that he chose marriage by virtue of a divine election, an election comparable to the election and vocation experienced or even only perceived by those called to the priesthood or to the personal following of Christ in religious life. One who chooses marriage simply has *not* experienced that special election in his soul; he does so, therefore, with the best conscience in the world and without imputing to himself any imperfection, but he does not, for that reason, claim that he is following a way specially chosen for him by God. He is but obeying God's general will for his creatures.⁸⁸

88. *The Christian State of Life*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy, from the 1977 German edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 421.

Experience falsifies von Balthasar's claim. When sound, balanced Christian young people learn about personal vocation and commit themselves to discerning the way specially chosen for them by God, some for the first time consider the possibility that the life of good deeds God prepared for them includes clerical or consecrated life and service, and discern that it does; others begin thinking about marriage in an entirely new way, and discern that they are called to it as part of their lay apostolate and way toward holiness.

The Pseudo-Areopagite regarded monasticism as *the* state of perfection, the condition of one who makes a permanent commitment to rise above mediocre Christian life and ascend to union with God. His view crystallized the interpretation of Jesus' exchange with the rich man that Origen already had proposed: Keeping the commandments is good but imperfect; and Christians go beyond the minimum not by loving God so wholeheartedly that, whatever God's plan for their lives might be, they undertake to follow it, but only by following the counsels.⁸⁹ That interpretation of Jesus' exchange with the rich young man has been rejected by both recent Scripture scholarship and John Paul II.⁹⁰

During the Middle Ages, however, only prelates and religious were thought to be in the state of perfection. St. Thomas shared that view but clarified it. Christian perfection, he explained, essentially consists in charity; moreover, not everyone in the state of perfection is perfect and some not in that state may be. But he also held that practicing the evangelical counsels enabled religious to devote themselves more freely to God so as to attain the perfection of charity possible in this life.⁹¹

In modern times, *state of perfection* had become virtually synonymous with religious life until Pius XII approved secular institutes and declared their members also to be in a "state of perfection." Teaching later on the states of perfection, Pius distinguished between *perfection* and *state of perfection*, explained that heroic Christian perfection can exist outside any state of perfection, and taught that striving for Christian perfection, in general, is to be understood "as a habitual disposition of the Christian soul, by which, not content merely to fulfill the duties which bind under pain of sin, the soul gives itself entirely to God to love him, to serve him, and consecrates itself to the service of the neighbor for the same purpose." He then said: "The perfection of every free human activity, as that of every reasonable creature, consists in the adherence of the will to God."⁹² Those statements point to conditions fulfilled not only by those who faithfully

89. See John M. Lozano, C.M.F., *Discipleship: Towards an Understanding of Religious Life*, trans. Beatrice Wilczynski (Chicago: Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality, 1989), 53-56, 70-72.

90. See **1-G-7**, above, fn. 330.

91. See *S.t.*, 2-2, qu. 184, aa. 4-5; and also qu. 44, a. 4, ad 2-3, where Thomas holds that the perfection of charity to which the counsels are directed is in between the perfect love of the saints in heaven, who always love God actually, and the perfection of Christians living in this world *who avoid mortal sin*, and thus always love God habitually but often not actually.

92. Pius XII, *Discourse to the Members of the Second General Congress of the States of Perfection* (9 Dec. 1957), I, AAS 50 (1958) 35; Gaston Courtois, ed., *The States of Perfection According to the Teaching of the Church: Papal Documents from Leo XIII to Pius XII* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1961), 306.

live a consecrated life but by everyone who faithfully live any sort of evangelical life. Yet, Pius XII held to the traditional significance of the expression *state of perfection* by limiting its reference to those somehow committed to following the counsels in what we now call “institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life.”

Vatican II, when legislating about the celebration of the divine office, speaks of “instituted states of perfection” (SC 98, 101). But *state of perfection* no longer appears in other Vatican II documents.⁹³ Nor is the expression used in other important postconciliar documents such as the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. John Paul II occasionally uses “*state of perfection*” to underline that consecrated life really is a way of pursuing Christian holiness.⁹⁴ But he puts it in quotation marks or explicitly indicates that he is talking about the expression itself.

As we have seen, Vatican II holds that Christians of *every* state are called to the perfection of charity and all Christians are called and bound to seek the perfection of their own state. This implies that every Christian who responds to the call to holiness by striving perseveringly to find and fulfill God’s entire plan for his or her life is habitually pursuing holiness and that evangelical life in general might fittingly be regarded as *the* state of perfection.

Suppose that devout, thirteen-year-old Maria, fascinated with the Gospel according to Luke, reads it through over and over. Filled with wonder and joy at God’s love for humankind, and especially for herself, she feels she must love him in return. Having been catechized soundly regarding holiness and personal vocation, she accepts in faith the given conditions of her present life as being from her heavenly Father’s hand. And, wondering what sort of life of good deeds he has prepared for her and discussing the matter with her parents, she asks the Holy Spirit for light and strength, and, entrusting herself to him, promises Jesus, and firmly commits herself, to go on accepting all things from the Father’s hand and to discern and faithfully walk in the life of good deeds prepared for her, whatever it may be and may require her to give up and suffer.

Having made this commitment, Maria not only practices liturgical piety, personal devotion, and self-denial but seriously tries to obtain and follow sound advice that will help her keep her commitment. This young woman is habitually pursuing holiness; and just as truly as her aunt—a Carmelite nun professed with solemn vows—she has permanently bound herself to the only plan of life that leads to perfection in holiness. For that reason, Maria, her aunt, and all others whose lives are truly evangelical actually are in the same state of perfection.⁹⁵

93. But in LG 45, “institutes of perfection” is used in the same way as “instituted states of perfection” in SC 98 and 101.

94. See *Redemptionis donum*, 4 and 13, AAS 76 (1984) 519 and 537, *OR*, 2 Apr. 1985, 2 and 4; *Vita consecrata*, 35, AAS 88 (1996) 409, *OR*, 3 Apr. 1996, VII.

95. St. Thomas, *S.t.*, 2-2, q. 184, a. 4, sets two requirements for being in a state of perfection: (1) that one obliges oneself permanently to the things that pertain to perfection, in which Thomas includes poverty, celibate chastity, and obedience (see q. 186, a. 6); and (2) that the obligation is established with a certain solemnity. Pius XII implicitly but definitely sets aside the second requirement by including in the states of perfection members of secular institutes who need not bind themselves by vows, much less solemn vows.

Maria may never undertake permanent celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake, for she might well discern that she is called to marry. Nevertheless, there also are good reasons for holding that she and all Christians who firmly commit themselves to living an evangelical life are as truly *consecrated* by their vocations and commitment as her aunt is by her calling to be a Carmelite and her solemn vows. Yet John Paul II explicitly teaches the contrary:

Everyone in the Church is consecrated in baptism and confirmation, but the ordained ministry and the consecrated life each presupposes a distinct vocation and a specific form of consecration, with a view to a particular mission.

For the mission of the *lay faithful*, whose proper task is to “seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God” (LG 31) the consecration of baptism and confirmation common to all members of the People of God is a sufficient foundation.⁹⁶

No doubt the sacraments of initiation are a sufficient foundation for the general mission of the lay faithful, and, without undertaking an evangelical life, lay people can understand and carry out that mission in some, even many, of their choices and actions. For instance, a man may strive sincerely to shape his marriage and family life according to God's plan while regarding spending time in paid employment as a necessary evil, and working only as much as he must to keep his job and maximize his income. But the consecration of baptism and confirmation are an insufficient foundation for the comprehensive, personal mission every lay person receives as his or her unique vocation—a mission fully undertaken only by a commitment, like Maria's, to evangelical life.

Baptism and confirmation do imply the responsibility to find, accept, and fulfill one's personal vocation, whatever it might be. But they do not specify the personal vocations of the lay faithful any more than of those called to the consecrated life or ordained ministry. Moreover, since catechesis for baptism and confirmation typically, and unfortunately, omits mention of personal vocation, as do the rites of those sacraments, and since nobody can commit himself or herself to something without knowing it, those receiving baptism and confirmation make only a general commitment to live a Christian life and participate in the apostolate.

God's gift of the calling common to all Christians is one consecration. His gift of a particular vocation offers a second consecration to at least some. But why not all?

Of course, many of the faithful, like Maria, undertake evangelical life without any official act of Church ministry. If such an act were necessary for *consecration* in general, as it is for consecration by profession of the evangelical counsels and the consecration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and holy orders, their lives would not be consecrated. But near the beginning of his exhortation on the consecrated life, John Paul II thanks God not only for those in its various forms recognized by the Church but also

Vatican II, by its teaching on the universal call to holiness, sets aside the exclusive specification by the evangelical counsels of the way toward perfection.

96. *Vita consecrata*, 31, AAS 88 (1996) 405, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, VI.

“for all those individuals who, in their inmost hearts, dedicate themselves to God by a special consecration.”⁹⁷ No doubt he has in mind those who privately undertake permanent, celibate chastity along with poverty and obedience according to their particular condition of life. But the remark entails that consecration can occur without any act of Church ministry.

That which is consecrated is transformed and placed in a special relationship with God. Always it is principally God who consecrates. In the first place, God consecrates everyone he calls by the gospel to be Jesus’ disciples. When they are baptized and confirmed, the Holy Spirit transforms them into children of God and living, functioning members of Jesus’ body, the Church. In the second place, God calls and consecrates those he sets apart for a particular dedication to himself. A document of the Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, which John Paul II approved, explains:

Consecration is the basis of religious life. By insisting on this, the Church places the first emphasis on the initiative of God and on the transforming relation to him which religious life involves. Consecration is a divine action. God calls a person whom he sets apart for a particular dedication to himself. At the same time, he offers the grace to respond so that consecration is expressed on the human side by a profound and free self-surrender. The resulting relationship is pure gift. It is a covenant of mutual love and fidelity, of communion and mission, established for God’s glory, the joy of the person consecrated, and the salvation of the world.⁹⁸

In this consecration distinct from that of baptism and confirmation, God calls someone he has set apart and that person responds, by God’s grace, with free self-surrender, thus forming a covenantal relationship.

Of course, the Congregation intended to deal only with religious life. But its teaching plainly is true of the consecration of members of secular institutes, consecrated virgins, and those sacramentally ordained for clerical ministry. Moreover, nothing in its account of the essentials of consecration requires that it be limited to those who undertake celibate chastity.

The Father calls *every* single one of his children to live the unique life of good deeds for which the Spirit has re-created him or her in Christ Jesus. In *every* case, God calls someone he has set apart for a particular dedication to himself, namely, the dedication of the commitment or set of commitments to undertake that life. In offering *every* person his or her personal vocation, the Holy Spirit also provides the charism or set of charisms required to undertake it. Thus, God’s action in *every* personal vocation satisfies the criteria for consecration. He challenges *every* Christian who begins to discern his or her personal vocation in the same way he challenged Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you . . .” (Jer 1.5) to fulfill *this* unique role in my salvific plan.

97. *Vita consecrata*, 2, AAS 88 (1996) 378, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, I.

98. Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church’s Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, 5, EV 9:184-85, OR, 18 July 1983, 4.

All Christians who accept their personal vocations do so by an act separate and distinct from the acts by which they receive baptism and confirmation. Undertaking one's personal vocation always is a profound and free self-surrender; it is giving oneself completely to God, undertaking to do his will in everything and to accept everything in faith from his hand. Thus, it satisfies the criteria for expressing on the human side the divine gift of consecration. The resulting relationship is pure gift, the gift of consciously cooperating with the Holy Spirit in fulfilling one's role in God's plan and becoming the saint he desires one to be forever. And there is a covenant: established by the person who undertakes his or her personal vocation for God's glory, established by God for that person's joy, and established by both parties for the salvific fruit of the life of good deeds, namely, its contribution to building up the one body of the Lord Jesus.

Suppose that in due course Maria discerns God's calling to be a Carmelite, joins her aunt, and takes solemn vows. That vocation and profession will specify and reaffirm the calling she heard and the commitment she made at thirteen. Still, in making her profession, Maria will not give herself to the Father any more fully or enter upon a new, covenantal relationship with him. She already has given herself to God as completely as possible in promising Jesus to walk in the life of good deeds prepared for her, whatever it might be and demand of her.

John Paul II teaches that the vocation to consecrated life is a loving initiative from the Father, requiring a wholehearted response on the part of the one chosen:

The experience of this gracious love of God is so deep and so powerful that the person called senses the need to respond by unconditionally dedicating his or her life to God, consecrating to him all things present and future, and placing them in his hands. This is why, with St. Thomas, we come to understand the identity of the consecrated person, beginning with his or her complete self-offering, as being comparable to a genuine holocaust.⁹⁹

In fact, by her promise at thirteen Maria unconditionally dedicated her life to God, consecrated everything present and future to him, and placed it all in his hands. Her consecrated life began with her complete self-offering at thirteen, when the holocaust was made—a holocaust that would have been no less genuine if she had later discerned that God meant her to marry and become a homemaker and mother.

Therefore, I hold that all Christians who firmly commit themselves to fulfill their entire personal vocations are consecrated with a consecration distinct from that of baptism and confirmation. Still, consecration that includes responding to the evangelical counsel of celibate chastity and its profession is specifically different from consecration, like Maria's at thirteen, open to whatever God's plan might require. Besides, as was made clear in **1**, above, those who undertake an evangelical life that does not include forgoing marriage for the kingdom's sake follow a path of holiness not pertaining to "the specific category of the consecrated life" recognized by the Church's law and teaching. Thus, the expression *consecrated life* must be reserved as a general name for the forms of

99. *Vita consecrata*, 17, AAS 88 (1996) 391, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, III; the passage ends with fn. 29: "Cf. *Summa theologiae*, 2-2, q. 186, a. 1."

evangelical life that include a permanent commitment to celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake. Furthermore, in the respects treated in **2**, above, those forms of life really are superior to other forms of evangelical life.

4) Features of only some forms of consecrated life are mistakenly attributed to consecrated life as such.

Vatican II's teachings relevant to consecrated life are focused almost entirely on the forms it has taken in religious institutes. Chapter six of the document on the Church is entitled *Concerning Religious* (see LG 43-47), while the only Council document devoted entirely to consecrated life is designated *Decree on the Suitable Renewal of Religious Life*. (It includes a single article about secular institutes, which begins: "Although secular institutes are not religious institutes, they bring into the world a true and complete profession of the evangelical counsels, recognized by the Church," by which men and women living in the world are consecrated [PC 11].¹⁰⁰) The revised Code of Canon Law for the Western Church, published in 1983, contains a section devoted to institutes of consecrated life, religious and secular (*CIC*, cc. 573-730), and societies of apostolic life (*CIC*, cc. 731-46). Toward the end of the canons common to both religious and secular institutes are two dealing with individuals consecrated without membership in any institute or society: hermits, who must profess the evangelical counsels (c. 603), and virgins, who need only undertake permanent, celibate chastity (c. 604).

John Paul II recognizes the diverse forms of consecrated life in his apostolic exhortation. He mentions monastic life; the order of virgins, men and women hermits, and widows; religious institutes devoted to contemplation; canons regular, mendicant orders, and clerics regular; congregations of men and women devoted to apostolic activity, missionary activity, and other works of charity; secular institutes and societies of apostolic life; and newly emerging forms of consecrated life.¹⁰¹ Even so, the document focuses mainly on forms of consecrated life involving explicit profession of all three evangelical counsels.¹⁰² And although John Paul explicitly deals with secular institutes in several places, occasionally he conflates the religious state or religious profession with

100. Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements*, 9, *EV* 186-89, *OR*, 18 July 1983, 4-5, develops Vatican II's summary statement: "Union with Christ by consecration through profession of the counsels can be lived in the midst of the world, translated in the work of the world and expressed by means of the world. This is the special vocation of the secular institutes, defined by Pius XII as 'consecrated to God and to others' in the world and 'by means of the world' (*Primo feliciter*, V and II). Of themselves, the counsels do not necessarily separate people from the world. In fact, it is a gift of God to the Church that consecration through profession of the counsels can take the form of a life to be lived as a hidden leaven. Christians so consecrated continue the work of salvation by communicating the love of Christ through their presence in the world and through its sanctification from within. Their style of life and presence are not distinguished externally from those of their fellow Christians. Their witness is given in their ordinary environment of life. This discreet form of witness flows from the very nature of their secular vocation and is part of the way that their consecration is meant to be lived (cf. PC 11)."

101. See *Vita consecrata*, 6-12, *AAS* 88 (1996) 381-85, *OR*, 3 Apr. 1996, I-II.

102. See *Vita consecrata*, 1, 5, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21, 29, 31, 35, 48, 55, 60, 72, 75, 87-91 (on the three counsels), 93, 95, and 107.

consecrated life and consecration.¹⁰³ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* carries those tendencies still further. Its section headed *The Consecrated Life* begins (914) by quoting a statement about religious life made by Vatican II, without indicating exactly what it refers to: “The state of life which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, while not entering into the hierarchical structure of the Church, belongs undeniably to her life and holiness” (LG 44). Then the *Catechism* adds: “It is the *profession* of these [three] counsels, within a permanent state of life recognized by the Church, that characterizes the life consecrated by God” (915; note omitted).

But even though they were permanently committed to celibate chastity and many lived in great austerity, the virgins and ascetics who pioneered consecrated life, including the desert fathers, did not profess the three counsels. Early monasticism and Benedict’s rule certainly involved the *practice* of permanent celibate chastity, community of goods, and obedience to the rule and to superiors’ directives in accord with it. Yet monastic profession was not profession of the three counsels. That form of profession emerged and began to be officially required only in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In modern times, St. Philip Neri and St. Vincent de Paul established groups now classified as societies of apostolic life, but tried to exclude vows, at least permanent ones. Still, John Paul II addresses his apostolic exhortation on consecrated life to, among others, societies of apostolic life and says of them: “In many of them an explicit commitment to the evangelical counsels is made through sacred bonds officially recognized by the Church. Even in this case, however, the specific nature of their consecration distinguishes them from religious institutes and secular institutes.”¹⁰⁴ Finally, contemporary consecrated virgins, like their ancient counterparts, undertake permanent, celibate chastity but do not explicitly profess the three counsels; and, living on their own in the world, consecrated virgins need not practice poverty or obedience other than required by common Christian norms and by their commitment to all of the elements of their vocations.

Of course, the vast majority of those who have undertaken consecrated life in modern times and are living it made their commitment by professing the three counsels. In the future, however, the majority might well be consecrated virgins and widows, along with male counterparts for whom the Church’s ritual and law have not yet provided. Such a development would make it clearer that an evangelical life including permanent celibate chastity for the kingdom’s sake is sufficient for consecrated life as such and that not all forms of consecrated life include profession of the three counsels.

The Church’s law, revised after Vatican II, deals with the profession of the counsels in a section of norms common to both religious and secular institutes. To allow for secular institutes without vows, the manner of profession is left to the laws of each institute: “Through vows or other sacred bonds according to the proper laws of the institutes, [members] profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience” (*CIC*, 573, §2). The substance of celibate chastity is the same for all: “The

103. Secular institutes are dealt with in *Vita consecrata*, 32, 42, 53, 54, 78, 97, and 99; the conflation is in 20 and 30, AAS 88 (1996) 393 and 403, *OR*, 3 Apr. 1996, IV and V.

104. *Vita consecrata*, 11, AAS 88 (1996) 384-85, *OR*, 3 Apr. 1996, II.

evangelical counsel of chastity . . . entails the obligation of perfect continence in celibacy” (*CIC*, c. 599). Poverty and obedience also are the same for all insofar as they are gospel ideals, but how they are practiced depends on the law of each institute: “The evangelical counsel of poverty . . . entails, besides a life which is poor in fact and in spirit and is to be led productively in moderation and foreign to earthly riches, a dependence and limitation in the use and disposition of goods according to the norm of the proper law of each institute” (*CIC*, c. 600). “The evangelical counsel of obedience . . . requires the submission of the will to legitimate superiors, who stand in the place of God, when they command according to the proper constitutions” (*CIC*, c. 601).

Although they are meant to express common requirements of poverty and obedience, “dependence and limitation in the use and disposition of goods” and “submission of the will to legitimate superiors” hardly mean the same thing when applied to religious and secular institutes. The practice of poverty and obedience is in part radically different in the latter, as the following representative statements illustrate:

— How is poverty lived in secular institutes?

Poverty calls the consecrated secular member to have a positive relationship with material things while not becoming attached to them. It recommends the application of social practices for the poor, the homeless and the disadvantaged. Poverty implies discerning what [is] necessary and practical in daily living and what to do with the superfluous. Members are self-supporting and provide for all of their expenses in daily living and retirement.

— How is obedience lived out?

Obedience concerns discerning and implementing the will of God amid daily activities and in a lifestyle within the secular environs. It has to do with being faithful to the institute’s spirituality, prayer life, and constitution. The member is expected to be faithful to Church laws and to the Magisterium.¹⁰⁵

Like consecrated virgins, members of secular institutes live on their own in the world. What poverty and obedience in practice entail for them is almost entirely determined by common Christian norms and the other elements of their own evangelical lives: their commitments with respect to work, friendships, and so on.

The Secular Institute of the Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ—an institute for women founded by Agostino Gemelli and Armida Barelli—explains what poverty and obedience mean for its members:

In SIM, the promises of poverty and obedience function differently than in religious orders. As lay women, we continue to own our own property and be responsible for our own finances; we draw up an annual budget as an expression of our commitment to allocate our resources according to Gospel priorities. Since we do not share community life or a common ministry, our obedience lies in our obligation to be faithful to our SIM

105. The United States Conference of Secular Institute, under “Articles,” then under “Questions and Answers About Secular Institutes and the Lifestyle of Secular Institute Members”:
<http://www.secularinstitutes.org/Questions%20and%20Answers.htm>

way of life and to obey our Institute leaders in the Institute in those matters which pertain to it in a spirit of dialogue.¹⁰⁶

Poverty and obedience as they developed and were traditionally understood become impossible without life in a community practicing withdrawal from the world, which began with monasticism and, in varying degrees, characterized religious life at least until Vatican II. Members of secular institutes and consecrated virgins, living on their own in the world, cannot replace private ownership with family-like community of goods nor can they give up personal autonomy about careers and schedules in favor of obedient cooperation in a community of brothers or sisters directed by a spiritual father or mother. Responsibility and restraint in using and disposing of goods are expressed in the drawing up of an annual budget to allocate resources according to gospel priorities, as any faithful Christian should do. Submission to the will of superiors is reduced to obeying leaders in matters that pertain to the institute *in a spirit of dialogue*.

My point is *not* that the consecration of members of secular institutes is unauthentic or defective. Like consecrated virgins, they commit themselves to permanent, celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake. Faithfully fulfilled as part of an evangelical life, that commitment allows them to participate in the superiority of consecrated life (see **2**, above). If they regularly carry out God's plan for their lives, their obedience mirrors Jesus' complete submission to his Father's will; and their submission, like Jesus', includes obeying human authorities when, but only when, that is the will of the Father. If they regulate the possession and use of material goods and money by their responsibilities to carry out their apostolic service effectively and meet their own genuine needs in a modest way, their poverty will be like Jesus' in putting the kingdom first. While they will not imitate the severe austerity Jesus practiced and taught his apostles when sending them out to evangelize, that form of poverty has seldom been practiced in religious institutes.¹⁰⁷

The authenticity of the consecration of members of secular institutes further confirms what already is clear from the consecration of virgins: Values inhering in and flowing from specifically religious life in its various forms during the second millennium should not be attributed to consecrated life as such.

Even freedom from anxiety about the "things of the world" in order to concentrate on "the things of the Lord," invoked by St. Paul in arguing for celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake (see **A-4**, above), is not characteristic of consecrated life as such. The celibate chastity of consecrated virgins and members of secular institutes does, of course, free them to focus on the things of the Lord in ways that marital and parental responsibilities would preclude. Yet, remaining immersed in the world, they carry out

106. The Institute's English-language website, under "Life": <http://www.simkc.org/life.cfm#con>

107. The first section of the first canon (*CIC*, c. 607, §1) on "Religious Institutes" appropriates to religious what is true of all but only those who faithfully fulfill a commitment to any form of consecrated life: "As a consecration of the whole person, religious life manifests in the Church a wonderful marriage brought about by God, a sign of the future age. Thus the [holy] religious brings to perfection a total self-giving as a sacrifice offered to God, through which his or her whole existence becomes a continuous worship of God in charity."

essentially lay apostolate, so that their concern with the things of the Lord, like that of spouses who live evangelical lives, includes anxiety about things of the world—secular occupations, political and cultural affairs, and so on—with which Jesus and St. Paul never concerned themselves.¹⁰⁸

Clerical secular institutes benefit the Church by fostering authentic evangelical life among diocesan clerics and benefit their members by supporting and encouraging their commitment to pursue holiness through their ministry. Belonging to a network of likeminded priests and maintaining more or less close contact with at least some of them helps many members of such institutes maintain their self-confidence and persevere despite loneliness and setbacks. Lay secular institutes and the forms of consecrated life available to individuals benefit the Church by fostering authentic evangelical life on the part of those with charisms for both consecrated life and lay apostolate. These consecrated persons are especially suited to provide models of holiness for other lay people and to lead organized lay apostolates. Lay members of secular institutes benefit from the formation they receive and, like clerics, from belonging to a network of likeminded people striving after an authentically evangelical life in the world. Recognition, teaching, and prayer on the part of the Church also benefit those who undertake one of the individual forms of consecrated life in the world as well as all the members of secular institutes, clerical and lay.

5) Distinctive features of religious life benefit the Church and those called to it.

I shall first describe the distinctive features of religious life, then treat their advantages for the Church and for individual religious.

“The first and foremost duty of all religious is to be the contemplation of divine things and assiduous union with God in prayer” (*CIC*, c. 663, §1). This duty of *all* religious is not the same as the duty of members of certain institutes to strive to become contemplatives of the sort that, according to St. Teresa of Avila, not even all Carmelite nuns can be.¹⁰⁹ Here, contemplating divine things means listening to and meditating on God’s word; participating in the Eucharist, if possible daily (see *CIC*, c. 663, §2); engaging regularly in liturgical and personal prayer (see *ibid.*, §3); striving constantly to discern God’s plan and will; giving oneself in conscious cooperation with Jesus’ salvific work and thereby promoting others’ entrance into the kingdom.

108. Someone might argue that St. Paul meant that spouses must concern themselves with the things of the world for nonreligious ends, while consecrated virgins and members of secular institutes concern themselves with the things of the world for religious ends. The answer is twofold: first, any Christian who responds to the call to holiness by living an evangelical life always acts for the sake of the kingdom, which is a religious end that includes every other human good; and second, in dealing with things of the world, members of secular institutes and consecrated virgins often rightly act for proximate, nonreligious ends—just as holy spouses and parents more often do. In fact, Paul meant that those having the charism for celibate chastity and embracing it thereby gain freedom to concentrate on religious activities, as Jesus and Paul himself did.

109. St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, XVII, 2 in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1980), 2:99.

Members of religious institutes make public vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience—that is, vows the Church officially accepts through someone authorized to do so on her behalf—and they share a common life as brothers or sisters (see *CIC*, cc. 573, §2; 607, §2; 1192, §1), which normally entails living together under the direction of a superior (see *CIC*, c. 608). For religious, the profession of the evangelical counsels involves setting aside worldly affairs in favor of the affairs of the Lord, and common life involves greater or less separation from the world (see *CIC*, c. 607, §3). Thus, in the many and diverse forms of religious life, celibate chastity for the kingdom’s sake frees those who undertake it from worldly affairs to form a spiritual family that concentrates on the specifically *religious* affairs of the Lord.

Central to that freedom from preoccupation with worldly affairs is poverty, but religious institutes differ significantly in what that vow requires (see *CIC*, c. 668).¹¹⁰ But every “religious forgoes the free use and disposal of his or her property, depends through the lawful superior on the institute for the provision of material goods, puts gifts and all salaries in common as belonging to the community, and accepts and contributes to a simple way of life.”¹¹¹

As an outward sign of their commitment and membership in their community or institute, monks, nuns, and religious always have worn distinctive garb: a habit specified by each group’s own law, though clerics sometimes dressed like diocesan clergy. Vatican II said habits should be simple, modest, poor but seemly, and should satisfy the requirements of health, time and place, as well as the group’s ministry (see PC 17). Church law still requires such a habit for religious—and clerical dress for clerical religious with no other habit—as a sign of consecration and witness to poverty (see *CIC*, c. 669). Distinctive garb thus remains another element separating religious from the world and marking them as men and women “of God.”

All members of any institute of consecrated life must share together in its common apostolate of “the witness of their consecrated lives, which they are bound to foster by prayer and penance” (*CIC*, c. 673).

Religious, by their particular form of consecration, are necessarily and deeply committed to the mission of Christ. Like him, they are called for others: wholly turned in love to the Father and, by that very fact, entirely given to Christ’s saving service of their brothers and sisters. This is true of religious life in all its forms.¹¹²

Still, members of different sorts of institutes have diverse apostolates.

110. In some, all members divest themselves of all possessions before final profession and afterward accept nothing except for the institute, while depending entirely on the community to meet their material needs. In other institutes, members need not divest themselves of everything when they enter and even after profession may accept for themselves what others give or leave them. But they must entrust responsibility for their property to another in order to avoid dealing with it themselves, and what they acquire as members of the institute or by their efforts after entering it belongs to the institute. Still other institutes adopt some combination or modified version of the two approaches.

111. Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements*, 16, *EV* 9:194-95, *OR*, 18 July 1983, 5.

112. *Ibid.*, 24, *EV* 9:204-5, *OR*, loc. cit.

Members of purely contemplative institutes engage in an apostolate similar to St. Antony's by their prayer, example, and advice (see *CIC*, c. 674). Members of other religious institutes carry on Jesus' mission of announcing God's kingdom, healing the sick and injured, converting sinners, blessing children, and in all things obeying the Father's will (see LG 46). Inasmuch as institutes' fundamental documents specify their diverse apostolates and are approved by ecclesiastical authority, the apostolic activities of individual religious contribute to a communal effort, mandated by the Church.¹¹³ Consequently, when individuals faithfully carry out their institutes' approved missions, they act both in the name of their institutes and as agents of the Church.

For this reason, all apostolic activities of any religious are subject to the authority of the bishop of the place (see *CIC*, c. 678, §1). That also follows from the fact that all those activities are either manifest forms of evangelization or else works of charity—for example, education, nursing, social work—that, in expressing the realities signified by the gospel the Church proclaims, also are essentially works “of evangelization: striving in the Church and according to the mission of the institute to bring the Good News” to everyone. Consequently, “religious manifest one of the most important aspects of their lives” by obediently cooperating in “corporate and ecclesial works of evangelization.” In doing that, they not only carry out an apostolate but “are living as the apostles lived: following Christ in service and in communion according to the teaching of the gospel and the Church he founded.”¹¹⁴

In describing the distinctive features of religious life, I have drawn on canon law and recent documents of the Holy See. Since Vatican II, some religious—and many or even all in some institutes and parts of the world—have challenged or in practice simply disregarded some or most of those features. Soon after the Council, Paul VI considered it urgent to try to support and strengthen religious life:

We wish to respond to the anxiety, uncertainty and instability shown by some; at the same time We wish to encourage those who are seeking the true renewal of the religious life. The boldness of certain arbitrary transformations, an exaggerated distrust of the past—even when it witnesses to the wisdom and vigor of ecclesial traditions—and a mentality excessively preoccupied with hastily conforming to the profound changes which disturb our times have succeeded in leading some to consider as outmoded the specific forms of religious life. Has not appeal even unjustly been made to the Council to cast doubt on the very principle of religious life?¹¹⁵

Although John Paul II did not say as clearly what concerned him, he repeatedly addressed the deterioration Paul VI's effort failed to halt. But despite all that, some will dismiss the provisions of canon law and the documents on which I have drawn as irrelevant abstractions. Rather than being abstractions, however, the distinctive features upon which the law and documents insist were important elements of all the diverse

113. *Ibid.*

114. *Ibid.*, *EV* 9:208-9, *OR*, 18 July 1983, 5-6.

115. *On the Renewal of the Religious Life according to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council (Evangelica testificatio)* (29 June 1971), 2, *AAS* 63 (1971) 498, *OR*, 15 July 1971, 5.

religious institutes founded during the past eight centuries. They became definitive around 1200, after developing through centuries of experience and the interplay between the ecclesiastical authorities and creative founders and foundresses, beginning with those who established the early monasteries, where consecrated life first was lived in well-organized, ongoing communities.¹¹⁶

As explained in **2**, above, all consecrated persons are duty bound to show God's mercy in lives truly transfigured by his grace. The lives of those who faithfully keep their commitments manifest the Church's holiness and bear especially perspicuous witness to the reality and supreme importance of the kingdom. Partly due to this potential for communicating, consecrated life as such is objectively superior to forms of evangelical life that include marriage.

The distinctive features of religious life greatly enhance its communicative potential. The public vows, corporate action in the Church's name, distinctive habits, and other things characteristic of members of religious institutes cause them to be perceived as more closely associated with the Church than other consecrated persons. Similarly, although all faithful Christians are displaced persons in this fallen and largely nonbelieving world, even other consecrated persons are not perceived as so completely displaced as *holy* members of religious institutes show themselves to be: committed to celibate chastity, they live cheerfully in community as brothers or sisters; committed to poverty, they gladly live simply and share material goods; committed to obedience, they willingly forgo personal self-fulfillment and work together on the things of the Lord, submissively carrying out their superiors' decisions. Consequently, *holy* religious most perspicuously and powerfully manifest the Church's holiness and bear witness that the goodness of the kingdom is superior to every other good—that the kingdom deserves to be sought first, as Jesus commanded.

Religious life focuses on the kingdom as already realized rather than still to come, and *holy* religious communities therefore not only point to the kingdom and bear witness to its supremacy but are living icons of it. The group is gathered in familial fellowship around the Lord, the center of their life; the family is permanent yet does not require marrying and raising children; material goods are shared and needs met without members' possessing and saving; members live and work together harmoniously and responsibly without bargaining or domination. Even for those who only read or hear about it, the unworldliness of a holy, contemplative community makes it an especially lovely and challenging icon of heaven; but it is especially so for someone privileged to experience its life from within: a bishop who visits it, a girl who is educated in it, a man or woman who spends time in it as a postulant or novice.

116. Vatican II teaches: The evangelical counsels are “a divine gift, which the Church receives from her Lord and by his grace always retains. Led by the Holy Spirit, Church authority has taken on the responsibility of interpreting these counsels, of regulating the practice of them, and of establishing stable forms of living them out” (LG 43). While ecclesiastical authorities have sometimes erred in their subsequent regulation of consecrated life, the Holy Spirit surely guided the long development by which *religious life* evolved so that this general form of living the counsels could be creatively instantiated, with all its essential features, by holy founders and foundresses from Francis of Assisi to Teresa of Calcutta.

Holy members of institutes entirely devoted to contemplation contribute to the Church's primary mission not only by being icons of the kingdom but by doing what they do. Their hidden lives sustain others' apostolic service. In its document on the Church's missionary activity, Vatican II teaches:

Institutes of contemplative life, through their prayers, works of penance, and hardships, hold the greatest importance in the conversion of souls, since it is God who, asked [by such prayers], sends workers into his harvest (see Mt 9.38), opens the minds of non-Christians to hear the gospel, and makes the saving word bear fruit in their hearts. (AG 40)

These religious surely make a similar contribution to all clerical ministry, the active apostolates of other religious, and the laity's apostolate as well. They attract souls hungry for God, as Antony did, enrich the spiritual lives of people who come to their oratories to worship and pray, and sometimes advise people who seek their help.

Holy clerical religious play an important role in the Church's missionary efforts and complement diocesan clerics' care of the faithful, especially with respect to preaching, chaplaincy of pious associations, spiritual direction, and the promotion of devotions. Holy religious women and men—sisters and brothers—engage in their diverse apostolates. Using their gifts in loving service to make Jesus present to others, especially to those in great and urgent need, their deeds regularly manifest and confirm the realities signified by the words of the clergy's preaching, often remotely or proximately prepare people to receive the sacraments fruitfully, and sometimes directly help nurture the Church's unity and lead God's people toward their heavenly home. Holy religious engaged in teaching, health care, raising orphans, looking after the elderly, and other charitable works not only spiritually benefit the faithful they serve but meet many of their other most vital needs.

Spiritually healthy religious institutes with holy superiors also greatly benefit their faithful members themselves.

Such an institute does not accept and profess people who lack the gifts required to live its specific way of life and cooperate in exercising its specific charism. Faithful members find themselves part of the fellowship God called them to, where they can use their gifts and flourish. Having been helped to discern and accept their vocation, they live and work among like-minded companions, who support one another's identity, bear one another's burdens, nurture one another's wholesome self-esteem, and provide care and security for the sick and the elderly.

Living in sisterly or brotherly communities that practice modesty, faithful religious are neither lonesome nor exposed to many of the temptations against their celibate chastity that consecrated persons immersed in the world must confront. Using shared things according to a reasonable plan for satisfying genuine needs in adequate but simple ways, they can resist attachment to possessions and avoid gradually increasing consumption, and are spared having to make anxious decisions about how to allocate material resources. Obediently cooperating in serving others according to a reasonable plan based on the institute's particular law and shaped by the chapter's decisions and advice, they also are predisposed to avoid competing for status and power, spared the

need to agonize over how to use their time and energies, and protected from exploitation by superiors pursuing their own, alien agendas. The constant interaction of such religious moderates their eccentricities and smoothes out their rough spots.

Because spiritually healthy religious institutes almost always attract generous support from lay people, their faithful members generally can devote themselves to apostolic and other religious activities rather than spend time and energy simply earning a living and the means of meeting other responsibilities. This also enables them to avoid even much of the arguably permissible material cooperation in evil sometimes required of other Christians by sinful socioeconomic structures and employers or clients engaged in objective wrongdoing.

Just as alcoholics cannot use alcohol moderately but can and must abstain from it entirely, others find moderation in other matters to be impossible and must practice total abstinence in regard to them. For someone with the charisms for peaceful celibate chastity and the other renunciations required by religious life who would not otherwise live virtuously, the only way to persevere in grace and enter the kingdom will be to find the institute that he or she is called to, make profession in it, and faithfully fulfill what he or she has undertaken. Religious life will be an immeasurable blessing for such a person.

Much that I have said about institutes of religious life and their members in this section also is true of societies of apostolic life and their members, especially those like the Daughters of Charity that would have been founded as religious institutes had that been possible at the time.

Despite the great benefits flowing from the distinctive features of religious life, not everyone who has received the charism of celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake is called to it. Many men are called to the diocesan priesthood, as their own gifts and the great need for diocesan clergy make clear. Other needs and the diverse gifts of other Christians make it clear that some are called to secular institutes or societies of apostolic life, some to consecrated virginity or widowhood or widowerhood, some to eremitic (or anchoritic) life, and some to forms of consecrated life not mentioned in canon law. Of the latter, some are called to join a third order or similar pious association, or Opus Dei. But the vocations of others may require them to avoid commitment to an established group, and to work with a variety of individuals and groups as their unfolding vocations indicate, while obtaining spiritual direction and support when needed wherever they can.

Finally, for each one who receives the charism for celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake, to discern, undertake, and faithfully persevere in the form of consecrated life to which he or she is called will be his or her way to follow Jesus and share in his holiness.

6) Some arguments for the superiority of consecrated life are unsound.

In his encyclical on celibate chastity, Pius XII rightly insists that the Christian excellence of embracing it lies in embracing it for the kingdom's sake. In developing this point, he quotes St. Paul: "The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit . . ." (1 Cor 7.32, 34), and

offers this comment: “This then is the primary purpose, this the central idea of Christian virginity: to aim only at the divine, to turn thereto the whole mind and soul; to want to please God in everything, to think of Him continually, to consecrate body and soul completely to Him.”¹¹⁷ Pius quotes many Church Fathers and argues that those who embrace celibate chastity for the kingdom’s sake imitate Jesus in consecrating themselves, body and soul, to God.¹¹⁸

The account of the superiority of consecrated life provided in **2**, above, agrees with Pius XII that celibate chastity for the kingdom’s sake originated in our Lord’s own lifestyle. But it explains three aspects of its excellence—greater intimacy with Jesus, more important benefits for those served, and more perspicuous witness—that explain why many who undertake celibate chastity become preoccupied, as Paul says, with the Lord’s affairs and with trying to please him. Instead of that threefold focus on intimacy with Jesus and collaboration in his service and witness to the kingdom, Pius XII concentrates exclusively on the Christian’s personal religious relationship with God.

The implications become clear when he goes on to compare celibate chastity with marriage. Although acknowledging that St. Paul does not reprove spouses for their mutual concern, the Pope claims that, in writing about married Christians by divine inspiration, Paul “is asserting clearly [in 1 Cor 7.32-33] that their hearts are divided between love of God and love of their spouse, and beset by gnawing cares, and so by reason of the duties of their married state they can hardly be free to contemplate the divine.”¹¹⁹

But only the second of these three points (the married are beset by cares) accurately reflects what Paul says. Rather than speaking of contemplation, Paul speaks of the “affairs of the Lord” as against “worldly affairs.” More importantly, although he says married Christians are divided, he does not say their hearts are divided between love of God and love of their spouse (see **A-4**, above). For Paul to have said that would have implicitly contradicted Jesus’ teaching about love of God and neighbor: not only, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Mt 22.37, Mk 12.30, Lk 10.27) but also, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22.39, Mk 12.31; cf. Lk 10.27).

Since Jesus’ two love commandments must be consistent, Christian love of neighbor must be consistent with loving God *with one’s whole heart*. A Christian’s upright love of another human person does not divide his or her heart between love of God and love of that person. But St. Paul also teaches: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5.25). For husbands to love their wives in that way no more prevents them from loving God wholeheartedly than Jesus’ love for the Church prevents him from loving the Father wholeheartedly.¹²⁰

Some will object that it is wrong to dissent from Pius XII’s teaching that married Christians’ hearts are divided between love of God and love of their spouses. After all,

117. Pius XII, *Sacra virginitas*, AAS 46 (1954) 165, PE, 248:14-15.

118. *Ibid.*, AAS 165-68, PE, 16-19.

119. *Ibid.*, AAS 168, PE, 248:20.

120. See *LCL*, 307-8, including the quotation from John Paul II in fn. 4.

in teaching that Paul was teaching with *with the Holy Spirit's inspiration*, Pius plainly meant to propose it as a truth divinely revealed, and therefore to be held definitively by faith. That, I concede, is precisely what Pope Pius meant to do. But although he proposed the proposition as a truth to be held by faith, he did not solemnly define it, nor was it ever proposed by the bishops dispersed around the world as a truth to be held definitively. Therefore, the teaching has only the authority of ordinary papal magisterium. Faithful Catholics cannot assent to such a teaching if they are morally certain that it is incompatible with a truth asserted in Scripture—as Jesus' teaching on love of neighbor certainly is.

In its document on the Church, Vatican II treats the evangelical counsels as one way of responding to the universal call to holiness and cites Paul in support of its assertion that celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake enables those who receive this precious gift of divine grace “to devote themselves more easily to God alone with undivided hearts (see 1 Cor 7.32-34)” (LG 42). By saying “more easily,” Vatican II avoids repeating Pius XII's claim that married Christians' love for their spouses prevents them from loving God with undivided hearts.

However, the Council's argument also is unsound. First, the affairs with which many of those celibately chaste for the kingdom's sake are preoccupied are those pertaining to the salvific mission that the Lord Jesus undertook and continues to carry out insofar as he is not only God but man. So, those anxious about the Lord's affairs devote themselves not to God alone but to his kingdom—to God and to the whole Christ, including his body, the Church. Second, the significant other of every spouse must be his wife or her husband, and every spouse must be concerned with worldly affairs, such as making a living and participating in neighborhood and civic affairs. The division Paul observed in married Christians is inevitable, not one they can with difficulty overcome.

Again, some will object that it is wrong to dissent from Vatican II's teaching that Christians committed to celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake can *more easily* love God with undivided hearts. However, Vatican II made it clear that it was not infallibly defining anything.¹²¹ Moreover, it not only supported the teaching in question with an unsound argument but itself implicitly contradicted it by what it taught about the universal call to holiness, which was soundly derived from the New Testament.

121. The Theological Commission of Vatican II declared on March 6, 1964: “In view of conciliar practice and the pastoral purpose of the present Council, this sacred Synod defines matters of faith and morals as binding on the Church only when the Synod itself openly declares so,” and this declaration was quoted in: “From the Acts of the Most Holy Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Announcements Made by the Most Excellent Secretary General of the Most Holy Council at the 123rd General Congregation; November 16, 1964,” AAS 57 (1965) 72; *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. William M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: America Press, 1966), 98. Vatican II never declared itself to be defining anything, as Paul VI noted: “Some people have asked what authority, what theological qualification the Council intended to attribute to its teaching, since it clearly avoided issuing solemn definitions that would involve the infallibility of the magisterium. The answer is clear for anyone who recalls the Council declaration issued on March 6, 1964, and repeated on November 16, 1964. In view of the pastoral nature of the Council, it avoided any extraordinary statement of dogmas that would be endowed with the note of infallibility, but still provided its teaching with the authority of the supreme ordinary magisterium” (*General Audience* [12 Jan. 1966], *The Pope Speaks*, 11 [1966]: 154; *Inseg.*, ???).

If the Council avoided Pius XII's error of claiming that spouses' hearts are inevitably divided between love of God and love of each other, why did it fallaciously cite Paul's text to support the claim that celibate chastity makes it easier to love God wholeheartedly? Probably because that view was widespread in Catholic theology. St. Thomas, for example, embraces it in explaining that the New Law fittingly includes not only precepts but counsels. Since the New Law is the law of liberty, he says, it fittingly includes not only strict obligations but optional norms. He explains:

Therefore, the precepts of the New Law must be understood as given regarding the things necessary for pursuing the end of eternal beatitude, to which the New Law immediately directs, while the counsels must be about things by which one can better and more expeditiously pursue that end.

Now, human beings are placed between the things of this world and spiritual goods in which eternal beatitude consists, so that the more they attach themselves to either, the more they distance themselves from the other. Thus, if one completely attaches oneself to the things of this world, so that one puts one's end in them and treats them like reasons for and standards of one's actions, one entirely falls away from spiritual goods. That disorder is excluded by the precepts. But reaching the aforesaid end does not require people to totally reject the things of the world, because if one uses things of the world without putting one's end in them, one can reach eternal beatitude, though one can reach it more expeditiously by totally abandoning the things of the world, and therefore on this the gospel provides counsels.

Now, the goods of this world relevant to human life are threefold: wealth in material goods, with which "lust of the eyes" is concerned; carnal delights, with which "lust of the flesh" is concerned; and honors, with which "pride of life" is concerned—as 1 John 2.16 makes clear. To forgo these totally, insofar as possible, belongs to the evangelical counsels. In these three, also, is the basis for every religious institute which professes the state of perfection; for wealth is given up by poverty, carnal delights by perpetual chastity, and pride of life by the servitude of obedience.¹²²

Thomas argues elsewhere that life according to the counsels aims at a perfection of charity—that is, wholehearted love of God—midway between that of the blessed in heaven and Christians in this world. The blessed love God in act always, while, usually, Christians in this world at best love him only habitually, that is, neither thinking of him nor consenting to something contrary to love of him. But those who undertake the counsels renounce temporal things as much as possible so as to love God in act as much as possible.¹²³

The truth is, though, that growth in charity is stimulated, not by that to which the Father calls certain Christians but by how any Christian responds to the Father's call. To grow in charity, one must listen to his call, consistently do his will, and gladly accept

122. *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 108, a. 4, c. Although John Paul II does not cite this passage, he follows this line of argument in *Redemptionis donum*, 9, AAS 76 (1984) 527-30, *OR*, 2 Apr. 1984, 3.

123. See *S.t.*, 1-2, q. 44, a. 4, ad 2 and ad 3. This passage was cited by Vatican II (in LG 42, fn. 13) but not by Pius XII in *Sacra virginitas*. On Thomas's teaching on the counsels in general, this passage in particular, and Vatican II's use of it, see Friedrich Wulf, "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 2:306-14.

everything from his hand. These are fruits of grace. But surely the Father never asks the impossible of anyone, and thus he offers everyone he calls the graces required to respond perfectly to his call. I impede my growth in charity by failing to welcome graces he offers me. The view that celibate chastity stimulates growth in holiness and that marriage impedes it thus implicitly contradicts the truth that everyone is called to grow in holiness by finding, accepting, and faithfully fulfilling his or her personal vocation.¹²⁴

Thomas's way of contrasting spiritual goods and the things of the world owes more to residues of neo-Platonism in Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius than it does to the New Testament. Although Jesus emphatically teaches his disciples detachment from everything other than God's kingdom and his righteousness, he promises that the Father will satisfy the human needs of those who concentrate on that ultimate end (see Mt 6.25-33). He insists, too, that his disciples meet their neighbors' human needs (see Mt 25.31-46), which inevitably involves them in the things of the world. Paul also taught detachment from the goods of marriage and property that belong to the passing world (see 1 Cor 7.29-31), yet he teaches that both celibate chastity and marriage are charisms (see 1 Cor 7.7), and that all charisms, including contributing liberally and doing works of mercy, are for building up the one body (see Rom 12.3-8).

Moreover, in approving secular institutes of consecrated life, Pius XII recognized that their members' apostolates are not only *in the world* but *from the world*.¹²⁵ Thus, he implicitly conceded that even consecrated life need not focus on "the affairs of the Lord" as Paul understood them, much less abandon the things of the world in order to attain the ultimate end more easily and expeditiously.

Those who undertake celibate chastity for the kingdom's sake can enjoy intimate friendship with Jesus as man—friendship that will motivate them to welcome the graces God offers and thus grow in holiness. Yet unlike the familial relationships that motivate devout married Christians to constant love of neighbor, that friendship does not come naturally. Those who undertake celibate chastity can neglect their relationship with Jesus and become self-absorbed. While avoiding consumerism and living austere in consequence of forgoing personal ownership, they may nevertheless become profoundly attached to their community's material goods, both for individual use and enjoyment of them and as an aspect of communal life ("our monastery," "our habit") and service ("our hospitals," "our library"). Similarly, while obedience is an obstacle to the quest for honors of some sorts, Christians eager for recognition always can prefer it to meekly accepting God's plan for their lives.¹²⁶

124. This line of argument is developed in greater detail by Lozano, *op. cit.*, 56-72, with whom I agree in general, though not in every detail.

125. Pius XII, *Primo feliciter* (12 Mar. 1948), AAS 40 (1948) 284-85; Courtois, ed., *op. cit.*, 120.

126. While St. Augustine, *On holy virginity*, argues at length for the superiority of virginity over marriage, he devotes a large part (32-56) of that work to humility, for he realizes that awareness of possessing the charism considered superior will be an occasion of the sin of pride. While the virgin should not hesitate to put her charism above marriage, he thinks, "the individual virgin who is obedient and fears God should not presume to raise herself above one laywoman or another who is obedient and fears God. Otherwise she will not be humble, and 'God resists the proud' (Jas 4.6)" (45), trans. from Augustine, *De bono coniugali; De sancta virginitate*, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 131.

When dealing with celibate chastity in its decree on the ministry and life of presbyters, Vatican II taught more soundly than it did in its document on the Church:

By virginity or celibacy observed for the heavenly kingdom's sake (see Mt 19.12), presbyters are consecrated to Christ in a new and outstanding way. They adhere to him more easily with an undivided heart (see 1 Cor 7.32-34). In him and through him, they dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and human beings; they more effectively minister to his kingdom and the work of supernatural regeneration, and thus become suited to accept fatherhood, understood broadly, in Christ. In this way they profess themselves before others to will undividedly to devote themselves to the role entrusted to them—namely, to betroth the faithful to one husband and present them to Christ as a chaste bride (see 2 Cor 11.2), thus evoking the mysterious marriage founded by God that will be fully manifested in the age to come, when the Church will have Christ as her only Spouse [note omitted]. (PO 16)

Here the Council situates the undividedness made possible by celibate chastity where Paul did: in adherence to the Lord and commitment to ministry.¹²⁷

Vatican II also taught on chastity in its decree on the renewal of religious life. The expression *undivided heart* does not appear; instead the Council simply affirms that celibate chastity “frees the human heart in a singular way (see 1 Cor 7:32-35) so that it may be more inflamed with love for God and for all human beings, and thus it is a very special sign of heavenly goods and a very suitable means by which religious dedicate themselves to divine service and apostolic works” (PC 12). This teaching would be entirely sound had the Council said that celibate chastity frees the heart for greater love for the Lord—that is, for Jesus as man—rather than for God.

In its decree on priestly formation, the Council does say that seminarians who accept the celibate state “forgo the companionship of marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (see Mt 19.12), adhere to the Lord with undivided love [note omitted] that perfectly fits the new covenant, bear witness to the resurrection in the coming age (see Lk 20.36), and obtain the most suitable help in constantly exercising that perfect charity by which they can become in their priestly ministry all things to all people [note omitted]” (OT 10). This teaching is entirely sound.¹²⁸

Paul VI avoided invidiously comparing marriage with celibate chastity in his 1967 encyclical on priestly celibacy. He made it clear that married Christians have their own way of holiness by affirming the true excellence of the holy celibate person's intimacy with Jesus and witness to the kingdom: “But Christ, ‘Mediator of a superior covenant’ (Heb 8.6), has also opened a new way, in which the human creature adheres wholly and directly to the Lord, and is concerned only with him and with his affairs (see 1 Cor 7.33-

127. Fortunately, this passage is the basis for present Church law regarding clerical celibacy: *CIC*, c. 277, §1.

128. Unfortunately, the first note omitted from the quotation refers to the passage in Pius XII's encyclical on celibate chastity that begins with the misinterpretation, which I criticized at the beginning of this section, of 1 Cor 7.32, 34.

35); thus, he manifests in a clearer and more complete way the profoundly transforming reality of the New Testament.”¹²⁹

Restating and developing Vatican II’s teachings, the teachings of John Paul II include both sound and unsound passages.

Speaking of celibacy in his exhortation regarding the formation of priests, he begins by quoting the unsound passage from Vatican II’s document on the Church, but at once explains soundly that virginity makes clear the nuptial meaning of the body by its self-giving to Jesus and his Church. He goes on to endorse one of the Synod’s propositions that speaks of the “undivided love of the priest for God and for God’s People”—without citing the often-misinterpreted passage from St. Paul.¹³⁰ Later, in dealing with formation for celibacy, John Paul quotes the entirely sound teaching of Vatican II’s decree on priestly formation.¹³¹

Toward the end of *Vita consecrata*, his apostolic exhortation on consecrated life, John Paul accurately speaks of the undivided love for Jesus that celibate chastity makes possible: “Those who have been given the priceless gift of following the Lord Jesus more closely consider it obvious that he can and must be loved with an undivided heart, that one can devote to him one’s whole life, and not merely certain actions or occasional moments or activities.”¹³² He also begins that document by regarding the special love that celibate chastity involves as focused on Jesus. Yet in that opening passage he mistakenly cites Paul (1 Cor 7.34) to support attributing “an ‘undivided’ heart” to those who devote themselves to Christ by undertaking consecrated life.¹³³ In another passage of *Vita consecrata*, John Paul II mistakenly appeals to Paul’s authority to apply to the dedication of those committed to celibate chastity something true of every holy Christian’s love: “The *chastity* of celibates and virgins, as a manifestation of dedication to God with an *undivided heart* (see 1 Cor 7.32-34), is a reflection of the *infinite love* which links the Divine Persons in the mysterious depths of the life of the Trinity.”¹³⁴

Affirming in *Vita consecrata* that the Church has always taught the superiority of celibate chastity over marriage, John Paul cites as support a canon of the Council of Trent and refers to a passage in Pius XII’s encyclical on virginity appealing to that same canon.¹³⁵ Thus, Pius XII’s appeal to that canon grounded not only his own teaching about

129. Paul VI, *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 20, AAS 59 (1967) 665, PE, 276:20. CIC, cc. 277, §1, and 599, dealing with the celibacy of priests and the evangelical counsel of chastity, also are sound.

130. John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 29, AAS 84 (1992) 703-4, OR, 8 Apr. 1992, VII-VIII.

131. Ibid., 50, AAS 746, OR, XIII.

132. John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 104, AAS 88 (1996) 480, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, XX.

133. Ibid., 1, AAS 377, OR, I.

134. Ibid., 21, AAS 394, OR, IV.

135. Ibid., 32, fn. 63, AAS 406, OR, XXII: “See Ecumenical Council of Trent, session XXIV, canon 10: DS 1810; Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Sacra Virginitas* (March 25, 1954): AAS 46 (1954) 174f [OR mistakenly has 176].” John Paul has a similar reference to Pius XII’s encyclical on virginity (but citing 174ff.) to support the passage in *Familiaris consortio*, 16, previously quoted (in 2, above), in which he affirms the superiority of celibate chastity on the basis of the witness it provides.

celibate chastity but that of John Paul II. I shall now argue that Trent's canon does not in fact support those papal teachings.

As was shown at the beginning of this section, Pius mistakenly claims that the hearts of married persons are divided between love of their spouses and of God. Since holiness requires loving God with one's whole heart, the claim implies that marriage impedes holiness. So, rather than recognizing that celibate chastity is superior to marriage only in important respects, Pius asserts, in summarizing his arguments, that celibate chastity's absolute superiority is a truth of faith:

This doctrine, establishing virginity or celibacy as altogether higher than and preferable to marriage [qua statuitur virginitatem et coelibatum omnino excellere ac matrimonio praestare], was, as we have said, already revealed by the divine Redeemer and by the Apostle to the Gentiles; it also was solemnly defined as a dogma of divine faith by the Council of Trent [note omitted], and always was affirmed by the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church as their common position.¹³⁶

As has been shown (in **A-3** and **A-4**, above), Jesus revealed the superiority of celibate chastity only for those called to it, and Paul revealed its superiority only in certain respects. However, the relevant canon of Trent must be examined, and something must be said about the Fathers and Doctors. Rather than consider many of them, however, I shall focus on St. Thomas Aquinas, who best represents them all.

The Council of Trent defined the following complex statement: "If anyone says that the married state is to be preferred to the state of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity or celibacy than to be joined in marriage, *anathema sit*."¹³⁷ In interpreting this definition, it is important to notice that there are two alternatives to the rejected statement that the married state is to be preferred: (1) that, as Pius XII holds, the state of virginity or celibacy is to be preferred, and (2) that neither state is to be preferred to the other. So, Trent's solemn definition need not be interpreted as asserting that virginity or celibacy is altogether higher than marriage and preferable to it. Moreover, remaining in a state, to which Trent refers, must be distinguished from entering into that state, which Trent does not mention. So, Trent's solemn definition need not be interpreted as asserting that it is better and more blessed to *commit oneself* to virginity or celibacy than to *commit oneself* to marriage.

The preparatory work that led to Trent's canon supports my interpretation. On 4 February 1563, theologians who were helping prepare canons for the Council Fathers to consider were given eight propositions on the sacrament of matrimony to examine, including the following:

5. Matrimony is not to be put after but to be preferred to chastity, and God gives spouses more grace than others.
6. Priests in the West can licitly contract matrimony, their vow or Church law

136. Pius XII, *Sacra virginitas*, II, AAS 46 (1954) 174, *PE*, 248:32 (but the translation here is my own).

137. DS 1810/980: "Si quis dixerit, statum coniugalem anteponendum esse statui virginitatis vel caelibatus, et non esse melius ac beatius, manere in virginitate aut caelibatu, quam iungi matrimonio [see Mt 19.11f; 1 Cor 7.25f., 38, 40]: anathema sit."

notwithstanding, and the opposite position is nothing but a condemnation of matrimony; and all who do not feel they have the gift of chastity can contract matrimony.¹³⁸

From 11 February to 22 March, seventeen theologians assigned to consider those draft canons held sessions in which they articulated their views. Most reaffirmed the received view that celibate chastity is better than and preferable to marriage. However, their deliberations make it clear that their intention was to reject the extreme views of (or attributed to) the Reformers. Moreover, one theologian, Ioannes Gallo, a Spanish Dominican, pointed out that Augustine equated the matrimony of Abraham to the celibate chastity of John the Baptist, and held that “it is possible that there be greater charity in spouses than in virgins.”¹³⁹

The draft canons presented to the Council Fathers on 20 July omitted “God gives spouses more grace than others” from the opinions to be condemned and condensed the other points into a single canon. That draft canon was similar to the canon finally adopted, except that it said “matrimony is to be preferred to virginity or celibacy.”¹⁴⁰ In accord with the urgings of several Fathers, that was amended to “the married state is to be preferred to the state of virginity or celibacy” in the revised draft presented to the Council Fathers on 7 August. The revision remained unchanged in the formulation of the canon defined on 11 November 1563.¹⁴¹

Consequently, although Trent condemns the opinions that the state of marriage is to be preferred to the state of celibate chastity for the kingdom’s sake, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in celibate chastity than to be joined in marriage, it teaches definitively neither that the state of celibate chastity is to be preferred to the state of marriage, nor that it is better and more blessed to commit oneself to celibate chastity than to commit oneself to marriage. So, without contradicting Trent’s definition, one can hold, as I do, that celibate chastity is superior to marriage in certain important respects but neither is unqualifiedly higher than and preferable to the other, that each state should be preferred by those called to it by God, and that it is better and more blessed for Christians who have undertaken either state to remain in it and fulfill their commitment than to leave it—except when both spouses discern the call to undertake celibate chastity for the kingdom’s sake and mutually agree to do so.

In making his case for the view “that virginity or celibacy is altogether higher than marriage and preferable to it,” Pius XII argues that, although chaste marital intercourse is sanctified by the sacrament of marriage, “as a consequence of the fall of Adam the lower faculties of human nature are no longer obedient to right reason, and may

138. *Concilium Tridentinum: Diariorum, Actorum, Epistularum, Tractatum*, ed. Societas Goerresiana (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1965), vol. 9, 380: “5. Matrimonium non postponendum, sed antefendum castitati, et Deum dare coniugibus maiorem gratiam quam aliis. 6. Licite contrahere posse matrimonium sacerdotes occidentales, non obstante voto vel lege ecclesiastica, et oppositum nihil aliud esse quam damnare matrimonium, posseque omnes contrahere matrimonium, qui non sentiunt se habere donum castitatis.”

139. *Ibid.*, 460: “Posset enim esse, ut maior caritas esset in coniugatis quam in virginibus.”

140. *Ibid.*, 640: “matrimonium antependum esse virginitati vel coelibatui.”

141. *Ibid.*, 662, 665, 670, 676, 680, 682, and 968.

involve man in dishonorable actions.” He then quotes St. Thomas: “As the Angelic Doctor has it, the use of marriage ‘keeps the soul from full abandon to the service of God’ (*S.t.*, 2-2, q. 186, a. 4).”¹⁴²

Thomas is dealing in that article with the question of whether perpetual continence is required for *religious* perfection. He offers two arguments for his view that marital intercourse impedes one from “the service of God”—that is, from that service provided God by those who faithfully fulfill the responsibilities of religious life. The second rightly invokes Paul’s authority to make the point that marriage requires a man to care for his wife and so involves him in the things of the world while preventing him from concentrating on the things of the Lord (see 1 Cor 7.32-33). But the first argument, which Pius XII quotes, is that marital intercourse impedes serving God

due to the intensity of the pleasure, the frequent experience of which increases concupiscence, as Aristotle says (*Nicomachean Ethics*, iii, 12 [1119b9]). That is why the pleasurable use of sex withdraws the mind from that perfect intention of tending to God. And this is what Augustine says (*Soliloquies*, i, 10): “I know nothing which brings the manly mind down from the heights more than a woman’s caresses and that joining of bodies without which one cannot have a wife.”

With the authority of Aristotle and Augustine, this argument seems powerfully to support Pius XII’s view.

Aristotle’s observation, however, is made, not in a treatment of chaste marital intercourse, but in a comparison between the sin of intemperance and other sins, as Thomas himself says in his commentary on the passage.¹⁴³ With chaste marital intercourse, however, concupiscence is remedied, not simply by being satisfied, but, as Thomas himself explains, by becoming submissive to reasonable judgments about engaging in and abstaining from intercourse according to the requirements of authentic conjugal love.¹⁴⁴

Similarly, Augustine’s statement, which appears in a work written shortly after his conversion, reflects his own experience with the effects of lust. Reflecting on whether to marry, he says: “I have decided that there is nothing I should avoid so much as

142. *Sacra virginitas*, AAS 46 (1954) 169, *PE*, 248:21.

143. See *In libros Ethicorum*, iii, lect. 22.

144. To an argument that invokes Aristotle’s teaching in *Nicomachean Ethics*, iii, 12 (1119b9), Thomas replies (*In 4 Sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 3, ad 4 [*S.t.*, sup. q. 42, a. 3, ad 4]): “A remedy against concupiscence can be provided in two ways. In one way, on the side of concupiscence by repressing it at the root, and thus matrimony provides a remedy by the grace given in it. In another way, on the side of its act, and this in two ways: first, by causing the act to which concupiscence inclines to lack outward shamefulness, and this is done by the goods of marriage which rectify carnal concupiscence; secondly, by impeding shameful acts, which is done by the very nature of the conjugal act, because that kind of act does not, in satisfying concupiscence, thereby motivate one to other corrupt acts. For this reason the Apostle says (1 Cor. 7.9): ‘It is better to marry than to burn.’ For though the behaviors characteristic of concupiscence in themselves naturally tend to increase concupiscence, yet insofar as they are directed according to reason they repress it, because like acts result in like dispositions and habits.” It also is worth noticing that Thomas does not suppose that reason’s control of chaste marital sexual intimacy does not mean it is less pleasant: *S.t.*, 1, q. 98, a. 2, ad 3; *In 2 Sent.*, d. 20, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2; *In 4 Sent.*, d. 26, q. 1, (= sup. q. 41) a. 3 ad 6.

marriage,” continues at once with the statement Thomas quotes, and goes on to explain that he regards marriage as dangerous, so that “for the sake of the freedom of my soul, I have enjoined myself—with due justice and good reason, I think—not to covet, not to seek, not to marry a wife.”¹⁴⁵ Like someone who can become sober only by entirely giving up alcohol, Augustine, as he himself later explained, had been a sex addict for whose concupiscence marriage could provide no remedy.¹⁴⁶

Again, Pius XII explains that the superiority of celibate chastity, which he has asserted, is mainly due to its having a higher end than marriage. In support he cites two articles of St. Thomas (*S.t.*, 2-2, q. 152, aa. 3-4).¹⁴⁷ In article 3, Thomas is discussing whether virginity is a virtue, and his arguments that it is do not try to show it to be superior to marriage. But in article 4, the issue is whether virginity is more excellent than marriage.

Thomas summarizes the case for holding that it is:

In Jerome’s book *Against Jovinian*, it is clear that Jovinian’s error was in holding that virginity is not preferable to marriage. This error is refuted above all by the example of Christ, who both chose a virgin mother and himself remained a virgin, and by the teaching of St. Paul, who (see 1 Cor 7) counsels virginity as the greater good. It is also refuted by reason: first, because a divine good is superior to a human good; second, because the good of the soul is preferable to the good of the body; and third, because the good of the contemplative life is preferable to that of the active life. Now virginity is directed to the good of the soul in respect of the contemplative life, which consists in thinking on the things of God, while marriage is directed to the good of the body, the bodily multiplying of the human race. That belongs to the active life, since the man and the woman living in matrimony must think about “the things of the world,” as St. Paul says (1 Cor 7). Therefore, virginity undoubtedly should be preferred to conjugal continence.¹⁴⁸

145. *The Soliloquies of Saint Augustine*, trans. Thomas F. Gilligan, O.S.A. (New York: Cosmopolitan Science and Art Service Co., 1943), 41.

146. See *Confessions*, vi, 12.

147. *Sacra virginitas*, AAS 46 (1954) 170, PE, 248:24.

148. In his *Against Jovinianus*—in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd ser., vol. 6: *St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, trans. W. H. Fremantle (New York: Christian Literature, 1890), 346-86—Jerome says (I, 3) that he honors marriage and affirms (I, 13): “The difference, then, between marriage and virginity is as great as that between not sinning and doing well; nay rather, to speak less harshly, as great as between good and better.” But Jerome also, and at length, makes it clear (in I, 7) that he regards marriage as an impediment to authentic Christian living and that it is tolerable only to avoid fornication; he holds that a Christian husband who abstains from marital intercourse honors his wife while one who wishes to engage in marital intercourse fails in self-control and insults his wife. Jerome also refers to 1 Pt 3.7 (an exhortation to husbands) and ends his argument by interpreting it: “In effect he says this: Since your outer man is corrupt, and you have ceased to possess the blessing of incorruption characteristic of virgins, at least imitate the incorruption of the spirit by subsequent abstinence, and what you cannot show in the body exhibit in the mind. For these are the riches, and these the ornaments of your union, which Christ seeks.” Moreover, commenting in I, 9 on Paul’s statement, “It is better to marry than to be aflame with passion” (1 Cor 7.8), Jerome says: “If marriage in itself be good, do not compare it with fire, but simply say, ‘It is good to marry.’ I suspect the goodness of that thing which is forced into the position of being only the lesser of two evils. What I want is not a smaller evil, but a thing absolutely good.”

This case, however, is riddled with fallacies.

Jesus' commitment to his mission adequately accounts for his whole lifestyle (see **A-2**, above), including his becoming a "eunuch for the kingdom's sake." By choosing that description of remaining unmarried and childless, moreover, he made it clear that he regarded his celibate chastity much as he regarded his death: both were deprivations to be freely accepted in faithfully carrying out the Father's plan for his life. It should be noted, too, that Jesus did not, as man, choose his own mother; rather, God created Mary to be the incarnate Word's mother and, in doing so, provided the plan of her life, including her commitment to virginity. That virginity served an important purpose: "The Fathers see in the virginal conception the sign that it truly was the Son of God who came in a humanity like our own" (CCC, 496). So, God's choice to reveal Jesus' divinity is sufficient to explain his choice to include virginity in Mary's personal vocation. It therefore begs the question to assume that Mary's virginity shows the state of celibate chastity to be more excellent than the married state. Thomas overlooked the fallacy because the mistakes of Greek philosophy, both those of Aristotle and those of the neo-Platonism purveyed by Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, led him to focus on the state of life that supposedly was better suited for pursuing holiness and distracted him from the New Testament's teachings about personal vocation and the diverse charisms that build up the one body of Christ, the incipient communion that will reach perfection in the heavenly kingdom.

St. Paul holds (in 1 Cor 7) that both marriage and celibate chastity are charisms—gifts of God (v. 7). He teaches: "Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches" (v. 17). He specifies two respects in which remaining unmarried is superior, one based on a self-interested concern about impending distress and the avoidance of worldly troubles (vv. 26, 28), the other that remaining unmarried enables a Christian to wait on the Lord undistractedly (undivided devotion to the Lord) (vv. 32-35). The latter consideration calls attention to the real superiority of celibate chastity: those who practice it enjoy a more intimate relationship with Jesus and closer collaboration with him.

Thomas is right in saying St. Paul commends virginity as the better charism. But Paul maintains only that celibate chastity is better in a certain respect, whereas Augustine and Thomas consider it, in Pius XII's formulation of their and his view, "altogether higher than marriage and preferable to it." That Thomas is missing Paul's real point becomes clear when he substitutes "thinking on the things of God" for Paul's "anxious about the affairs of the Lord"—that is, focused on collaborating with Jesus.¹⁴⁹

Thomas assumes that virginity is a divine good and marriage a human good. Insofar as Jesus is God, however, he is as incapable of celibate chastity as he is of dying. His celibate chastity and his dying are not divine goods but human ones, both good only insofar as they pertain to his life dedicated to the Father, accepted freely as side effects of

149. Someone might object: "the things of God" and "the affairs of the Lord" could be used interchangeably. Perhaps. But "thinking on" and "anxious about" cannot.

doing the Father's will, and contribute to God's redemptive work. Both consecrated life and sacramental marriage are human goods that pertain to the supernatural order.¹⁵⁰

Thomas assumes that virginity is a good of the soul and marriage a good of the body. Both consecrated life and sacramental marriage, however, are goods of whole human individuals; neither is the good of body or soul alone. Being a sign of the union of Jesus and the Church is not merely a bodily good, and, as Paul says: "the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit" (1 Cor 7.34).

Thomas assumes that virginity pertains to the contemplative life. But St. Angela Merici founded a company of virgins whose concern about the affairs of the Lord motivated them to carry on an active apostolate in the world, and some devout married women are no less contemplative than holy members of women's religious institutes devoted to teaching, health care, or other charitable works.

Thomas also answers three arguments for the view that virginity is not more excellent than marriage. The first two are based on the virtue of particular married people, and Thomas's responses to them make it clear he is comparing only the states of marriage and celibate chastity and not excluding the possibility that some spouses might be holier than some virgins. The third argument against virginity's superiority is this:

Common good is higher than private good, as Aristotle makes clear. Now, marriage is ordered toward common good, for Augustine says: "What food is to the preservation of the individual, intercourse is to the preservation of the human race." But virginity is ordered to a special good of individuals, namely, that they avoid the worldly troubles that spouses experience, as Paul makes clear (see 1 Cor 7.28). So, virginity is not higher than conjugal continence.

This argument is answered by Thomas:

Common good is higher than private good if both belong to the same genus; but a private good can be generically better than a common good. In this way, virginity dedicated to God is preferred to bodily fruitfulness. So Augustine says that "the physical fruitfulness even of those women of our era who seek nothing from marriage except offspring to commit to Christ cannot possibly be thought to compensate for loss of virginity."¹⁵¹

150. John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 18, AAS 88 (1996) 392, OR, 3 Apr. 1996, III, teaches that Jesus' "way of living in chastity, poverty and obedience appears as the most radical way of living the gospel on this earth, a way which may be called *divine*, for it was embraced by him, God and man, as the expression of his relationship as the Only-Begotten Son with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. This is why Christian tradition has always spoken of the *objective superiority of the consecrated life*." But, although Jesus' way of humanly living his gospel is radical and objectively superior, as I explained (in **A-2**, above), and although his lifestyle may be called *divine* inasmuch as he is a divine person, *human* goods explain both why he adopted his lifestyle and its objective superiority to other good human lifestyles. If Jesus adopted his unique lifestyle as an expression of his relationship with the Father and the Spirit, he did so because his mission itself somehow expresses that relationship. However, the consecrated life of *human persons* cannot rightly be called "divine." It is an objectively superior human lifestyle just insofar as it participates in Jesus' own lifestyle considered as the most perfect human lifestyle (see **2**, above).

151. *S.t.*, 2-2, q. 152, a. 4, ad 3. The quotation from Augustine is in *On Holy Virginity*, 9; the translation here is taken from P. G. Walsh, ed., op. cit., 75.

Augustine's statement is the conclusion of an argument in which he concedes that a claim by Christian mothers that their fruitfulness is as great a blessing as other Christians' dedicated virginity "would certainly be tolerable if the children to whom they gave birth were Christians" but points out that they are not until the "Church gives birth to them."¹⁵²

If this argument were sound, Augustine's conclusion would support Thomas's claim that virginity dedicated to God is preferable to bodily fruitfulness. In fact, it might even support the claim's adequacy as a response to the view that virginity is not higher than conjugal continence. However, Augustine simply ignores the fact that Christian marriage and the parenthood it includes are more than the couple's reproductive behavior and its natural consequences.¹⁵³ Thomas's use of Augustine's conclusion therefore is fallacious. Thomas's (and Pius XII's) thesis is that virginity is more excellent than marriage; and Augustine's comparison—of virginity dedicated to God to bodily fruitfulness abstracted from Christian parents' dedication of their marital intercourse and parenthood to God—cannot show that virginity is more excellent than marriage, any more than comparing marriage undertaken as part of a couple's vocation and an intact hymen abstracted from a virgin's dedication to God could show that marriage is more excellent than virginity.

At the end of this lengthy refutation of arguments for the unqualified superiority of consecrated life, I affirm again that holy consecrated life does mirror Jesus' uniquely excellent lifestyle. It involves a more intimate relationship with Jesus and closer collaboration with him than other forms of evangelical life lived with similar fidelity. Moreover, since the meritorious works of the saints are entirely the fruit of grace, holy consecrated life is a living miracle—a brilliant sign that clearly points both to the Spirit, who is the source of all grace, and to the heavenly kingdom, which will be its ultimate fruit.

152. P. G. Walsh, ed., *op. cit.*, 7, p. 73.

153. United in Christ and themselves members of his Church, Christian parents have an important role in the cooperation by which the Church gives their offspring birth as new Christians. Church law makes parents' essential role clear by forbidding, except in special circumstances, that a child be baptized unless the parents consent and undertake to bring him or her up as a Catholic (see *CIC*, 868, §1).

C: How Ordained Ministry and a Lifestyle Like Jesus' Are Related

1) Jesus continues his saving work through those he sends.

Having been sent by the Father, Jesus sends others, beginning with the Twelve, and tells them they will make him present as he has made his Father present: "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me" (Mt 10.40; cf. Jn 13.20). He says essentially the same thing when he sends the seventy (see Lk 10.16). And he promises to remain *with* his Church as she carries out her mission with his authority: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28.18-20).

Those thus sent, as Ceslas Spicq explains, were appropriately called "apostles." Underlying the Greek *apostolos* (meaning "envoy, emissary"), Spicq detects the Semitic institution of the *salīah*: "This person is not a mere envoy but a chargé d'affaires, a person's authorized representative; his acts are binding upon the 'sender.' At this point the principal and the proxy are equivalent . . . This rule carries over into the religious sphere: when the *salīah* acts on God's orders, it is God himself who acts."¹⁵⁴ Consequently, when those Jesus sends bind or loose on earth as he has authorized them to do, their action is effective "in heaven" (see Mt 16.19, 18.18)—that is, with God. The seventy Jesus sent reported on their mission's effectiveness: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" (Lk 10.17).

Of course, of themselves those sent are incapable of making present Jesus' human acts, much less his divine actions. But Jesus gives them the Holy Spirit: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. . . . Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (Jn 20.21-23). Likewise, those he sends can convey God's saving truth, to be accepted with faith, because he has consecrated them in truth (see Jn 17.17-19) and given them the Holy Spirit (see Lk 24.49; Acts 1.4-5, 8; cf. Mt 10.19-20; Jn 14.16-17, 25-26; 15.26-27; 16.7-15). Thus, after Pentecost (see Acts 2.1-4) the apostles taught, worked miracles, and did exorcisms "in the name" of Jesus (see Acts 3.6; 4.10, 30; 5.40; 9.27, 29; 16.18); and they presented the resolution of a divisive issue as the Holy Spirit's position as well as their own (see Acts 15.28).

In no way did the apostles' action replace Jesus' action or detract from its significance when they served as his authorized agents, acting in his name. Of course, after his resurrection and ascension, his presence and action were not obvious. But the apostles' role was similar to what it had been before. When, for instance, they carried out his directive to do in his memory what he had done in the Last Supper,¹⁵⁵ their role was

154. Spicq, *op. cit.*, 1:188-89; cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 28A:857, on Lk 10.16. Also see John Paul II, *Pastores gregis*, 9, AAS 96 (2004) 836-37, *OR*, 22 Oct. 2003, III-IV.

155. See Lk 22.19, 1 Cor 11.24-25. Paul includes the directive after the blessing of both the bread and the cup, and adds: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11.26). Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 28A:1401-2, explains that Jesus is replacing the

not greatly different from what it had been when they fed the hungry thousands with food Jesus miraculously provided.¹⁵⁶

St. Paul was fully conscious of being Jesus' agent. Writing to the Corinthians, he appeals "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1.10; cf. Rom 1.5, 2 Cor 13.10, 2 Thes 3.6); he regards himself and others engaged in spreading the faith as ministers through whom God is working (see 1 Cor 3.5-9; cf. Eph 3.2, Col 1.25); in Jesus' name he judges a wrongdoer in the community, confident that Jesus will carry out the judgment (see 1 Cor 5.3-5). Explaining that God reconciled the world to himself through Jesus and established an ongoing ministry of reconciliation (see 2 Cor 5.18-19), Paul describes his ministerial role: "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5.20).¹⁵⁷ He also credits the Galatians for receiving him as Jesus' emissary—indeed, for receiving him *as Christ himself*: "You did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel [messenger] of God, as Christ Jesus" (Gal 4.14).

Thus, the New Testament makes it clear that the ministry of the apostles and those who share in it has a special relationship to the Lord Jesus' own action and the Holy Spirit's work.

2) Clerics act in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*).

That special relationship and its unique features came to be encapsulated in the expression, *in the person of Christ*, which also may have originated with St. Paul.

A wrongdoer having been disciplined by the majority of the Corinthian church at Paul's urging, he begs them to forgive that person (see 2 Cor 2.5-9). He certainly wants the Corinthians' forgiveness to be wholehearted, and probably for that reason he does not command or even anticipate it, but invites them to take the lead: "Any one whom you forgive, I also forgive." But he then adds: "What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake"—and the Greek sentence goes on—"en prosopo Christou" (1 Cor 2.10).

That phrase is ambiguous. The RSV and most other recent translations, including the NAB and NJB, render it *in the presence of Christ*, implying that Paul either is reinforcing, as with an oath, his affirmation that any forgiving he has already done was for the Corinthians' sake or is explaining that his forgiving, if any, was not intended to preempt theirs but was exacted by his submission to Christ, in whose presence he is conscious of living.¹⁵⁸ However, St. Jerome translated *en prosopo Christou* as *in persona*

Pascal lamb with himself, the old covenant with the new, and the Passover ritual with the re-presenting of him and his sacrifice.

156. See Lk 9.10-17; cf. Mt 14.13-21, Mk 6.30-44; in John's account (6.1-13), the apostles' role is limited to gathering up the leftovers.

157. The ministry of reconciliation of which Paul speaks certainly includes the administration of the sacraments of baptism and penance, but is not limited to that: Paul regards himself as an "ambassador" for the "mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6.19-20), for the whole of God's salvific work in Christ.

158. See, for example, Furnish, op. cit., 153, 157-58; Philip E. Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962), 69-71; Eduard Lohse, s.v. *prosopon* in *TDNT* (6:777) says that "in 2 C. 2:10 Paul appeals to Christ as witness to the sincerity of his forgiveness."

Christi, and many others have interpreted the Greek similarly.¹⁵⁹ Not even all recent Scripture scholars agree that *en prosopo Christou* should be rendered *in the presence of Christ*; the NEB translates it “as the representative of Christ” and Alfred Marshall’s interlinear translation is “in [the] person of Christ.”¹⁶⁰ This reading implies that Paul is distinguishing between his promised forgiving *in propria persona*, where he will follow the Corinthians’ lead, and the forgiving he may already have done *in persona Christi* for the benefit of the church at Corinth. The latter would have been an exercise of divine mercy that called for rather than preempted the Corinthian church’s charity toward its wayward member.¹⁶¹

The context seems to me to support St. Jerome’s translation, for Paul at once explains why he has forgiven, if he has, *en prosopo Christou*: “to keep Satan from gaining the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his designs” (2 Cor 2.11). Being very aware that only God, working in Jesus, has conquered the forces of evil, Paul has good reason to say that, if he forgave, he did so acting in Christ’s person—that is, as his emissary (or *salîah*)—so as to counter Satan. Moreover, if he was acting *in propria persona*, any forgiving he already has done, even if done in Christ’s presence, has anticipated what he is urging the Corinthians to do.¹⁶²

Be that as it may, St. Thomas Aquinas accepted St. Jerome’s translation of 2 Cor 2.10 and often cited that text in explaining that clerics can do various things only inasmuch as they act in the person of God or of Christ. For example, the authority of a

159. Hughes, *op. cit.*, 71, fn. 18: “The Vulgate, Estius, Luther, Alford, AV, RV (one of the places where the latter differs from ASV) render *en prosopo Christou* here ‘in the person of Christ’, implying that Paul forgave the offender ‘acting as Christ’ (Alford).”

160. *The R.S.V. Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, 3rd ed. (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1975), 711.

161. Hughes (*loc. cit.*) adds after his quoted remark: “But the authoritarian note of such a rendering is out of harmony with the context.” However, that rendering no more has an authoritarian note than any other expression of awareness of being the instrument of God’s *pervenient* grace.

162. *In the presence of Christ* is assumed to be the correct reading by Bernard Dominique Marliangéas in his seminal study of the history of *in persona Christi*: *Clés pour une Théologie du Ministère: In Persona Christi, in Persona Ecclesiae* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1978), 31-48, 225-26. He shows that several of the Fathers: (1) used *ek prosopou* (Lat.: *ex persona*) and other expressions in attributing to Christ what others, such as the psalmists, had said; (2) held that Christ acts through his ministers; and (3) by the beginning of the fourth century, were taking 2 Cor 2.10 in a directly “sacramental” sense. Noting that St. Jerome put that sense into the vulgate by translating Paul’s *en prosopo* as *in persona* but convinced that *en prosopo* always meant “in the presence of,” Marliangéas holds (pp. 46 and 226) that Jerome and the tradition gave 2 Cor 2.10 an interpretation that the literal sense of the Greek text did not support. Similarly, Lohse, *op. cit.*, 778, says of *prosopon*: “The sense ‘person’ occurs in the NT at 2 C. 1:11” and also reports (770): “In the 2nd cent. Phrynichos [note omitted] complains that orators often spoke of *prosopa* in court and in so doing offended against correct Gk.”; still, he holds (770) that one may not assume that “in the NT period or the age of the early Church” *en prosopo* had a sense corresponding to the Latin *in persona*. However, neither Marliangéas nor Lohse deals with Paul’s explanation of *why* he did any forgiving he may have done *en prosopo Christou*, and the data they do present might be accounted for by a different hypothesis: Paul, perhaps familiar with the Latin *in persona*, anticipated the second-century orators’ offense against correct Greek; Jerome and others, reflecting on 2 Cor 2.10 in its context, accurately grasped and expressed what Paul really meant. See also Charles R. Meyer, “The Ordination of Women: Responses to Bishop Untener,” *Worship*, 65:3 (May 1991): 256-62.

prelate (a bishop or religious superior) is required to dispense vows, because prelates “hold the place of God [gerit vicem Dei] in the Church” and “determine in the person of God [in persona Dei] what is acceptable to him, according to 2 Cor 2.10.” A prelate should dispense a vow only for the “honor of Christ, in whose person he dispenses, or for the benefit of the Church, which is Christ’s body” (*S.t.*, 2-2, q. 88, a. 12, c.). Again, “Christ is the head of the Church by his own power and authority, while others are called heads inasmuch as they take the place of Christ [vicem gerunt Christi], according to 2 Cor 2.10 . . . and 2 Cor 5.20” (*S.t.*, 3, q. 8, a. 6, c.).

Thomas states unqualifiedly that Christian priests act *in persona Christi*: “Christ is the font of the entire priesthood, for the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ while the priest of the new law works in his person [in persona ipsius operatur], according to 2 Cor 2.10” (*S.t.*, 3, q. 22, a. 4, c.). But Thomas also clarifies the limits of the authority of the apostles and their successors. When 2 Cor 2.10 is cited to argue that they can institute new sacraments because “the apostles held the place of God [vicem Dei gesserunt] on earth” (*S.t.*, 3, q. 64, a. 2, obj. 3), Thomas answers that “the apostles and their successors are God’s vicars with respect to the governance of the Church instituted by faith and the sacraments of faith. So, just as they are not free to constitute another Church, so they are not free to hand on another faith or to institute other sacraments” (*ibid.*, ad 3.)

Most uses by Thomas of *in persona Christi* are in statements about ordained priests’ role in the Eucharist. “Whoever acts in the person of another must do it by power granted by that other. Just as every Christian at baptism is empowered by Jesus to receive the Eucharist, so priests are empowered at ordination to consecrate in the person of Christ” (*S.t.*, 3, q. 82, a. 1, c.). A concelebrated Mass does not involve multiple consecrations because all the concelebrants participate in one and the same act insofar as all act in the person of Christ (see *ibid.*, a. 2, ad 2). Since the Lord Jesus both consecrated and distributed his own body at the Last Supper, the ordained priest who consecrates in the person of Christ also fittingly distributes Communion (see *ibid.*, a. 3). A priest who is a wicked minister remains Jesus’ minister, and so can consecrate the Eucharist, because he does so acting in the person of Christ; still, the unworthy celebrant’s own action deserves a curse (see *ibid.*, a. 5). Since a priest “in the consecration of the sacrament speaks in the person of Christ, whose place in this he takes [cuius vicem in hoc gerit] through the power of orders,” even if he cuts himself off from the Church “he consecrates the true body and blood of Christ” (*ibid.*, a. 7, ad 3).

After Thomas, there seems to have been no significant theological progress in clarifying *in persona Christi* until Vatican II.¹⁶³ Obviously influenced by the statement of St. Thomas just quoted, the Council of Florence for the first time used *in persona Christi* in a document of the magisterium (the *Decree for the Armenians*, 1439), when it taught that the form of the sacrament of the Eucharist is “the words of the Savior, by which he effected this sacrament; for a priest effects this sacrament speaking in the person of Christ” (DS 1321/698). But not until Pius XII did Church teaching begin to make significant use of the expression.

163. See Marliangéas, *op. cit.*, 228-31.

In his encyclical on the sacred liturgy, Pope Pius begins with Christ, the unique priest of the new covenant. He points out that Jesus is present at the Eucharist not only under the appearance of bread and wine but also “in the person of his minister.”¹⁶⁴ As ordained priests, they

. . . represent [sustinent] the person of Jesus Christ before their people, acting at the same time as representatives of their people before God. . . . Prior to acting as representative of the community before the throne of God, the priest is the ambassador [legatus] of the divine Redeemer. He is God’s vice-gerent [vices gerit] in the midst of his flock precisely because Jesus Christ is Head of that body of which Christians are the members. The power entrusted to him, therefore, bears no natural resemblance to anything human. It is entirely supernatural. It comes from God.¹⁶⁵

Thus, the ordained minister’s sacred power does not extend to anything he does *in propria persona*. Rather, he, “by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is made like to the high priest and possesses the power of performing actions in virtue of Christ’s very person [note omitted]. Wherefore in his priestly activity he in a certain manner ‘lends his tongue, and gives his hand’ to Christ [note omitted].”¹⁶⁶

In its document on the liturgy, Vatican II develops Pius XII’s teaching (see SC 7). The Council repeats that Jesus is present at the Eucharist in the person of the minister and makes it clear that the ordained priest’s service makes present—not replaces—Jesus’ own action. It does this by adding a quotation from the Council of Trent: “the same now offering himself by the ministry of priests who then offered himself on the cross” (DS 1743/940). Then, the Council also indicates that Christ’s presence is not limited to the Eucharist by at once adding that Christ baptizes when anyone baptizes and speaks when Scripture is read in church.

Later in the same document, the Council teaches that, in the liturgy, God continues to speak to his people and Jesus continues to proclaim his gospel. Then it adds: “Moreover, the prayers directed to God by the priest, who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ, are said in the name of the whole holy people and of all here present” (SC 33). The ordained priest not only consecrates but *presides* in the person of Christ and addresses prayers to the Father in the name of the whole Church, not just those present at the particular celebration. The Council’s formulation also suggests what Pius XII had taught: the capacity of the ordained to act in the name of the Church *presupposes* their capacity to act in the person of Christ.

In distinguishing the ministerial priesthood from the priesthood common to all the baptized in its document on the Church, Vatican II might seem to limit what the ordained priest does in the person of Christ to consecrating the Eucharist. For it teaches that “by the sacred power he enjoys, he forms and governs the priestly people, effects

164. *Mediator Dei*, AAS 39 (1947) 528, PE, 233:20.

165. *Mediator Dei*, AAS 39 (1947) 538, PE, 233:40.

166. *Ibid.*, AAS 39 (1947) 548, PE, 233:69. The first of the two omitted notes refers to Thomas, *S.t.*, 3, q. 22, art. 4, where he holds that Christian priesthood as such is characterized by acting *in persona Christi*; the second is to St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, 86:4; in context, the quoted phrases help make the point that God alone bestows the benefits brought about through the ordained priest.

the eucharistic sacrifice in the person of Christ, and offers it to God in the name of the whole people” (LG 10). When explaining the ministry of bishops, however, the Council teaches that Jesus is present in the midst of the faithful “in the bishops, whom priests assist,” and that by the bishops’ service Jesus preaches the word of God to all nations, administers the sacraments to Christians, incorporates new members into his body, and leads and governs the people of the new covenant in their journey toward eternal happiness. Thus, “the bishops, in an eminent and visible way, carry out the roles of Christ himself [ipsius Christi . . . partes sustineant]—teacher, pastor, and priest—and act in his person” (LG 21).

In the same document, explaining what presbyters are, the Council only explicitly teaches that they act in the person of Christ when celebrating the Eucharist:

[Presbyters] proclaim the divine word to all people, participating in the role of Christ the unique mediator (see 1 Tm 2.5). But they exercise this sacred role most fully in eucharistic worship, in the eucharistic assembly of the faithful [synaxis]; there, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they unite the offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of their Head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord (see 1 Cor 11.26), the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, namely, that of Christ offering himself once for all as a spotless victim to the Father. (LG 28; notes omitted)

In the same article, however, the Council teaches that the ministry of bishops is shared within limits by presbyters, and their share includes participation in Christ’s prophetic and pastoral roles, so that presbyters with their bishop work together in carrying out the three roles. The implication is that presbyters, like bishops, act in the person of Christ in all three roles. Appropriately, then, the Council refers back to this article in its document on missionary activity when it teaches: “Presbyters represent Christ [personam Christi gerunt] and cooperate with the episcopal order in the threefold sacred role that by its very nature pertains to the Church’s mission” (AG 39).

Vatican II makes the point more clearly in its document on the ministry and life of priests in explaining how the priesthood of presbyters is different from the priesthood of the baptized in general and is related to that of bishops and of Jesus:

The office of presbyters, inasmuch as it is joined to the episcopal order, participates in the authority by which Christ himself constitutes, sanctifies, and rules his own body. So, while the priesthood of presbyters presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, it is conferred by a distinctive sacrament, by which presbyters . . . are enabled to act in the person of Christ the head (see *Lumen gentium*, 10). (PO 2)

Elsewhere in the same document, the Council teaches: that ordained ministers in general “publicly fulfill their priestly office for the sake of others in the name of Christ” (PO 2); that every priest “represents Christ himself [ipsius Christi personam gerat]” (PO 12); and that presbyters “especially represent Christ [personam specialiter gerunt Christi]” as ministers of sacred rites, “especially in the sacrifice of the Mass” (PO 13).

In sum, Vatican II, like St. Thomas, holds that bishops and presbyters act in the person of Christ in a way somehow special when they celebrate the Eucharist, yet also

really represent him and act in his person when carrying out other parts of the threefold ministry for which they are ordained.

The 1971 session of the Synod of Bishops neatly restates the Council's teaching. The Synod states that ordained priesthood must be understood in the context of the Church, which always remains subject to Christ. The

priestly ministry of the New Testament, which continues Christ's function as mediator . . . alone perpetuates the essential work of the Apostles: by effectively proclaiming the gospel, by gathering together and leading the community, by remitting sins, and especially by celebrating the Eucharist, it makes Christ, the head of the community, present in the exercise of his work of redeeming mankind and glorifying God perfectly.¹⁶⁷

Subsequently, the *Code of Canon Law* was completely rewritten to conform to the Council's teachings and decisions. The section on the sacrament of orders begins with a brief and carefully worded description of it:

By divine institution, the sacrament of orders establishes some among the Christian faithful as sacred ministers through an indelible character which marks them. They are consecrated and designated, each according to his grade, to nourish the people of God, fulfilling in the person of Christ the Head [in persona Christi Capitis] the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing. (*CIC*, c. 1008)

Similarly, in treating the sacrament of orders, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* summarizes the Council's teaching:

In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis*.¹⁶⁸

These passages confirm that bishops and presbyters act in the person of Christ in their whole ministry: every part of it, not only their celebration of the Eucharist, makes Jesus' saving actions present to his Church.

3) Acting in the person of Christ is not just serving as his agent.

People often designate someone to act on their behalf in a way that will be recognized by law. For instance, planning to be out of the country for a long time, Smith sets up a trust to handle his business affairs; the trustees' actions have the same legal effects his own would have. Under certain conditions, someone can even contract marriage by proxy (see *CIC*, cc. 1104-5). The acts of such representatives substitute for acts of those who designated them, who are called "principals." By legal fiction, the acts of designated agents are treated as if they were the principals' own.

167. *Ultimis temporibus*, I, 4, AAS 63 (1971) 906, *Vatican Collection*, ed. Flannery, 2:679.

168. *CCC*, 1548. This paragraph opens a subsection headed, "In the person of Christ the Head . . .," is accompanied by a footnote referring to the relevant passages in Vatican II, and is followed by quotations from Pius XII's *Mediator Dei* and St. Thomas, *S.t.*, 3, q. 22, a. 4, c.

Thomas argues from what is true about anyone who acts in the person of another (see *S.t.*, 3, q. 82, a. 1, c.), and thereby shows that his theological uses of *represents* and *acts in the person of* presuppose the use of such expressions to signify actions taken through designated agents, vicarious exercises of authority, and so on. Still, the meaning of *in the person of*, as used by Thomas (and the documents of the magisterium), should not be reduced to what is meant when the phrase is applied to other relationships between the actions of agents and the principals whom they represent. Generally, someone who acts through an agent is absent or unable to act on his or her own behalf. But God causes the effects of the sacraments, while the ordained minister serves only as an instrument (see *S.t.*, 3, q. 64, a. 1). Thus, the exercise of ordained ministry, for Thomas, is not a matter of a delegate acting instead of Christ but of someone making him present and performing acts that are really Jesus' own.¹⁶⁹

The Lord Jesus also does saving acts through persons who are not ordained. For example, anyone at all, even a nonbeliever, can baptize, provided he or she properly says the words and uses the water, and intends to do what the Church does (or what Christians do) rather than, say, to act the role of someone baptizing in a drama or imitate the rite in order to ridicule it.¹⁷⁰ No matter who baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes, and the one who pours the water and says the words is only a minister of Christ.¹⁷¹

Even when the nonordained baptize, they do not serve just as his agents. What they do is meaningful only inasmuch as Jesus authorized others to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28.19), and anyone who baptizes does so by Jesus' power and helps bring about what he wants. Rather than substituting for his action by means of a legal fiction, however, the actions of others make his actions really present. As ministers, they pour the water and say the words that are a sign and instrument—a sacrament—of what he alone can do: baptize with the Holy Spirit (see Mt 3.11, Mk 1.8, Jn 1.33). Even a nonbelieving baptismal minister somehow represents Jesus and might well be said to act “in the person of Christ.”

Nevertheless, the use of *in persona Christi* by St. Thomas and in magisterial documents always is tied to ordained ministry—in fact, almost always to the ministry of presbyters and bishops. I have found only one statement in a Church document (*CIC*, c. 1008, quoted above) clearly including deacons among those who act *in persona Christi*.¹⁷² But documents on the permanent diaconate published by the Holy See in 1998

169. See Marliangéas, op. cit., 138. Writing in his own name, E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (Kansas City, Missouri: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1963), 170-71, puts the point well: “Christ carries out his activity as High Priest in the acts of this [ordained] priesthood; priestly acts are the personal acts of Christ himself made visible in sacramental form.”

170. See DS 802/430; *S.t.*, 3, q. 67, a. 5; CCC, 1256; Bernard Leeming, S.J., *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1956), 435-61, 471-75.

171. See St. Augustine, *In evangelium Ioannis*, 6, 7-10; St. Thomas explains that the one “baptizing provides only outward ministry; but Christ, who can use human beings for whatever he wants, is the one who baptizes interiorly” (*S.t.*, 3, q. 67, a. 5, ad 1).

172. While some passages in other documents, such as CCC, 1142, do not clearly exclude deacons, read in context neither do they clearly include them, and CCC, 875 distinguishes deacons from bishops and priests: “From him [Christ], bishops and priests receive the mission and faculty (“the sacred power”) to act

speak of neither the ordained as a whole nor deacons in particular as acting “in the person of Christ.” Quoting the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, they instead say every ordained minister “is enabled to act as a representative [legatus] of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king”; and the minister acts “by virtue of Christ’s authority” and speaks to the Church “in the name of Christ.”¹⁷³ As for the deacon, he is a specific “sign, in the Church, of Christ the servant”; in the Eucharist, “in the name of Christ himself, he helps the Church to participate in the fruits of that sacrifice”; and he serves “God’s people in the name of Christ.”¹⁷⁴

4) In a special way, those ordained priests act in persona Christi.

As has been shown, Vatican II teaches that presbyters “especially represent Christ” when acting as ministers of sacred rites, “especially in the sacrifice of the Mass” (PO 13), where they “make present again . . . the unique sacrifice of the New Testament” (LG 28). Following earlier teachings, Vatican II also makes it clear that Jesus really is present in the Mass, offering himself through the ministry of ordained priests (see SC 7; cf. CCC, 1548). To understand the special way in which presbyters and bishops act *in persona Christi*, one must therefore consider more carefully what Jesus does and what ordained priests do in the Eucharist, which is the central case of their special relationship.

In celebrating the Eucharist, ordained priests really make present the unique sacrifice of the new covenant. It is not entirely in the past; rather, it is ongoing.¹⁷⁵ Priests do not repeat or renew, much less reenact, what Jesus did at the Last Supper and underwent on Golgotha. “The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice, in the liturgy of the Church which is his Body” (CCC, 1362). Jesus makes only a single offering of himself (see Heb 9.24-26, 10.12-14), but he performs *that single offering* in each and every Mass.

But how can a unique sacrifice be performed innumerable times? The unifying principle of Jesus’ sacrifice was his free acceptance of the passion and death he foresaw when he chose, out of obedience to the Father, to return to Jerusalem to celebrate the Last Supper and establish the new covenant (see **1-D-4-5**, above). Because he never changed his mind about that self-sacrificing choice, it lasts (see **1-B-2**, above), and his self-offering continues. Moreover, his command, *Do this in memory of me*, showed that his intention in returning to Jerusalem was not limited to that first Eucharist but extended to all the celebrations that would carry out his command. Each Eucharist therefore is part of

in persona Christi Capitis; deacons receive the strength to serve the people of God in the *diaconia* of liturgy, word, and charity, in communion with the bishop and his presbyterate.”

173. Congregation for Catholic Education and Congregation for the Clergy, *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons and Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 11-12 (“Introduction,” I, 1).

174. *Ibid.*, 24 (*Basic Norms*, 5); 94 and 101 (*Directory*, 28 and 37).

175. John Paul II, *Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday* (1996), 1, AAS 88 (1996) 540, OR, 27 March 1996, 3, teaches that Christ is “the one priest of the new eternal covenant. . . . For only the Son, the Word of the Father, in whom and through whom all things were created, can unceasingly offer creation in sacrifice to the Father, confirming that everything created has come forth from the Father and must become an offering of praise to the Creator.”

the carrying out of Jesus' unique self-sacrificing choice: his passion and death were the foreseen and freely accepted side effects of his obedient choice to return to Jerusalem with the intention not only of celebrating the first Eucharist but bringing about all subsequent Eucharists.

Precisely *how* ordained priests make present Jesus' self-offering in the Eucharist by acting in his person also must be made clearer. Someone might say: "Priests make Jesus' self-offering present simply by consecrating the Eucharist" and quote the *Code of Canon Law*:

The eucharistic celebration is the action of Christ himself and the Church. In it, Christ the Lord, through the ministry of the priest, offers himself, substantially present under the species of bread and wine, to God the Father and gives himself as spiritual food to the faithful united with his offering. (*CIC*, c. 899, §1)

But while Jesus' substantial presence is sufficient for him *to be offered* and *to be given*, it is not sufficient for him *to offer* and *to give* himself. Both at the Last Supper and in the Mass, Jesus offers himself in consecrating, as the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* makes clear: "*Institution narrative and consecration*: In which, by means of words and actions of Christ, the Sacrifice is carried out which Christ himself instituted at the Last Supper . . ." ¹⁷⁶ Thus, *CIC*, c. 899, §1, juxtaposes two truths: Jesus is substantially present *in* the Eucharist and he is really present *doing* the Eucharist. The second helps explain the first, but the first does not explain the second. How, then, do ordained priests, by acting in Jesus' person, make him really present *as an acting person*?

In answering that, I shall draw on Church teaching, beginning with Pope Pius XII, about what baptism and presbyteral ordination do to those who receive them; but that teaching draws on a received theology of sacramental character, which I therefore begin by summarizing.

St. Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, and others held that the three sacraments which cannot be repeated—baptism, confirmation, and holy orders—irreversibly change their recipients by consecrating them, and thus mark them off from people who have not received them—impart a "character." That doctrine came to be held and handed on throughout the Church. ¹⁷⁷ The Council of Florence (1439) formulated this element of Catholic faith as follows: "baptism, confirmation, and holy orders indelibly imprint on the soul a character, that is, a certain spiritual sign of distinction from others. So, they cannot be repeated in the same person" (DS 1313/695). When this doctrine was denied during the Reformation, the Council of Trent solemnly defined it with respect to all three sacraments (see DS 1609/852) and again with respect to holy orders (see DS 1774/964).

Even so, early Christian writers never unanimously agreed entirely on what sacramental character is. Gathering and integrating others' insights, St. Thomas developed a systematic account that became widely though not universally accepted.

176. *Third Typical Edition*, 79 d (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003), 41.

177. On the history of the doctrine and theology of sacramental character, see Leeming, *op. cit.*, 129-279.

According to Thomas, the main thing sacraments do is cause grace in those who receive them. Of course, God alone is the principal cause of grace, but he uses Jesus' humanity and the sacraments as instruments—not because he needs instruments, but for the benefit of human beings. The sacramental characters that baptism, confirmation, and holy orders give are secondary effects of those sacraments. Characters, too, are instrumental, Thomas explains; sacramental characters belong to Christians as servants of God (*ministris Dei*), and a servant cannot act except as an instrument (see *S.t.*, 3, q. 61, a. 1; q. 62, aa. 1 and 3-5; q. 63, a. 2).

So, sacramental character is an instrumental capacity in respect to grace. Baptism, confirmation, and holy orders give their recipients such a “spiritual power,” a capacity to participate in Christian worship by participating in various ways in Jesus' unique and permanent priesthood, which is the principle of all Christian worship. Because these characters are capacities to participate in Jesus' priesthood, they are said to “configure Christians to Christ.” These capacities are characters—that is, seals or signs—inasmuch as baptism marks Christians off from non-Christians and the other two sacraments mark off Christians who have received them from those who have not (see *S.t.*, 3, q. 63, aa. 1-6).

Thomas holds that baptism gives each Christian the capacity to participate in worship as a recipient of “divine things”—the graces God causes. Confirmation gives a further character marking off more mature Christians from those who can only receive divine things: the capacity to participate in the prophetic dimension of Jesus' priesthood by publicly professing the faith despite risks and hardships. Holy orders gives those ordained still another character: the capacity to participate in Jesus' priesthood by handing divine things on to other believers.¹⁷⁸

While Pius XII taught that only the priest performs the unbloody immolation of the Lord Jesus made present on the altar at the words of consecration, he also taught that the faithful should participate actively in the Eucharist. This they can do primarily by joining with the priest in offering the divine victim—not by some outward liturgical performance, however, but by uniting their hearts with the priest's intention and Jesus' own self-offering.¹⁷⁹ Pius explains the faithful's ability to do this:

[By baptism,] Christians are made members of the Mystical Body of Christ the Priest, and by the “character” which is imprinted on their souls, they are appointed [deputantur] to give worship to God. Thus they participate, according to their condition, in the priesthood of Christ.¹⁸⁰

178. See *S.t.*, 3, q. 63, aa. 2 and 6; q. 64, aa. 1 and 8; q. 66, a. 11; q. 72, a. 5. Thomas sharply distinguishes the passive potency to receive divine things conferred by baptism from the power conferred by holy orders: “an active potency with some preeminence” to transmit divine things to others (*In 4 Sent.*, d. 24, q. 1, a. 1, qu'la. 2, ad 2 and ad 3; cf. d. 4, q. 1, a. 4, qu'la. 3). Pseudo-Dionysius is the source of that ordering of agents and patients in Thomas's account of sacramental character (see *ibid.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, c.; a. 4 qu'la. 3 c.). Thomas thinks the spiritual capacity conferred by confirmation is active, but only in bearing witness to faith, not in handing on “divine things” (see *ibid.*, d. 7, q. 2, a. 1, qu'la. 1, ad 3).

179. Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, AAS 39 (1947) 554-56, PE, 233:87-93.

180. *Ibid.*, AAS 555; PE, 88.

This teaching endorses the view that the baptismal character is a spiritual power by which the faithful participate in Jesus' priesthood. But Pius tacitly sets aside Thomas's limiting of that participation to the passive reception of divine things. Instead, he teaches that baptism capacitates the faithful to participate actively in the Eucharist.¹⁸¹ Moreover, in teaching about the faithful's cooperation in Jesus' priestly human act of self-offering, Pius focuses on an aspect of the Eucharist not central to Thomas's analysis of God's causing of grace through instrumental causes.¹⁸²

Still, Pius does not say that the baptismal character configures the faithful to Jesus. With regard to holy orders, however, he teaches that the sacrament not only confers appropriate grace

but imparts an indelible "character" besides, indicating the sacred ministers' conformity [conformatos] to Jesus Christ the Priest and qualifying them to [aptos ad] perform those official acts of religion by which men are sanctified and God is duly glorified in keeping with the divine laws and regulations.¹⁸³

Thus Pope Pius seems to think that only the sacramental character of holy orders assimilates its recipients to Jesus.

Vatican II's teachings on these matters differ in important ways from the theology of St. Thomas and the teachings of Pius XII, but the Council provides no basis whatsoever for denying or minimizing the distinction between the priesthood common to all the faithful and the priesthood of ordained ministers, or the institution of the latter by Jesus himself.

In its document on the Church, Vatican II teaches that both modes of priesthood "participate in the one priesthood of Christ," each "in its distinctive way" but that they "differ in essence and not just in degree" (LG 10). In dealing with the mission of the priesthood in its document on priestly ministry and life, Vatican II begins by teaching that Jesus gave his whole mystical body a share in his own anointing by the Spirit, so that all the faithful together become a holy and royal priesthood, all share some common responsibilities, and each has a unique part to play (see PO 2). The Council then teaches that the same Lord Jesus "established some as ministers, who would enjoy the sacred power of Order in the society of the faithful . . . and would publicly fulfill their priestly office for the sake of others in the name of Christ" (PO 2). Sent by the Father, Jesus in

181. Thus, Pius implicitly teaches that baptism empowers all the faithful to do something that Thomas thought only ordained priests, acting *in persona Christi*, can do. Thomas teaches that holy orders confers the power of consecrating the Eucharist and offering the sacrifice for the living and the dead, while baptism confers no "sacramental power," with the result that the devout layperson only "is united with Christ by spiritual union through faith and charity" and is given "the power of receiving this sacrament," and so only "has a spiritual priesthood for offering spiritual sacrifices" (see *S.t.*, 3, q. 82, a. 1, c. and ad 2). Pius XII has an expanded conception of spiritual priesthood: it includes a sacramental power conferred by baptism to do the volitional act of *offering the sacrifice*, reserving for the ordained minister only the behavior he performs *in persona Christi*.

182. In the eleven questions Thomas devotes to the Eucharist (*S.t.*, 3, qq. 73-83), only one article (q. 83, a. 1) deals directly with its sacrificial aspect.

183. *Mediator Dei*, AAS 39 (1947) 539, *PE*, 233:42.

turn sent the apostles and through them “made to share in his own consecration and mission their successors, the bishops, whose function of ministry was passed on, in a subordinate degree, to presbyters” (PO 2; cf. LG 17-20).

This conciliar teaching clearly reflects the New Testament’s witness regarding the Church’s origin as a covenantal community established by Jesus with definite leaders (see **1-F-4**, above). Unlike democratic societies that organize themselves and choose their own leaders, the Church’s ordaining of presbyters and bishops hands on a divine gift and consecration.¹⁸⁴ So, the Church ordains only inasmuch as the Lord Jesus does so through successors of the apostles acting in his person.

Vatican II’s teachings on sacramental character itself do not go beyond received teaching. All the baptized are called to offer spiritual sacrifices through their whole Christian lives (see LG 10), and their baptismal character sets them apart for Christian worship (see LG 11). In ordination to the episcopate, “the Holy Spirit is so conferred and the sacred character is so engraved that bishops, in an eminent and visible way, carry out the roles of Christ himself—teacher, pastor, and priest—and act in his person” (LG 21; notes omitted). And, “while the priesthood of presbyters presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, it is conferred by a different sacrament, in which presbyters, by the Holy Spirit’s anointing, are marked with a special character and so configured to Christ the priest that they are enabled to act in the person of Christ the head (see *Lumen gentium*, 10).” (PO 2; cf. *CIC*, c. 1008; *CCC*, 1563).

Unlike Thomas and like Pius XII, however, Vatican II teaches that the baptismal character capacitates Christians not only to receive divine things passively but to participate actively in Jesus’ priestly acts. By reason of their baptism, the faithful, as a holy priesthood, should participate actively in the liturgy; this active participation “is the first and necessary source from which they imbibe a truly Christian spirit” (SC 14). Actively participating in the Eucharist, the faithful, “offering the spotless victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, should learn to offer themselves” (SC 48). In context, the Council’s teaching also makes it clear that baptismal character is a power to act:

The nature of the priestly community, sacred and organically structured, is brought out by the sacraments and powers to act. The faithful are incorporated into the Church by baptism, deputed by its character for Christian worship, and, having been reborn as children of God, are held to profess before human beings the faith they received through the Church from God. (LG 11)

Rather than limiting the lay faithful’s active participation in Jesus’ priesthood to confirmation, as Thomas did, the Council teaches that confirmation *perfects* baptism (see LG 11, 33; AG 11).

Moreover, like Thomas and unlike Pius XII, Vatican II teaches that all the faithful are configured to Christ:

184. The essential elements of this teaching also were solemnly defined by the Council of Trent: see DS 1771-78/961-68.

As members of the living Christ, incorporated into him and configured to him by baptism and also by confirmation and the Eucharist, all the faithful are duty bound to cooperate in the expansion and growth of his body, so that they may bring it to its fullness as soon as possible (see Eph 4.13). (AG 36)¹⁸⁵

This passage is remarkable for two reasons.

First, as has been explained, baptism, confirmation, and holy orders configure to Christ because they mark off recipients by empowering them to participate in different ways in his priesthood. The Eucharist does not do that; and so, by teaching that it along with baptism and confirmation, configures the faithful to Christ, the Council is broadening the meaning of *to be configured to Christ*. In this broader sense, the expression seems to refer to a real change that assimilates, or more perfectly assimilates, one to Christ and incorporates one into him or strengthens one's union with him.¹⁸⁶

Second, the passage links this assimilation to Christ and incorporation into him to the duty to cooperate in the Church's apostolate. This also is implied when the Council teaches that every lay person, in virtue of the gifts he or she has received, "is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church" (LG 33; cf. AG 41, CCC, 913). Thus, their configuration to Christ makes all Christians living instruments of his body who share responsibility for its maintenance and growth. By this teaching, Vatican II enlarges upon Pius XII's focus on the faithful's cooperation in Jesus' human act of offering himself; the Council's vision embraces the cooperation of all the baptized in the Church's entire salvific mission (see AA 2-3).

As has been shown, Vatican II also teaches that bishops and presbyters share in Jesus' own consecration and mission in a way that involves their sharing in the authority by which he constitutes, sanctifies, and rules his own body, the Church. In being ordained, presbyters are "by the Holy Spirit's anointing, marked with a special character and so configured to Christ the priest that they are enabled to act in the person of Christ the head (see *Lumen gentium*, 10)" (PO 2). In other words, when presbyters are ordained, the Holy Spirit brings about a real change in them so that they are assimilated to Christ and united with him precisely insofar as he is the one and only priest of the new covenant. That real change capacitates them to act in the person of Christ as head of his body, the Church. At the beginning of its chapter on the life of presbyters, the Council recalls: "By the sacrament of holy orders, presbyters are configured to Christ the priest, as ministers of the head, so that in cooperation with the bishops, they might establish and build up his body, which is the Church." In this context, the Council also teaches that

185. Cf. LG 7. In summarizing the Council's teaching, the *Code of Canon Law* indicates explicitly that the baptismal character brings about configuration to Christ: by baptism people are freed from sin, reborn as God's children, "and, configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church" (CIC, 849; cf. CCC, 1272). The *Catechism* also teaches that the baptized are "configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation" (CCC, 1322).

186. Other texts support this interpretation: see LG 48, GS 22; CCC, 1460, 1505, 2844. In its document on the Church, Vatican II does not use *configured* in teaching about presbyters, but instead says that they are consecrated "in virtue of the sacrament of orders, after the image of Christ [ad imaginem Christi], the supreme and eternal priest . . . as true priests of the New Testament" (LG 28; cf. CCC, 1564). The language suggests that presbyteral ordination makes men priests by making them like Jesus, the priest.

presbyters, in being ordained, “are made living instruments of Christ the eternal priest, so that they will be able to carry out through the ages his wonderful work” (PO 12).

So, while baptism and confirmation make the faithful in general living instruments of Christ, holy orders makes those of the faithful who become ministerial priests his living instruments in a special way.

In explaining this, the Council says the Church is “organically structured” (LG 11) and quotes (in PO 2) from St. Paul’s teaching: “As in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom 12.4-5). Indeed, Vatican II repeatedly links the Church’s organic structure with every member’s active power and responsibility to build up the body of Christ:

Just as, in the structure of a living body, no part is merely passive, but every part shares in the body’s workings together with its life; so, too, in the body of Christ, which is the Church, the whole body, “by the appropriate functioning of every part, brings about bodily growth” (Eph 4.16). (AA 2; cf. AG 5)

Thus, the Church’s many living instruments with their different functions are complementary organs of Christ’s one body.¹⁸⁷ Through the Eucharist, the whole fellowship shares in his glorious resurrection life, and the fellowship’s bodiliness, though mystical, is not metaphorical but real (see **1-F-4**, above). Still, as the individuality of husband and wife is not compromised but perfected by their two-in-one-flesh communion, so the individuality of Jesus as man and those incorporated into him by baptism is both safeguarded and fully realized in the one-flesh communion of the new covenant.

Having clarified what baptism and presbyteral ordination do to those who receive them, I return to the question: How do ordained priests, by acting in Jesus’ person, make him present *as consecrating* the Eucharist and *as offering himself* in doing so?

John Paul II addresses this question in *Dominicae cenae*, his 1980 letter on the mystery and worship of the Eucharist. He teaches that the Eucharist is holy and sacred because the presence *and the action* of Christ are there. Explaining how, he focuses on the role of the ordained priest:

187. By drawing out so clearly the implications for both ecclesiology and Christian life of St. Paul’s insight into the Eucharist’s forming of Christians into bodily communion with Christ and one another, Vatican II implicitly rejects the ecclesiology that divided various groups into a graded series of givers and recipients, from those at the top (who receive God’s gifts from him and pass them along to the rest) down to those being prepared for baptism (who receive divine things but give to no one). Lacking any ground in the New Testament, that mistaken and pernicious theology was rooted in the Neo-platonism of Pseudo-Dionysius; see Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, op. cit., 61-78 (chs. 5-6). St. Thomas’s sound insight that confirmation confers a power to participate actively in Christ’s prophetic office did not offset the view, mistakenly accepted on the authority of Dionysius, that the relationship of clergy to laity, grounded in the clergy’s active power and the laity’s passive receptivity, pertained to the divinely established order of reality. As a result, with Aquinas’s help, the writer who passed himself off as an immediate disciple of St. Paul transformed the servant pastors whom Jesus gave his Church into the hierarchy, understood as the caste superior not only to the laity in general but to “monks.”

The priest offers the Holy Sacrifice *in persona Christi*; this means more than offering “in the name of” or “in the place of” Christ. *In persona* means in specific sacramental identification with “the eternal High Priest” who is the Author and principal Subject of this Sacrifice of his, a Sacrifice in which, in truth, nobody can take his place. Only he—only Christ—was able and is always able to be the true and effective “expiation for our sins and . . . for the sins of the whole world.”¹⁸⁸

The phrase, *in specific sacramental identification with* translates the Latin “ratione peculiari et sacramentali idem prorsus sit ac,” which literally means: *in a unique and sacramental way is entirely the same as*. One commentator dismisses that language as “theologically confused inasmuch as it transfers the true locus of Christ’s identification in the Eucharist from the Body and Blood to the ministerial priest.”¹⁸⁹ But that is a misreading. Since John Paul is explaining what the adverbial phrase “*in persona Christi*” means as a modification of “offers,” he must be understood as saying, not that the celebrant is substantially the same as Christ, but that the celebrant and Christ are completely identified in the *act* of offering the Holy Sacrifice. That statement, too, might seem confused, but I believe it is both intelligible and true.

When the priest offers the Holy Sacrifice *in persona Christi*, there are not two offerings but only one: Jesus’ self-offering. That would be true even if the priest offered Mass only in the name of Christ. If, for instance, a friend to whom I give a power of attorney to sell my house attends the settlement in my place, there still is only one act of selling—mine. But unlike the friend, who acts in my name and replaces me at the settlement, the priest makes the Lord Jesus present, offering himself. Nevertheless, because the priest’s offering of the Mass and Jesus’ self-offering are entirely the same in a unique and sacramental way, there is only one offering. What the priest does *in propria persona* is an instrument of what Jesus, present as an acting person, himself does then and there.

How can that be? A later passage in *Dominicae cenae* points to the answer. In being ordained, John Paul says, priests are consecrated, “to represent Christ the Priest: for this reason their hands, like their words and their will, have become the direct instruments of Christ.”¹⁹⁰ When priests consecrate, intending to do what the Church does, they do not offer their own sacrifice but make Jesus’ sacrifice present. Like all the faithful, they really are members of Christ’s body, but unlike other Christians’ bodies, those of priests—their hands and voices—have been adapted by ordination to serve as the living instruments, as the organs, by which the Lord Jesus does his own priestly acts. The gesture and utterance that carry out the intention to consecrate are both the priest’s and Christ’s, so that the priest’s offering of Mass and Jesus’ self-offering are *entirely* the same—that is, the same not only in respect to what is offered but to the behavior by

188. *Dominicae cenae*, 8, AAS 72 (1980) 128-29, *Vatican Collection*, ed. Flannery, 2:74 (notes omitted).

189. Dennis Michael Ferrara, “*In Persona Christi*: Towards a Second Naïveté,” *Theological Studies*, 57 (1996): 67, referring to the same language as quoted by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Sacerdotium ministrale*, III, 4, AAS 75 (1983) 1006, *OR*, 12 Sept. 1983, 4.

190. *Dominicae cenae*, 11, AAS 72 (1980) 141, *Vatican Collection*, ed. Flannery, 2:82.

which the offering is performed. Behavior that appears to be only the priest's is in reality *also* Jesus'. The faithful participating in the Eucharist experience Jesus' self-offering not through and *beyond* the priest's offering of Mass but *by* it and *in* it.

An analogy helps explain the significance of that identity. Nonbelievers can represent Christ in administering baptism, and those baptized thereby enter into unbreakable, covenantal fellowship with God in Christ. Similarly, a man incapable of consenting validly to marriage can serve as a proxy for his absent brother, and the brother thereby enters into an unbreakable marriage. However, no one can represent either of the spouses when the couple actualize and experience their one-flesh communion by consummating their marriage. They must give themselves bodily to each other. Similarly, for Jesus to offer his body and blood to God the Father and to give his glorified, bodily self as spiritual food to the faithful, he must be bodily present as author and principal subject of the Eucharist. This is a role *in which nobody can take his place*. Nevertheless, the ordained priest, acting *in persona Christi*, is the living instrument of Jesus' bodily and active presence.¹⁹¹

According to the preceding explanation, the sacramental character given by presbyteral ordination involves an adaptation of the incorporation into Jesus' body that those being ordained already enjoy by reason of their baptism. This adaptation is required so that their priestly hands and voices will serve Jesus as the living instruments—the organs—of his own bodily behavior.

Someone might reject that explanation by arguing that, since Trent teaches definitively that the character is spiritual (see DS 1609/852), it cannot involve bodiliness. But that argument is unsound. First, sacramental character is spiritual in two senses: (1) unlike a tattoo on a soldier or a brand on a slave, sacramental character is not perceptible to the senses, and (2) it is supernatural rather than natural. But other realities, such as the bond of sacramental marriage, that are spiritual in both of those senses involve bodiliness. Second, the bodily dimension of the capacity to act *in persona Christi* is spiritual inasmuch as it is an adaptation of the priest's incorporation into the risen body of Jesus, which, as St. Paul teaches, is spiritual (see 1 Cor 15.44-45).

191. Ferrara, op. cit., 74-76, overlooks the fact that the human unions both of spouses in marriage and of Jesus and his Church in the new covenant can be immediate and physical without submerging the parties' distinct identities; he holds (75) that Christ and the Church are united *only* by the Holy Spirit, with the result that Jesus is not really present *as agent* in the Eucharist; rather, the Spirit acts through the Church in what is, essentially, only an *ecclesial* ritual. Ferrara sums up his view (76): "It is, in short, not directly but in and through his Spirit that Christ is united to the Church as its Head and Lord. It is thus also in and through his Spirit that Christ continues, through the Church, his saving activity and, in particular, 'acts in the sacraments.'" Having earlier (67) set out Pope John Paul's teaching in *Dominicae cenae*, quoted above, Ferrara later labels it "an ideology" at odds with "evangelical truth" (82-83): "To deny that the consecratory word is a word of the Church would not only shatter the unity of the sacrament of Order, but imply that its utterance is not the culminating act of the Church's priesthood, but one in which the latter transcends its own nature by becoming not just a sacrament of Christ, but in some sense Christ himself. Here theology must draw a firm and unequivocal line and call the theology of the priesthood away from the danger of such an ideology and back to its doctrinal roots in the theology of grace so as to preserve its evangelical truth."

Every baptized person who bears witness to the gospel with an authentically Christian life and thereby makes his saving work present to others is a living instrument, an organ, of Jesus. Someone might therefore argue that all such Christians act *in persona Christi*, and presbyters and bishops enjoy no special distinction by doing so. Indeed, holy orders does not confer special distinction in the sense of superiority over other Christians.¹⁹² But it does consecrate the ordained to carry on the work that Jesus assigned to the apostles. That work involves action in the person of Christ precisely as the unique priest of the new covenant and as head of his body, the Church. Jesus thought out and chose to do the acts that presbyters and bishops do in the person of Christ. No human being except Jesus could do what the ordained do in his person. Whenever presbyters and bishops act in his person, however, they do nothing *in propria persona* except make him and his action present. By contrast, those who are not ordained but live authentically Christian lives think out and choose their own actions. While they follow Jesus by living according to his teachings and thus doing their part in the Church's apostolate, they discern their own personal vocations and commit themselves to them. The Lord Jesus certainly lives in such members of his body, which is built up toward its fullness by their lives. They are therefore his living instruments, his organs, but they are not the organs through which he personally acts.

Analogies might help clarify this point. Good citizens traveling abroad represent their nation, but the nation does not act by them as it does by its ambassadors. My lungs perform their vital function whether I am conscious of it or not; I breathe with my lungs, but their breathing is not my action as writing this is—or even as holding my breath is.

5) Ordained priests sacramentally represent Jesus, the head and shepherd.

In its document on the Church, Vatican II teaches that Jesus' authorization of the Apostles, "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me" (Lk 10.16), applies to their successors, the bishops (see LG 20). The Council then goes on:

In the bishops, therefore, whom presbyters assist, the Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme high priest, is present in the midst of the faithful. Sitting at the right hand of God the Father, he is not absent from the gathering of his high priests, [note omitted] but primarily through their signal service, he preaches the word of God to all nations and continually administers the sacraments of faith; by their fatherly office (see 1 Cor 4.15) he incorporates new members into his body by a new birth from above; and finally by their wisdom and prudence he directs and governs the people of the new covenant in its pilgrimage to eternal happiness. (LG 21)

Later in the same article, the Council makes it clear that in carrying out all three roles—teacher, priest, and pastor—the bishops act in the person of Christ. A footnote

192. While acknowledging the variety of gifts and the special service of sacred ministers in the Church, Vatican II stresses the Church's unity and what all members share in common, and teaches that "there is a true equality among all as to dignity and the action common to all the faithful in respect to building up the body of Christ" (LG 32).

cites St. John Chrysostom and says: “The priest is a ‘symbolon’ of Christ.”¹⁹³ This implies two things: (1) not only in celebrating the Eucharist but in everything they do in the person of Christ, bishops and presbyters make Jesus and his saving action really present by serving as organs of his own bodily behavior, and (2) in doing so, they themselves serve as the sign of Jesus’ presence.¹⁹⁴

Being both a sign of the Lord Jesus and a living instrument that brings about his saving presence and action, the ordained priest can be considered an ongoing sacrament of Christ. This conclusion was adumbrated by St. Thomas, who said the celebrant of the Mass “serves as the image of Christ [gerit imaginem Christi] in whose person and by whose power he pronounces the words of consecration” (*S.t.*, 3, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3) and maintained that, not the transient rite but “the interior character itself is essentially and chiefly the very sacrament of order.”¹⁹⁵ While that inner character does not by itself make the priest a *symbolon* of Christ, it is the power that marks priests off for the service of acting in his person, imaging him, and thus representing him.¹⁹⁶

The 1971 session of the Synod of Bishops states that the ministerial priest “is a sign of the divine anticipatory plan proclaimed and effective today in the Church. He makes Christ, the Savior of all men, sacramentally present among his brothers and sisters, in both their personal and social lives.”¹⁹⁷ Making the Lord Jesus sacramentally present, ordained priests represent him, as sacramental signs always represent sacred realities. Just as the appearances of bread and wine do not replace Jesus’ flesh and blood but represent him bodily present as sacrificed and to be received, so ordained priests acting in Jesus’ person do not replace him and his action but represent him here and now offering himself to the Father and giving himself to the faithful. Thus the 1970 session of the International Theological Commission holds that “the Christian who is called to the priestly ministry . . . represents Christ as head of the community and, as it were, facing [coram] the community.”¹⁹⁸

193. Fn. 22: “Sacerdos est ‘symbolon’ Christi.” Since the Council’s statement is unqualified and Chrysostom’s text is not quoted, the statement’s magisterial authority is not affected by whether the text supports the teaching.

194. J. M. Somerville, s.v. “Symbol,” *NCE*, 13:860, helpfully explains how the Greek word came to mean “one thing (usually material and visible) calling forth its complement or better half (usually something that is immaterial and unseen).”

195. *In 4 Sent.*, d. 24, q. 1, a. 1, qu’la. 2, ad 1.

196. A. G. Martimort, “The Value of a Theological Formula ‘In persona Christi,’ *OR*, 10 March 1977, 7, examines other texts and concludes that “the thought of the Angelic Doctor can be easily discerned: the Christian priesthood is of a sacramental nature, not only in the transitory act of ordination, but in the person of the priest. Certainly, the supernatural efficacy of his action . . . proceeds from the character received in ordination. But this character is invisible; the priest himself is and must be a sign . . .”

197. *Ultimis temporibus*, I, 4, AAS 63 (1971) 906, *Vatican Collection*, ed. Flannery, 2:679.

198. *De Sacerdotio catholico*, “Thesis quarta,” in *Documenta/Documenti (1969-1985)*, ed. Candido Pozzo, S.J. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), 30: “Christianus ad ministerium sacerdotale vocatus . . . Christus repraesentat ante communitatem et coram illa.” The thesis was approved “in forma specifica” (28), which means (12) that an absolute majority of the members present at the plenary session approved the text, including the ideas and the formulation.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1976 document on women's ordination made use of this developing thought regarding ordained priests' sacramental representation of Jesus:

The supreme expression of this representation is found in the altogether special form it assumes in the celebration of the Eucharist . . . in which the People of God are associated in the sacrifice of Christ: the priest, who alone has the power to perform it, then acts not only through the effective power conferred on him by Christ, but *in persona Christi*, taking the role of Christ, to the point of being his very image [ita ut ipsam eius imaginem gerat], when he pronounces the words of consecration.

The Christian priesthood is therefore of a sacramental nature: the priest is a sign, the supernatural effectiveness of which comes from the ordination received, but a sign that must be perceptible and which the faithful must be able to recognize with ease.¹⁹⁹

This led some proponents of women's ordination to maintain that ordained priests do not represent Jesus sacramentally but only in the way other agents represent those for whom they act.²⁰⁰

In a theological study first published in German in 1982, Gisbert Greshake holds that the ordained priesthood fulfills the definition of a sacrament: "If we consider Church office [i.e., ordained ministry] under the aspect of its being representation of Christ, then it is, *within the people of God*, an essential *sacrament* of Christ, i.e., a sign and instrument of his action which it makes present."²⁰¹ Greshake argues that precisely because ordained ministry is sacramental it does not come between Jesus and the faithful; rather, the ordained "effect a (mediated) immediacy," with the result that those being saved by the Church's sacramental mediation "meet God himself in his self-revelation to

199. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood (Inter insigniores)*, 5, AAS 69 (1977) 109, *Vatican Collection*, ed. Flannery, 2:339 (notes omitted).

200. See, for example, Dennis Michael Ferrara, "Representation or Self-Effacement? The Axiom *in Persona Christi* in St. Thomas and the Magisterium," *Theological Studies*, 55 (1994):195-224 at 195-96, 203-4, and, most clearly, 212: "The expression [*in persona Christi*] means no more, but also no less, than that the priest, by recalling, in obedience to Christ's command, the words of Christ, is the instrument of the real presence of Christ—to whom the eye of faith principally attends. This instrumentality is exercised by virtue of a power that is in the priest as not his own, a power virtually as mysterious as the effect of which it is the instrument. Action *in persona Christi* does not transcend instrumentality in the direction of some kind of mystical coincidence with Christ, but rather is instrumentality in its purest and most sublime form." The treatment of *in persona Christi* in 4, above, and in the present section, falsifies Ferrara's thesis. For his reading of St. Thomas, he claims (198) the support of Marliangéas; but he ignores a key passage (op. cit., 138), cited above, that contradicts his reading of Aquinas. Ferrara's expression, *mystical coincidence*, caricatures both the sense in which the priest as sacrament represents Christ and effects his saving presence and the sense in which the priest as instrument provides behavior Jesus uses to perform his own acts.

201. *The Meaning of Christian Priesthood*, trans. Peadar MacSeumais, S.J. (Dublin: Four Courts, 1988), 69-70; cf. 28, 63. By *within the people of God*, Greshake excludes the view that ordained ministers (the hierarchy) are *above* the rest of the Church (monks, lay people, and catechumens); ordained ministers are simply those of Christ's faithful capacitated to exercise the indispensable role of making Jesus' action available, so that everyone can interact *directly* with him.

the world.”²⁰² Sacramental Church office also makes it clear that Jesus is permanently prior to the people of God, and the Church prior to her individual members, who can maintain their union with Jesus only by taking advantage of the Church’s ministry.²⁰³ Again, Greshake argues that the sacramental character of Church office makes it point beyond itself to Christ, and therefore both reminds the officeholder that “it is inadmissible that he should put himself in place of Christ” and reminds “the community of the faithful that the Church depends on Christ and is not the owner and still less the mistress of the gifts of salvation.”²⁰⁴

The emerging lines of thought on the sacramentality of ordained priesthood are synthesized in John Paul II’s 1992 post-synodal apostolic exhortation on priestly formation:

In the Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the head and shepherd, authoritatively proclaiming his word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation, particularly in baptism, penance and the Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit. In a word, priests exist and act in order to proclaim the gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ the head and shepherd [note omitted].²⁰⁵

This passage makes it clear that priests are a sacramental representation of Christ in respect to all that they do acting in his person—teaching, sanctifying, and leading his flock.

In the following section, the Pope makes several points reminiscent of Greshake’s views. John Paul teaches that the ordained priest’s identity primarily depends on his special relationship to Jesus: “The priest’s relation to the Church is inscribed in the very relation which the priest has to Christ, such that [the relation of] ‘sacramental representation’ to Christ serves as the basis and inspiration for the relation of the priest to the Church.” He then quotes the Synod Fathers with approval, and draws his own conclusions from what they say:

“Inasmuch as he represents Christ the head, shepherd and spouse of the Church, the priest is placed not only *in the Church* but also *in the forefront of* [Latin: *erga* = over against] *the Church*. The priesthood . . . belongs to the constitutive elements of the Church. . . .”

Therefore, the ordained ministry arises with the Church and has in bishops, and in priests who are related to and are in communion with them, a particular relation to the original ministry of the Apostles—to which it truly “succeeds”—even though with regard to the latter it assumes different forms.

202. *Ibid.*, 36-37. Greshake implicitly contrasts this immediacy with an erroneous notion of mediation previously described (19), which originated in Pseudo-Dionysius.

203. *Ibid.*, 48-49.

204. *Ibid.*, 64.

205. *Pastores dabo vobis*, 15, AAS 84 (1992) 680, *OR*, 8 Apr. 1992, IV. The omitted fn. 27 refers to the Synod Fathers’ Proposition 7.

Consequently, the ordained priesthood ought not to be thought of as existing prior to the Church, because it is totally at the service of the Church. Nor should it be considered as posterior to the ecclesial community, as if the Church could be imagined as already established without this priesthood.

The Pope also affirms that “by his very nature and sacramental mission, the priest appears in the structure of the Church as a sign of the absolute priority and gratuitousness of the grace given to the Church by the Risen Christ.” He then restates and puts into perspective a point he has drawn from the Synod Fathers: “The Apostles and their successors, inasmuch as they exercise an authority which comes to them from Christ, the head and shepherd, are placed—with their ministry—in *the forefront of* [Latin: *coram* = facing] *the Church* as a visible continuation and sacramental sign of Christ in his own position before [*coram*] the Church and the world.”²⁰⁶

Thus, John Paul II teaches that the sacramentality of the ordained priesthood makes it clear that the priest neither created the Church nor is her creature. Both are creatures of God’s grace. Jesus forms the Church as a reality distinct from himself and sanctifies her by uniting her with himself. He is one with the Church and before her: he does not dominate her, much less absorb her into himself, but gives himself for her and makes her his bride. The ministerial priest’s share in Jesus’ priesthood involves sacramentally representing his spousal relationship of loving service and manifesting its origin in God’s grace.²⁰⁷

6) Representing Jesus, ordained priests also act in the person of the Church.

As we have seen, Vatican II teaches that “the prayers directed to God by the priest, who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ, are said in the name of the whole holy people and of all present” (SC 33), and likewise that the priest “effects the eucharistic sacrifice in the person of Christ, and offers it to God in the name of the whole people” (LG 10). Vatican II’s *in the name of the whole people* expresses what St. Thomas expressed by *in persona ecclesiae*. For both, the ordained priest acts not only in the person of Christ but in the person of the Church. But what exactly is the relationship between those two ways of acting?

206. Ibid., 16, AAS 681-82, OR, IV-V. Ferrara, “*In Persona Christi: Towards a Second Naïveté*,” does not mention John Paul II’s teaching in *Pastores dabo vobis* that the ministerial priest “represents Christ the head, shepherd and spouse of the Church,” but clearly disagrees with it (81): “The eucharistic presence of Christ effected by the priestly consecration is not an isolated but an ecclesial presence, the presence of the Bridegroom to the Bride, of the Head to the Body. Here, assignation of a representational role to the priest is positively out of place, since, both symbolically and functionally, it interposes the priest between Christ and that Church which is, after all, Christ’s and not the clergy’s bride, the function of the priest being to serve as the official ecclesial instrument of their union, the ‘marriage-broker,’ to borrow Paul’s image (2 Corinthians 11:2).” That seems to me as wrongheaded as it would be for someone to say: “Regarding the appearances of bread and wine as a sacramental representation of Jesus’ body and blood is out of place, because doing so interposes those appearances between Christ’s reality and the faithful to whom he gives himself in and by sacrament of the Eucharist.”

207. For a more explicit statement of this line of thought, see *Pastores dabo vobis*, 22, AAS 84 (1992) 690-91, OR, 8 Apr. 1992, VI.

Bernard Dominique Marliangéas carefully examined every instance in which *in persona Christi* and *in persona ecclesiae* occur in the works of St. Thomas. Summarizing his findings, he begins by recalling what he has shown about the deputation of the baptized to worship: It

is not a matter of delegation to do something *in place* of the Church or of Christ. It is a capacitation [habilitation] to posit actions that are the actions of Christ and of the Church. Here we are not at all in a perspective where some do something in place of others, by a mandate. . . . [In St. Thomas,] we find a conception of the relation of the minister to Christ and the Church that is not juridical but organic. It is because the priest has become a participant in the priesthood of Christ, configured to Christ by a “character,” that his act can be an act *in persona Christi*. Christ acts in the sacraments in him and by him, not by delegation but as a principal cause employing an instrument It is the same with priests acting *in persona ecclesiae*. The Church does not delegate priests to pray in place of the ecclesial community; but priests, because they are put into conformity with the unique priesthood of Christ can by that conformity be organs by which the Church, the community of believers, the mystical body of Christ, prays and professes her faith.²⁰⁸

Having been made by ordination organs of Jesus’ body, ministerial priests are both instruments through which Jesus and his saving action are present and organs by which his body, the Church herself, acts. That scholarly conclusion shows that Thomas’s understanding of *in persona ecclesiae* does not support the view that ordained priests merely preside at rituals in which they participate in exactly the same way as other members of the assembly; rather, it supports recent Church teaching that ordained priests’ special configuration to Christ the priest grounds their capacity to speak and act in the person of the Church.²⁰⁹

Although St. Thomas’s views foreshadowed recent teaching that ordained priests sacramentally represent Christ, Thomas never focused on that point. So, Marliangéas, in pointing out the real similarity between priests’ actions *in persona Christi* and *in persona ecclesiae*, leaves unmentioned an important difference. Acting *in persona Christi*, priests make Jesus and his actions present, and the behavior that carries out those actions belongs both to Jesus and to the priest serving as his instrument. Acting *in persona ecclesiae*, however, ordained priests do not sacramentally represent the Church. Rather, just as nations act only when various citizens exercise powers assigned them by the constitution, so the Church acts only when her members fulfill their proper roles. Public officials carrying out their duties do not make some other acting person present, and neither do ordained ministers acting in the person of the Church. Rather, they act *in persona ecclesiae* by performing the behavior appropriate to carry out their intention to do what the Church does. Acting *in persona ecclesiae*, the ordained do in and on behalf of the Church what she cannot do in any other way, while acting *in persona Christi* they make present what only Jesus himself can do.

208. Marliangéas, op. cit., 138.

209. This recent Church teaching is presented and defended against theological critics by Lawrence J. Welch, “For the Church and within the Church: Priestly Representation.” *Thomist*, 65 (2001): 613-37.

It might seem that St. Thomas thinks that ordained priests act *in persona Christi* only when they consecrate the Eucharist. He says that the forms of the other sacraments are expressed as prayers or pronounced by ministers speaking in their own person (“I baptize you”) but the form of the Eucharist “is pronounced in the person of Christ himself speaking [ex persona ipsius Christi loquentis], which makes it clear that in effecting this sacrament the minister does nothing but pronounce the words of Christ” (*S.t.*, 3, q. 78, a. 1, c.). But as other texts show (see 2, above), Thomas does not limit priests’ action *in persona Christi* to the Eucharist. Here he probably only means to point out that when the priest consecrates he not only acts in the person of Christ but uses Jesus’ own words.

But with respect to the Eucharist, Thomas does limit the priest’s action *in persona Christi* to consecrating. He argues that heretical, schismatic, and excommunicated priests can consecrate. Ordination, which they cannot lose, gives them power to act *in the person of Christ*; yet their prayers in the Mass have no efficacy, because those prayers are said *in the person of the Church*, and priests separated from the Church’s unity cannot speak for her (see *S.t.*, 3, q. 82, a. 7, c. and ad 3).

However, while action in the person of Christ and in the person of the Church are distinct, Thomas is mistaken in separating the two. As has been shown (in 2, above), recent Church teaching makes it clear that presbyters act *in persona Christi* not only in consecrating but in carrying out every aspect of their ministry, not least in administering the sacraments. But the fact that ministers of sacraments must intend “to do what the Church does” makes it clear that presbyters administering sacraments *in persona Christi* must simultaneously act *in persona ecclesiae*.²¹⁰ The two roles are distinct, but not separate, and priests often act in both ways at once.

The celebrant of the Eucharist does act *in persona Christi* in saying the words of consecration; but, as Vatican II teaches (in SC 33), he also *presides* in the person of Christ. And it is as presider that the priest not only consecrates but says the prayers.²¹¹ At the same time, as presider, the celebrant both says the prayers and consecrates in the person of the Church.²¹² For in the eucharistic prayer, the Church plainly carries out Jesus’ command, “Do this in memory of me,” by narrating what he did and *quoting* his

210. In explaining the sense in which sacraments’ validity depends on the minister’s intention, St. Thomas, *S.t.*, 3, q. 64, a. 8, ad 2, cites with approval the view of those who hold that “the minister of a sacrament acts in the person of the whole Church, whose minister he is; and the words he utters express the Church’s intention, which is enough to execute the sacrament, unless the contrary is explicitly expressed on the part of the sacrament’s minister and recipient.”

211. Moreover, Vatican II’s teaching on ecumenism falsifies Thomas’s view that priests separated from the Church’s unity cannot speak for her. The Council makes it clear both that non-Catholic Christians’ separation from the Church’s unity is a matter of degree (see UR 3) and that validly ordained priests of the separated Eastern churches act in the person of the Church: through the Eucharists they celebrate, “the Church of God is built up and grows” (UR 15).

212. While St. Thomas, *In 4 Sent.*, d. 8, q. 2, a. 2, qu’la. 4, ad 4, says that words of the priest in consecrating “simul et recitative et significative tenentur,” he does not notice that the words considered *recitative* (as quoted) are being said *in persona ecclesiae*.

words and gestures, including the words of consecration.²¹³ Thus, the entire eucharistic prayer, including the consecration, is the Church's prayer. Consequently, just as priests cannot lose the power ordination gives them to consecrate, neither can they lose the power to say the eucharistic prayer in the person of the Church.

Recent Church documents support this view. For example, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith explains:

It is true that the priest represents the Church, which is the body of Christ. But if he does so, it is precisely because he first represents Christ himself, who is the head and shepherd of the Church. The Second Vatican Council [note omitted] used this phrase to make more precise and to complete the expression *in persona Christi*. It is in this quality that the priest presides over the Christian assembly and celebrates the eucharistic sacrifice "in which the whole Church offers and is herself wholly offered" [note omitted].²¹⁴

Similarly, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "The prayer and offering of the Church are inseparable from the prayer and offering of Christ, her head. . . . It is because the ministerial priesthood represents Christ that it can represent the Church" (CCC, 1553).

Though distinct, Christ and the Church are not separate. Jesus was able to act without the Church and to found the Church; but although the Church is completely dependent on him, he does not act through her without her cooperation, as if she were a merely passive instrument. Vatican II teaches: "Every liturgical celebration, because it is the action of Christ the priest and of his body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others" (SC 7). Christ the priest, acting as head of his Church, himself acts in the person of the Church in the liturgy, thus providing the communal action in which each of the faithful can cooperate.²¹⁵ Since ministerial priests act in the person

213. See Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 82-93. Sokolowski also makes it clear (86) that the Eucharist is not a dramatic representation of the Last Supper, "a ritualized Passion Play." Ferrara, "Representation or Self-Effacement?" (209-11) rightly makes the same point, but mistakenly concludes (211): "Only a man (or an ungainly and heavily disguised woman) can play Abraham Lincoln; but anyone can quote the words of Christ." That overlooks the fact that the Church's quoting in carrying out Jesus' command makes him present not only as sacrifice offered to the Father and self given to the faithful (*sacramentally represented* by the species of bread and wine) but also as the person offering and giving himself (*sacramentally represented* by the priest). For a critique of Ferrara's attempt to reduce what the priest does in consecrating to quotation of Jesus' words, see Sara Butler, M.S.B.T., "Quaestio Disputata: 'In Persona Christi,' A Response to Dennis M. Ferrara," *Theological Studies*, 56 (1995): 61-80. Ferrara's "A Reply to Sara Butler," *Theological Studies*, 56 (1995): 88-91, concedes that the ministerial priest does speak *in persona Christi* in consecrating but denies that point's significance! For a critique of some other aspects of Ferrara's views about representation, see Benedict M. Ashley, O.P., *Justice in the Church: Gender and Participation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 174-79.

214. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood*, 5, AAS 69 (1977) 112-13, Flannery, 2:341. The first omitted footnote refers primarily to LG 28 and PO 6.

215. See Lorenzo Loppa, "In Persona Christi"—"Nomine Ecclesiae" (Rome: Libreria Editrice della Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1985), who sums up (114-16) his study as showing the organic unity of the single ministerial act that has as its two dimensions acting *in persona Christi* and *nomine ecclesiae*; cf.

of Christ *the head*, they therefore never act in his person without acting in the person of the whole Church.

But though they are not separate, Christ and the Church really are distinct. The Father not only sends the Son to save humankind and establish the fellowship of the new covenant, which is the Church, but sends the Holy Spirit to sanctify that Church and through her reconcile all things to God in Christ (see LG 3-4). The Spirit fulfills his mission by dwelling in Christ, the head, and in the Church's members, to enliven, unify, and move the whole somewhat as our souls enliven, unify, and move our bodies (see LG 7). Thus, ministerial priests' action in the person of the Church, considered as a fruit of the Spirit, cannot be altogether explained by their action in the person of Christ.²¹⁶

Still, some theologians reject recent Church teaching that ministerial priests represent the Church because they first represent Christ. They argue that the action of priests in the person of the Church is prior to their action in the person of Christ and should be used as the principle for explaining it.²¹⁷ These theologians seem to me at least partly correct. When ministerial priests do what they are ordained to do, they act, not as any of the faithful might act, but as Church officials, and so *in persona ecclesiae*; and only when acting as Church officials do they act *in persona Christi*. Therefore, there is a sense in which action in the person of the Church is prior to action in the person of Christ and part of its explanation. However, this priority does not exclude the priority recent Church teaching ascribes to acting in the person of Christ. As has been explained, the ordained act in the person of the Church when acting in the person of Christ, because Jesus himself, as head of his Church, acts in her person. So, when the ordained act both in the person of Christ and in the person of the Church, each in its own way depends on and is prior to the other. Therefore, while it is true that ministerial priests act in the person of Christ only in acting as Church officials, it is a mistake to reject the teaching that ministerial priests represent the Church because they first represent Christ.

7) Episcopal and presbyteral office is multidimensional.

Without denying (indeed, without even considering) that bishops and presbyters first represent Christ, Walter Kasper argued that the proper starting point for understanding the Church's ordained ministry is the charism of community leadership—that is, directive leadership, carried out in a collegial spirit and as a service for promoting the Church's unity. Kasper maintained that “the priestly office” is better described in terms of “its socio-ecclesial function” than “in terms of its sacral-

Marliangéas, op. cit., 238-41. That Christ acts *in persona ecclesiae* may seem strange; but even St. Thomas, *In 3 Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 3, qu'la. 4, ad 1, says that Christ “said in the person of the Church” the words: “I cry by day, but thou dost not answer” (Ps 22.2).

216. Greshake, op. cit., 85-101, provides a profound treatment of this matter; though I do not agree with him on some things, his reflections deserve consideration I cannot give them here.

217. See the works cited by Welch, op. cit., 613, especially the article by David Coffey, which Welch criticizes at length; also see Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J., *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. Robert J. Daly, S.J. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998), 348-49, 376-77.

sacramental-consecratory function.”²¹⁸ All Christians share in the ministry of the word, but the ordained, as community leaders, carry out a special “directive function, seeking to preserve the unity of the Church in its witness to Christ and its profession of faith.” Similarly, since the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church’s unity, “the priestly office, serving the unity of the Church, is authorized to preside over the eucharistic celebration.”²¹⁹ Kasper’s theology of episcopal and presbyteral office is cogent if one considers ordained ministry, as he plainly does, only insofar as action *in persona ecclesiae* is prior to action *in persona Christi*.

Some theologians, including many who argue that ministerial priests primarily represent the Church, point out that the focus on bishops’ and presbyters’ priestly role since the Council of Trent detracted from their prophetic role. Vatican II tries to redress the balance by giving a certain priority to the ministry of the word (see LG 25, PO 4), and many theological works and magisterial documents since the Council stress the responsibility to evangelize, catechize, and preach.²²⁰ The word of God not only prepares people for the liturgy but permeates it; the Eucharist itself *proclaims* the Lord’s death and resurrection until he comes again. Moreover, authentic pastoral leadership—which is not engrossed in ecclesiastical administration—feeds people with the word, helps them see their own vocations in its light, and encourages them to unite in carrying out the Church’s apostolic mission. Thus, the ministerial priest’s prophetic role is primary in the sense that everything else he does presupposes and is informed by God’s word.

Proponents of the primacy of ordained ministers’ priestly function also can make their case. We do not communicate with one another for the sake of communicating but for the sake of self-expression and of our relationships and cooperation, and the same is true of God’s revealing.²²¹ God speaks his word for the sake of covenantal fellowship, and the fellowship of the new covenant is realized and, in a certain way, experienced in the Eucharist. So, Vatican II teaches that liturgical actions surpass all others (see SC 7), and that the Eucharist contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth (see PO 5) and is the source and culmination of the whole Christian life (see LG 11; cf. SC 10). Therefore, presbyters’ and bishops’ ministry as priests is primary insofar as their effecting the Eucharist contributes to the Church’s supreme act.

Proponents of the primacy of the pastoral, prophetic, and priestly elements of ordained ministry all make sound and complementary cases, but the significance of what they say is diminished by an additional consideration. As I already explained, Jesus simultaneously provided prophetic, priestly, and kingly service throughout his public life. The three roles are distinct aspects of his salvific service to humankind, but they are not

218. “A New Dogmatic Outlook on the Priestly Ministry,” in *The Identity of the Priest*, ed. Karl Rahner, S.J., Concilium, 43 (New York: Paulist, 1969), 27.

219. *Ibid.*, 30.

220. For a good, brief summary, see Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection* (New York: Paulist, 1997), 16-29.

221. St. Paul, a peerless minister of the word, calls his evangelization of the Gentiles “priestly service of the gospel of God” (Rom 15.16), because his purpose is the sanctification of their offering, the spiritual worship of their Christian lives (see Rom 12.1).

separate, and whenever bishops and presbyters act in the person of Christ, they participate in all three roles, though at any particular moment one or another may stand out. Referring to Vatican II's document on the Church, John Paul II explains: "If we examine the council texts carefully it becomes obvious that we should speak of a threefold dimension to Christ's office and mission, rather than of three different functions. In fact, these functions are closely linked to one another and they explain, condition, and clarify one another."²²² John Paul repeats this teaching in his apostolic exhortation on bishops and draws the conclusion: "For this reason, then, when the Bishop teaches, he also sanctifies and governs the People of God; when he sanctifies, he also teaches and governs; when he governs, he teaches and sanctifies."²²³

Since bishops and presbyters simultaneously carry on all the dimensions of their mission and office, how each dimension is prior to the others is in practice not very important. Having reached a similar conclusion, Greshake points out, in my judgment rightly, that "the individual priest has a basic spiritual need, while listening to his own personal vocation and reflecting together with his brothers, to ask himself where is or where ought to be his own special task, its centre of gravity and 'style'. This approach will lead to a legitimate multiplicity of 'images of the priest' which become distorted only when the triple nature of priestly office is obscured in favour of one or two isolated elements."²²⁴

Even so, one can wonder how best to characterize ordained ministers' single yet complex role in the Church.

Jesus refers to himself as the "good shepherd," who will be the "one shepherd" of all humankind (Jn 10.11-16). The early Church refers to him as the "great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb 13.20), "the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Pt 2.25), "the chief Shepherd" (1 Pt 5.4) who will come to crown faithful presbyters, and the Lamb who, having saved those who wash their robes in his blood, "will be their shepherd" (Rev 7.17). Having compassion on the crowds who came to him, "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9.36), Jesus commissioned the Twelve to carry on his pastoral service (see Mt 10.1-15). In fulfilling his promise to Peter and giving him the keys to the kingdom, Jesus makes it clear that Peter's task will be that of a shepherd: "Feed my lambs. . . . Tend my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep" (Jn 21.15-17), and the early Church regards it as presbyters' duty to "tend the flock of God" (1 Pt 5.2).

Pastor in English originally referred to a shepherd and often is used to refer to shepherds of souls. Vatican II considers all the responsibilities of bishops in its decree on their *pastoral office* (CD). John Paul II follows the Council's example by using *pastor* as the general characterization of the offices of presbyters and bishops in his apostolic exhortations *Pastores dabo vobis* and *Pastores gregis*. He understands *shepherd* inclusively in teaching that ordination "configures the priest to Christ, the head and shepherd of the Church, entrusting him with a prophetic, priestly and royal mission to be

222. "Letter to Priests" (Holy Thursday, 1979), 3, AAS 71 (1979) 397, OR, 17 April 1979, 6.

223. *Pastores gregis*, 9, AAS 96 (2004) 837, OR, 22 Oct. 2003, III-IV.

224. Greshake, op. cit., 75.

carried out in the name and person of Christ.”²²⁵ Certain theologians also have argued for defining ordained ministry as the office of the shepherd, understood broadly to include not only leadership but all three dimensions of episcopal and presbyteral service.²²⁶

Thus, Jesus and the Church have made it clear that bishops and presbyters are fittingly regarded as pastors, understanding *pastor* in its inclusive sense. That characterization also is fitting because ordained ministers serve the pilgrim Church; their service will end when faith gives way to sight, all sacraments drop away, and God is “everything to every one” (1 Cor 15.28). Until then, as Vatican II twice says: “Exercising the office of Christ as shepherd and head, they gather up the family of God, as a fellowship animated toward unity, and lead it through Christ in the Spirit to God the Father” (LG 28; PO 6). While here the Council is speaking of presbyters’ pastoral role in the narrow sense, its statement could be expanded easily to include the ministry of the word, which both gathers and guides God’s family, and priestly ministry, centering on the Eucharist, which nourishes the fellowship as Christ’s one body.

Of course, regarding bishops and presbyters as pastors can lead to mistakes. One mistake lies in supposing that their responsibility extends only to their actual flock and those added to it by natural increase. In fact, pastors need to consider as lambs who need special care those who have never really heard the gospel, those who mistakenly think they can do without pastoral service, and those who have wandered from the fold. Another mistake is to suppose that, as shepherds are superior to their sheep, pastors are superior to the souls entrusted to their care. In fact, only the Lord Jesus is as superior to other human beings as the analogy suggests: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Ps 23.1). And he defined his pastorate as self-sacrificing service: “I lay down my life for the sheep” (Jn 10.15). The Church’s pastors are to imitate him:

Intrinsically linked to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry is *its character as service*. Entirely dependent on Christ who gives mission and authority, ministers are truly “slaves of Christ” (cf. Rom 1.1) in the image of him who freely took “the form of a slave” for us (Phil 2.7). Because the word and grace of which they are ministers are not their own, but are given to them by Christ for the sake of others, they must freely become the slaves of all (cf. 1 Cor 9.19). (CCC, 876)

Moreover, while bishops and presbyters “exist and act in order to proclaim the gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ the head and shepherd,”²²⁷ they, too, are sheep insofar as they act *in propria persona*.

8) Ordained priesthood is subordinate to the common priesthood of the faithful.

While the Church’s pastors exercise authority in Jesus’ person, all they are ordained to do, considered insofar as they do it *in propria persona*, is a means to an end: the benefits Jesus provides to all his faithful, including them, by what they do in his person.

225. *Pastores dabo vobis*, 27, AAS 84 (1992) 700, OR, 8 April 1992, VII.

226. See, for example, Galot, op. cit., 135-42; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 4, *Spirit and Institution* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 365-81.

227. John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 15, AAS 84 (1992) 680, OR, 8 April 1992, IV.

But any means is subordinate to the end for the sake of which it is used. So, the ordained priesthood is subordinate to the common priesthood of the faithful as means to end.

This subordination is not a novel idea. By his apostolic ministry, St. Paul founded the church at Corinth, and he regards himself as a marriage broker who has promised that church as a chaste virgin to Christ (see 2 Cor 11.2). Even if the marriage broker's role is indispensable for bringing a couple together, it is limited. The marriage broker is not a party to the married couple's intimate relationship. Using abstractions, Vatican II makes the same point in speaking of bishops' prophetic role: "That office, which the Lord entrusted to the pastors of his people, is a true service and in sacred Scripture is significantly called *diaconia* or ministry (see Acts 1.17, 25; 21.19; Rom 11.13; 1 Tm 1.12)" (LG 24). Thus, the opening sentences of the Council's chapter on the hierarchical constitution of the Church are shaped by the New Testament when they speak of "ministries" instituted by Christ for "the good of the whole body," and point out that "ministers, who are endowed with sacred power, serve their brothers and sisters" (LG 18).

As usual, John Paul II develops and clarifies Vatican II's teaching. Writing to all priests, he exhorts them to exemplify for married couples fidelity to vocation and he teaches them that "we should understand our ministerial priesthood as 'subordination' to the common priesthood of all the faithful, of the laity, especially of those who live in marriage and form a family."²²⁸ He spells out the relationship between the exercise of the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood:

The priest is for the laity: he animates them and supports them in the exercise of the common priesthood of the baptized—so well illustrated by the Second Vatican Council—which consists in their making their lives a spiritual offering, in witnessing to the Christian spirit in the family, in taking charge of the temporal sphere and sharing in the evangelization of their brethren. But the service of the priest belongs to another order. He is ordained to act in the name of Christ the Head, to bring people into the new life made accessible by Christ, to dispense to them the mysteries—the Word, forgiveness, the Bread of Life—to gather them into his Body, to help them to form themselves from within, to live and to act according to the saving plan of God. In a word, our identity as priests is manifested in the "creative" exercise of the love for souls communicated by Christ Jesus.²²⁹

228. "Letter to all priests of the Church" (Holy Thursday, 1979), 9, AAS 71 (1979) 411, *OR*, 17 Apr. 1979, 8. Pointing out that the word *subordination* appears here in quotation marks, someone might argue that it is being used in some mysterious, figurative sense. However, John Paul's fuller explanations, quoted in this paragraph, make it clear that here *subordination* refers to the literal subordination of a means to the end for the sake of which it is used. The quotation marks surely were an attempt to exclude another literal meaning of subordination: subjection to another's authority. The subordination of ordained priesthood to the common priesthood of the faithful does not mean that the Church's pastors are answerable to the faithful as democratically elected officials are to the electorate. In that sense, all the faithful, including ministerial priests, are subordinate to Jesus and answerable to him.

229. "Letter to all priests of the Church" (Holy Thursday, 1986), 10, AAS 78 (1986) 699, *OR*, 24 Mar. 1986, 3.

Again, the Pope reflects on Vatican II's teaching about the difference in essence between the two ways of sharing in Jesus' unique priesthood:

The [ministerial] priesthood is not an institution that exists "alongside" the laity or "above" it. *The priesthood* of bishops and priests, as well as the ministry of deacons, is "for" the laity, and precisely for this reason it possesses a "ministerial" character, that is to say one "of service." Moreover, it highlights the "baptismal priesthood," the priesthood common to all the faithful.²³⁰

The Church hierarchy described by Pseudo-Dionysius is one in which the clergy receive divine things from above and hand them down to a passively receptive laity. Stripping away that ill-conceived remodeling, Vatican II and John Paul II restore the beautiful structure Jesus gave the Church. The laity are called to exercise their priesthood by living their entire lives as spiritual worship and witness. The ministerial priesthood is not above the common priesthood or even alongside it but subordinate to it.²³¹ To be sure, clerics must carry out Christ's program, not cater to the wishes of lay people, but ministerial priests are meant to be servants, as Jesus emphatically taught the Twelve they were to be.

The faithful in general and ordained presbyters and bishops are all called "priests" by analogies based on their different relationships to Jesus' priesthood. Understanding those relationships more exactly will help clarify precisely what ministerial priesthood is.

John Paul II began a series of Wednesday audiences on presbyters by pointing out that Christ "is the one 'High Priest' of the new and eternal covenant." Since his sacrifice is perfect and unending, "There is no further need or possibility of other priests in addition to or alongside the one Mediator, Christ." He alone is "the true and definitive *hiereús*, or Priest (Heb 5.6, 10.21). . . . No one else in the new covenant is *hiereús* in the same sense."²³² Thus, not only do the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood differ in essence from each other (see LG 10), but both differ essentially from the unique and definitive priesthood of Christ.

Albert Vanhoye points out that nobody in the early Christian communities performed functions similar to those of the Jewish priests.

230. "Letter to all priests of the Church" (Holy Thursday, 1990), 3, *AAS* 82 (1990) 420, *OR*, 2 Apr. 1990, 3. Galot, op. cit., 120, makes the same point: "The two priesthoods are reciprocally related, but, when it comes to the finality that presides over that relation, the relation runs exclusively in favor of the universal priesthood. The ministerial priesthood can never be an end in itself, nor is the universal priesthood ever intended to be subservient to the ministerial priesthood."

231. Without such striking language, John Paul II restates the same teaching in the context of his synthetic account of the nature and mission of ministerial priesthood in *Pastores dabo vobis*, 12-18, *AAS* 84 (1992) 675-86, *OR*, 8 Apr. 1992, III-V. *CCC*, 1547, similarly teaches: "The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, 'each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ.' While being 'ordered one to another,' they differ essentially (LG 10, §2). In what sense? While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit—the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. The ministerial priesthood is a *means* by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church."

232. General Audience (31 Mar. 1993), 2, *Inseg.*, ???, *OR*, 7 Apr. 1993, 11.

Therefore the leaders of the Christians did not take the title of *kohen* or *hiereús*. They were given names which expressed the notion of mission, or of service, or of a position of responsibility and authority, such as *apostolos*, apostle, which means “one who has been sent”; *diakonos*, deacon, “one who serves”; *episkopos*, from which the word “bishop” comes and which means “overseer”; *presbyteros*, which gives us the word “priest” and which means an “elder”; *hegoumenos*, which means “a leader.”²³³

Priests mediate between a human community and God. Do those who receive the sacrament of holy orders mediate? Vanhoye says they do not: “They are not mediators who would substitute themselves for Christ, but are believers whom Christ the mediator makes use of.”²³⁴ Still, “because the mediation of Christ is made present through” the ordained leadership, one might consider it “more specifically priestly” than the common priesthood.²³⁵

Of course, acting *in persona Christi*, presbyters and bishops do mediate by offering Jesus’ self-sacrifice to the Father and conveying Jesus’ gift of his glorified self to his fellow human beings. Also, acting *in persona ecclesiae*, they can celebrate Mass for the particular intentions of the faithful, especially the poor, and are encouraged to do so and authorized to accept offerings for that service.²³⁶ But what ordained ministers do *in propria persona* is neither offering nor mediating nor even applying the Mass for particular intentions, but simply intending to do what the Church does, uttering the words and making the gestures that constitute the sacrament of Jesus’ presence and action, and intending to fulfill their responsibility as ordained ministers in respect to applying the Mass for a particular intention.

Of course, insofar as bishops and presbyters sacramentally represent Jesus, they do mediate between him and those benefited by his priestly acts. But since Jesus’ priestly acts are human acts, ministerial priests’ mediation is between Jesus *as man* and the faithful, not between the Father—or Jesus as God—and the faithful. Therefore, no ordained minister’s mediation between Jesus and the faithful is, strictly speaking, priestly. Still, making Jesus’ priestly mediation available, actions in his person by ministerial priests provide the basis for calling them “priests” in an analogous sense.

The bases in Scripture and Vatican II’s teaching for speaking of the common priesthood of the faithful were treated (in **1-F-1**, above). About it, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1141) teaches: “This ‘common priesthood’ is that of Christ the sole

233. Albert Vanhoye, S.J., *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament*, trans. J. Bernard Orchard, O.S.B. (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede’s, 1986), 51-52.

234. *Ibid.*, 232.

235. *Ibid.*, 317.

236. See *CIC*, c. 945. Applying the Mass for particular intentions is an established practice not only approved but carefully regulated by the Church (see cc. 945-58; Paul VI, *Firma in traditione*, AAS 66 [1974] 308-11, *OR*, 11 July 1974, 3). So, the faithful reasonably assume that the actions *in persona ecclesiae* of bishops and presbyters who “say a Mass” for their intentions are effective in heaven, according to Jesus’ authorization: “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16.19, 18.18). On that reasonable assumption, Jesus himself intercedes in a special way for such particular intentions, and celebrants therefore also act *in persona Christi* in applying Masses for them.

priest, in which all his members participate.” Vanhoye points out that the New Testament distinguishes two aspects in the priesthood of Christ: that of offering and that of mediation. Jesus offers himself in sacrifice, and this “aspect of offering is found in the priesthood of all Christians, who are invited to approach God with full confidence and to offer sacrifices, . . . to open their whole personal and social lives to the transforming action of God.” The point of Jesus’ sacrifice is to form the new covenant, “so that through him and in him all human beings can enter into intimate relationship with God. And this is the aspect of mediation.” That aspect belongs only to Jesus; his members contribute nothing to it, but simply enter into the covenantal fellowship he established and forever maintains.²³⁷

Because “the common priesthood is a real transformation of existence” and “a personal *offering*,” while the ministerial priesthood “does not itself bring about the mediation,” one might regard the latter as “less really priestly.” Still, the two are not susceptible to that kind of comparison, because they are related to Jesus’ priesthood in entirely different ways.²³⁸ Neither depends on the other to exist or to be what it is; both depend directly on Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Differing essentially, neither is more nor less than the other—they do not differ in degree.²³⁹ Therefore, the ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of the faithful should not be contrasted as superior and inferior or as primary and secondary.

Imprecise, adulatory language was used in the past to convey the nobility of ministerial priesthood. For example, the *Roman Catechism*, teaching about the dignity and excellence of the sacrament of holy orders, says:

Bishops and priests being, as they are, God’s interpreters and ambassadors, empowered in His name to teach mankind the divine law and the rules of conduct, and holding, as they do, His place on earth, it is evident that no nobler function than theirs can be imagined. Justly, therefore, are they called not only Angels, but even gods, because of the fact that they exercise in our midst the power and prerogatives of the immortal God.²⁴⁰

Many documents of the magisterium and theological works call the man ordained a priest “alter Christus”—“other Christ.”²⁴¹ That notion, combined with the sound point that

237. Vanhoye, *op. cit.*, 315.

238. *Ibid.*, 317.

239. From Vatican II’s statement that the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood “differ in essence and not just in degree” (LG 10), someone might infer that they do differ in degree. But two things can differ in degree only with respect to their common attributes; so two things differentiated essentially with respect to something cannot with respect to that same thing differ in degree—that is, cannot be more or less than in which they differ essentially. So, the Council’s “not only in degree” means “not in degree,” just as “not only late” means “not late” in the statement: “Some were late; others were not only late, but absent.” Tardiness and absence differ in essence, not just in degree.

240. II, 7, 2, in *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, trans. John A. McHugh, O.P., and Charles J. Callan, O.P. (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1923), 318.

241. Even John Paul II sometimes uses that expression; e.g., he writes—“Letter to all priests of the Church” (Holy Thursday, 1991), AAS 83 (1991) 465, *OR*, 18 Mar. 1991, 6—of “each priest’s participation

action in the person of Christ involves a sacramental identification with Christ, led to the exaggeration that ordained priesthood “is essentially and above all a configuration, a mysterious and sacramental transformation of the person of the man-priest into the person of Christ himself, the only Mediator.”²⁴²

Greshake characterizes certain statements in the *Roman Catechism* as “extremely questionable” and says that *sacerdos—alter Christus* expresses a misunderstanding: “a quasi-mystical identification of Christ and the office-bearer.”²⁴³ Those criticisms seem to me excessive, for such language, benignly interpreted, can have a sound sense. However, its imprecision does render it ambiguous and therefore likely to mislead faithful Catholics and provoke sincere Protestants, who mistakenly take it to mean that ordained priests duplicate or replace Christ and his unique priesthood rather than make him and his priestly acts really present.

Moreover, simply doing that is noble, as John Paul teaches: “For us priests *the priesthood is the supreme gift, a particular calling to share in the mystery of Christ, a calling which confers on us the sublime possibility of speaking and acting in his name.*”²⁴⁴ The sublimity is not due to what the ordained man himself is or does, but to what the Lord Jesus is and to the absolutely supreme goodness of what he does and its importance for all his fellow human beings. Most citizens of a great nation would regard it as a high honor to work closely with its president or prime minister or to serve as its ambassador. How much higher an honor for the ordained to work closely with the Lord Jesus and to serve as his ambassadors!

Of course, all Christians are anointed by the Holy Spirit when they are christened. St. Josemaría Escrivá, having recalled that everything is given in Christ, teaches: “But we have to join him through faith, letting his life show forth in ours to such an extent that each Christian is not simply *alter Christus*: another Christ, but *ipse Christus*: Christ himself!”²⁴⁵ That responsibility to be Christ certainly is fulfilled by any bishop or presbyter who without hypocrisy or self-deception can say, as Paul did: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11.1) and “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2.20). Such holy men also can tell their people what Paul told the Philippians: “Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all” (Phil 2.17). For, exercising their own share in the *common* priesthood, such holy men join in the sacrificial offerings of the churches whose *members*

in the saving mystery of Christ: ‘*Sacerdos alter Christus.*’ This is an expression which indicates how necessary it is that Christ be the starting point for interpreting the reality of the priesthood.”

242. Alvaro del Portillo, *Consacrazione e Missione del Sacerdote* (Milan: Edizioni Ares, Milan, 1990), 55-56.

243. Op. cit., 20 and 29.

244. “Letter to all priests of the Church” (Holy Thursday, 1994), 1, AAS 86 (1994) 642, *OR*, 30 Mar. 1994, 3.

245. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, *Christ is Passing By: Homilies* (Chicago: Scepter, 1974), 147; again (137): “The Christian is obliged to be *alter Christus, ipse Christus*: another Christ, Christ himself. Through baptism all of us have been made priests of our lives, ‘to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’ (1 Pt 2.5).”

they also are. But similar statements could be made by holy people who are not ordained. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, for instance, let Jesus' life show forth so perfectly in her own life that she, like Paul, was not simply *alter Christus* but *ipse Christus*.

This is not the case, however, with all those who have been ordained priests. Imagine an extreme instance.²⁴⁶ A priest has had a successful career but, due to obduracy in a discreet but sinful intimate relationship, has entirely lost his faith; unwilling to give up the advantages of his position in the Church, he continues to play the part of a holy, dedicated, and skillful pastor. His homilies are orthodox and inspiring; his leadership builds up a vibrant community of faith. He presides in the liturgy of the Eucharist and administers the other sacraments with seemingly exemplary reverence. Though doing nothing but playing a role he secretly regards as meaningless, he knows that the Church intends to hand on the faith, confer sacraments, and lead the pilgrim people to their heavenly home by what he outwardly does. In intending to provide the services the faithful expect of him, he intends to do what the Church does, and so he continues to act *in persona Christi*.²⁴⁷ Yet such a man would not be *ipse Christus*. Still, he would be *alter Christus*—and would share in the sublimity of ministerial priesthood. But that would be true only inasmuch as, continuing to represent Christ sacramentally, he would go on making Jesus' sublime, saving acts present for the faithful.

9) It would be fitting to ordain only men with charisms for a lifestyle like Jesus'.

Jesus' commitment to his mission accounted for his lifestyle (see **A-2**, above), and he chose the Twelve to collaborate closely in his mission and to represent him in carrying it on. In forming them to serve as his apostles, Jesus therefore understandably required them to adopt some aspects of his lifestyle and commended forgoing marriage for the kingdom's sake (see **A-3**, above). Bishops are the apostles' successors; presbyters participate in their ministry; and both represent Jesus as he carries on his salvific service. So, Jesus' lifestyle is as appropriate for bishops and presbyters as it was for the Twelve. But men lacking charisms for that lifestyle cannot be expected to commit themselves to it and faithfully fulfill that commitment. It therefore seems that men should be ordained for priestly ministry only if they have charisms for the aspects of Jesus' lifestyle he required of the Twelve, and that it would be fitting, at least, to ordain only those with the charism for celibate chastity.²⁴⁸

Ordination empowers men to act *in persona Christi*, but it seems that something else must have grounded Jesus' directives and advice regarding lifestyle. After all, validly

246. Since drafting what follows, I have been told about priests it called to some readers' minds, but the instance is purely fictional.

247. See St. Thomas, *S.t.*, 3, q. 64, a. 5, c.; a. 9, c., ad 1.

248. Paul VI, *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 31, *AAS* 59 (1967) 669, *PE*, 276:31, among other arguments in favor of celibacy, teaches: "In the community of the faithful committed to his charge, the priest represents Christ. Thus, it is most fitting that in all things he should reproduce the image of Christ and in particular follow his example, both in his personal and in his apostolic life. To his children in Christ, the priest is a sign and a pledge of that sublime and new reality which is the kingdom of God . . . Thus he nourishes the faith and hope of all Christians, who, as such, are bound to observe chastity according to their proper state of life."

ordained priests can act in Jesus' person despite lacking not only the distinctive aspects of his lifestyle but the virtues essential for any upright life.

However, bishops and presbyters who do not share certain aspects of Jesus' lifestyle are thereby impeded from some ways of acting *in persona Christi*. Although those whose lifestyle obviously is very unlike Jesus' can consecrate the Eucharist and validly administer other sacraments, their attempts to preach and teach in his name are defective at best.²⁴⁹ For even if they say *what* they should, Jesus' message, being revelatory, cannot be communicated without prophetic *deeds* that manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words (see DV 2). That need for deeds partly explains why Jesus undertook his peculiar lifestyle (see A-2, above), and its continuing importance is shown by the role of the apostles' *example* in handing on the message (see DV 7). Bishops and presbyters who are ambitious careerists, preoccupied with secular affairs, bent on ensuring their own comfort and financial security, and/or attached to escapist entertainment and sensory gratification can say clearly and even eloquently that the kingdom is supremely important and the world as we know it is passing away. But even if they speak *in persona Christi*, what they do *in propria persona* sends a contradictory message.²⁵⁰

Likewise, attempts at pastoral leadership in the person of Christ by bishops and presbyters whose lifestyle is manifestly unlike that of Jesus in relevant respects are at best defective. Vatican II, teaching about presbyters, explains what such pastoral leadership should be. They should

“... gather up the family of God, as a fellowship animated toward unity, and lead it through Christ in the Spirit to God the Father” (LG 28). Spiritual power is conferred on presbyters for carrying out this service, as it is for their other tasks, and that power is given for building up (see 2 Cor 10.8, 13.10). Now, in building up the Church,

249. Guy Mansini, O.S.B., “Sacerdotal Character at the Second Vatican Council,” *Thomist*, 67 (2003): 539-77, points out that the priestly office requires less of the minister than the prophetic and kingly offices and concludes that the spiritual power to act *in persona Christi* included in the sacramental character conferred by ordination is limited to the *munus* of sanctifying. His study of relevant texts of Vatican II and the underlying documentation shows that the Council does not expressly settle the issue. But it seems clear that the Council's texts imply that the sacramental character of ordination is or includes the spiritual power to act in Christ's person in all three *munera*. One can account for the differences among the exercises of the *munera*: the power is one thing, its exercise another, and the latter requires more when teaching and governing than when sanctifying—more knowledge, care, and cooperation with the grace of the Holy Spirit. However, those differences are only of degree. Even an attempt at baptism might well be invalid if, for example, a cleric pours hydrogen peroxide instead of water on the head of an infant (whose parents had been told to use the antiseptic, not water, to wash an infected head wound) or says “I baptize you,” not in the name of the three divine persons, but “in the name of God, the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier.”

250. John Paul II, *Pastores gregis*, 31, AAS 96 (2004) 866-67, *OR*, 22 Oct. 2003, IX, teaches with respect to bishops what holds for presbyters as well: “No full treatment of the ministry of the bishop, as the preacher of the gospel and guardian of the faith among the People of God, can fail to mention the duty of personal integrity: the bishop's teaching is prolonged in his witness and his example of an authentic life of faith. He teaches with an authority exercised in the name of Jesus Christ (see DV 10) the word which is heard in the community; were he not to live what he teaches, he would be giving the community a contradictory message.”

presbyters should deal with everyone, according to the Lord's model, with extraordinary humanity. They should deal with everyone, not in accord with what people find agreeable, but in accord with the demands of Christian doctrine and life, teaching them and warning them as their very dear children (see 1 Cor 4.14). (PO 6)

Even if an ordained minister whose lifestyle and behavior is unlike Jesus' tells people the truth about what they ought to do, he more or less fails to make present Jesus' own shepherding. Only that shepherding manifests the concern of self-sacrificing love for each person, draws everyone to Jesus, promotes solidarity in the new covenant's communion in all who respond, and encourages each fully to use his or her unique gifts to build up that fellowship.²⁵¹

Those holding pastoral office in the Church might succeed as managers but will surely fail as pastors if they seek to dominate those entrusted to their care; if they are irascible, unreceptive to advice, offended by criticism, resentful, vindictive; if they refuse to cooperate with their peers or disobey Church law and their superiors; if they are unsolicitous about nonbelievers, separated Christians, fallen-away Catholics, habitual sinners, the lukewarm; if they are less concerned to know well the people they are called to serve than to maintain good public relations, look after temporalities, and have a balanced budget—if, in short, they fail to follow Jesus' example in caring about people, relating to them, and dealing with them.²⁵²

Even insofar as they do act in his person, bishops and presbyters whose lifestyle is unlike Jesus' often fail to help him achieve his purpose in acting by means of their ministry. Jesus intends not only that his saving acts be made present by the ordained who sacramentally represent him to those who might benefit from them but that those acts be fruitful: he intends that people listen to the gospel and believe it, devoutly receive and be sanctified by his sacraments, and flourish as active members of his flock. Of course,

251. See the passage from PO 6, quoted in **1-G-9**, above, in which Vatican II teaches that priests, *exercising authority in their pastoral role*, should see to it that each of the faithful cultivates his or her own vocation; also see in the footnote John Paul II's comment on that passage regarding the standard of pastoral care set by Jesus.

252. John Paul II, *Pastores gregis*, 11, AAS 96 (2004) 840, *OR*, 22 Oct. 2003, IV, again teaches with respect to bishops what holds for presbyters as well: The bishop's spirituality will be ecclesial "since everything in his life is directed towards the building up of the Church in love. This requires of the bishop an attitude of service marked by personal strength, apostolic courage and trusting abandonment to the inner working of the Spirit. He will therefore strive to adopt a lifestyle which imitates the *kenosis* of Christ, the poor and humble servant, so that the exercise of his pastoral ministry will be a consistent reflection of Jesus, the Servant of God, and will help him to become, like Jesus, close to everyone, from the greatest to the least. . . . In the practice of charity, as the content of the pastoral ministry he has received, the bishop becomes a sign of Christ and acquires that moral authority needed for the effective exercise of his juridical authority. Unless the episcopal office is based on the witness of a holiness manifested in pastoral charity, humility and simplicity of life, it ends up being reduced to a solely functional role and, tragically, it loses credibility before the clergy and the faithful." Again, (*ibid.*, 43, AAS 883, *OR*, XIII), commenting on Vatican II's teaching (in LG 27) that bishops govern their dioceses not only "by their counsel, exhortations and example, but also by their authority and sacred power," the Pope implies that bishops who are not holy simply cannot effectively govern *in persona Christi*: "This 'sacred power' is one which is rooted in the moral authority which the bishop enjoys by virtue of his holiness of life. It is this which facilitates the acceptance of his every act of governance and makes it effective."

fruitfulness depends upon the dispositions of those who hear the message, receive the sacraments, and enjoy the Church's pastoral guidance; but those dispositions partly depend on the lifestyle and behavior of ordained ministers.²⁵³

Those who adopt a lifestyle like Jesus', put on his mind, and share his sensibility and feelings treat people as he would. In sacramentally representing Jesus and making his actions present, they do not make it difficult for people to recognize Jesus' actions nor do they needlessly provoke resistance to cooperating with him and benefiting from his acts. Instead, they do what they can to overcome inappropriate dispositions and promote suitable ones. In a word, they make Jesus' saving acts not only *present* but readily *available*.

What else they do, beyond acting *in persona Christi*, to make Jesus' acts available is not done merely *in propria persona*. It pertains to their ecclesial offices and—along with everything they do *in persona Christi*—is done *in persona ecclesiae*. Since these things are essential to the ministry for which they are ordained, the Church, wanting the service provided by her ordained ministers to be of good quality, has a compelling reason for encouraging them to adopt a lifestyle like Jesus' and in all respects carry out their ministry as he would. But since it would be unreasonable to expect that of men who do not have the charisms for it, it is fitting that the Church ordain only those who manifest the charisms for a lifestyle like Jesus' and the readiness to behave as he would.

Vatican II teaches in its document on the formation of seminarians:

May the students very clearly understand that they are not destined to exercise lordship and enjoy honors but to be bound over entirely for the service of God and pastoral ministry. Let them be formed with special solicitude in priestly obedience, a lifestyle of poverty, and the spirit of self-denial so that they will be habituated to renouncing unhesitatingly whatever is not advantageous, even if licit, and to conforming themselves to Christ crucified. (OT 9)

The Council develops the same line of thinking in its document on the ministry and life of presbyters, using Jesus' self-sacrifice as the exemplar for priestly self-mortification and pastoral service (see PO 12) and making the counsels of obedience, chastity, and poverty the framework for teaching about priestly obedience, celibacy, and dealing with material goods (see PO 15-17). But even though the Council teaches firmly about

253. John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 25, AAS 84 (1992) 696-97, *OR*, 8 Apr. 1992, VII, links the Council of Trent's teaching about the relevance of the dispositions of those who receive the sacraments with the holiness of the minister, and quotes PO 12 on the relationship between priests' holiness and their ministry's fruitfulness. Then in 43—AAS 732, *OR*, XII—he teaches: “The priest, who is called to be a ‘living image’ of Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, should seek to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God and which is reflected with particular liveliness in his attitudes toward others as we see narrated in the Gospels. The ministry of the priest is, certainly, to proclaim the Word, to celebrate the Sacraments, to guide the Christian community in charity ‘in the name and in the person of Christ,’ but all this he does dealing always and only with individual human beings. . . . So we see that the human formation of the priest shows its special importance when related to the receivers of the mission: In order that his ministry may be humanly as credible and acceptable as possible, it is important that the priest should mold his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of man.”

obedience and celibacy, and invites priests voluntarily to embrace poverty, it stops short of saying a lifestyle like Jesus' is necessary for all priests.

A document of the 1971 session of the Synod of Bishops hints that such an integral lifestyle is necessary: "If celibacy is lived in the spirit of the Gospel, in prayer and vigilance, with poverty, joy, contempt of honors, and brotherly love, it is a sign which cannot long be hidden, but which effectively proclaims Christ to modern men also."²⁵⁴ A 1974 document of the Congregation for Catholic Education more clearly suggests the same thing:

Celibacy constitutes a sign which completes the total picture of the other evangelical counsels. Insofar as it is chosen for the kingdom of heaven, it implies fundamentally the Gospel virtues of poverty and obedience. In fact, these are intimately connected with one another, and complementary to each other, and they signify a life which is perfectly evangelical in nature.²⁵⁵

Moreover, it becomes even clearer that a lifestyle like Jesus' is fitting for all priests only in John Paul II's exhortation after the session of the Synod of Bishops on the formation of presbyters.

Having pointed out that Jesus himself exercises headship as service and total self-emptying, John Paul teaches that the presbyter is configured to Christ the head and *servant*, and concludes: "The spiritual life of the ministers of the New Testament should therefore be marked by this fundamental attitude of service to the People of God (see Mt 20.24ff., Mk 10.43-44), freed from all presumption or desire of 'lording over' those in their charge (see 1 Pt 5.2-3)."²⁵⁶ He recalls Jesus' act of washing the Apostles' feet and, making the point that education in obedience, celibacy, and poverty should be in the context of pastoral "charity, which consists in the loving gift of oneself," he quotes the passage from *Optatam totius* that I quoted above.²⁵⁷

John Paul says in his treatment of priests' spiritual life that the three evangelical counsels are a particularly significant expression of gospel radicalism. Then he asserts: "The priest is called to live these counsels in accordance with those ways and, more specifically, those goals and that basic meaning which derive from and express his own priestly identity."²⁵⁸ On another occasion, he points out that faith teaches that priestly ordination confers a new consecration; then, while using the indicative, he draws a normative conclusion:

When the priest recognizes that he is called to serve as the *instrument of Christ*, he feels the need to live in intimate *union with Christ* in order to be a *valid instrument* of the "principal Agent." Therefore, he seeks to reproduce in himself the "consecrated

254. *Ultimis temporibus*, AAS 63 (1971) 915, *Vatican Collection*, ed. Flannery, 2:687.

255. "A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy," 6, in National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Norms for Priestly Formation*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1993), 159; *EV* 5 (1974-76), 194.

256. *Pastores dabo vobis*, 21, AAS 84 (1992) 689, *OR*, 8 Apr. 1992, VI.

257. *Ibid.*, 49, AAS 745-46, *OR*, XIII.

258. *Ibid.*, 27, AAS 701, *OR*, VII.

life” (the sentiments and virtues) of the one, eternal priest who shares with him not only his power, but also his state of sacrifice for accomplishing the divine plan.²⁵⁹

In treating poverty, John Paul observes that the synod Fathers “further developed” the Council’s teaching, quotes their norm that priests “should be capable of witnessing to poverty with a simple and austere lifestyle,” and adds his own teaching that poverty is required of priests: “It is a condition and essential premise of the apostle’s docility to the Spirit, making him ready to ‘go forth,’ without traveling bag or personal ties, following only the will of the Master.”²⁶⁰

John Paul takes the same tack in his treatment of the spiritual life of bishops:

To all his disciples, and especially to those who while still on this earth wish to follow him more closely like the Apostles, the Lord proposes the way of the evangelical counsels. . . . The life of the bishop must radiate the life of Christ and consequently Christ’s own obedience to the Father, even unto death, death on a Cross (see Phil 2.8), his chaste and virginal love, and his poverty which is absolute detachment from all earthly goods.

In this way the bishops can lead by their example not only those members of the Church who are called to follow Christ in the consecrated life but also priests, to whom the radicalism of holiness in accordance with the spirit of the evangelical counsels is also proposed.²⁶¹

With respect to poverty, the Pope recalls Jesus’ example and teaching, and concludes: “Consequently, the bishop who wishes to be an authentic witness and minister of the gospel of hope must be a *vir pauper*.”²⁶²

10) A cleric’s vocation to holiness takes one of three forms.

These statements of Vatican II, the 1971 session of the Synod of Bishops, and John Paul II make it clear that any man who accepts ordination ought to commit himself to live an evangelical life—that is, to forgo having an agenda of his own, to discern and accept God’s entire plan for his life, and to strive always to carry it out perfectly. Thus, the Church now implies by her teaching that, when men who undertake celibacy accept ordination as presbyters, they should respond to the call to make their profession in the primal institute of consecrated life, the one founded by the Lord Jesus himself, and to abide by its rule of service and life, just as he commanded or encouraged the Twelve to do. This is the first of the forms a clerical vocation to holiness can take.

The fulfillment of that type of clerical vocation is exemplified by St. Paul, other saintly apostles and bishops, the Curé d’Ars, and other saintly celibate presbyters. They became holy by committing themselves to use *all* their gifts and resources as fully as possible in serving Jesus and his Church and by accepting in faith as from the Father’s hand everything that befell them, constantly praying for the Holy Spirit’s light and power to faithfully do these things, always maintaining the intimacy with Jesus essential for

259. General Audience (26 May 1993), 5, Inseg., ???, OR, 2 June 1993, 11.

260. *Pastores dabo vobis*, 30, AAS 84 (1992) 706, OR, 8 Apr. 1992, VIII.

261. *Pastores gregis*, 18, AAS 96 (2004) 850, OR, 22 Oct. 2003, VI.

262. *Ibid.*, 20, AAS 852, OR, VII.

friends working together so closely,²⁶³ and regularly examining themselves, repenting their sins, and seeking the Lord's forgiveness and reconciliation with those they wronged.

If a man with that form of vocation to holiness does not sinfully reject the graces he is offered, he responds to his calling, and his life is evangelical in the sense defined in **1-G-10**, above. His lifestyle, being like Jesus' own, is superior to other evangelical lifestyles, as explained in **B-2**, above, and his holiness has the distinctive excellence pertaining to that lifestyle. While his vocation continues to unfold throughout his life, all of it is subordinate not only to his fundamental option of faith but to his one and only vocational commitment, namely, to carry out the ministry proper to his order.

Before Vatican II, it was commonly assumed that clerics could become holy only by taking time out from their ministry for personal religious practices; the holiness thus achieved would then contribute to the fruitfulness of their ministry. Vatican II overcomes that supposed split by teaching: "Presbyters will obtain holiness in a characteristic fashion by properly and tirelessly carrying out their roles in the Spirit of Christ" (PO 13). Working out this idea (see PO 12-17), the Council makes it clear that preparing well for various ministerial acts and properly carrying them out involves many things that foster a presbyter's love of God and neighbor and integrate his entire life with that love, while that growth in charity contributes to his increasingly effective and fruitful ministry. John Paul II restates and clarifies this teaching in *Pastores dabo vobis*, chapter three, "The Spiritual Life of the Priest," and *Pastores gregis*, chapter two, "The Spiritual Life of the Bishop."

Pastoral charity is central in all three treatments. This, in the first place, is Jesus' love of neighbor, the love with which the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.²⁶⁴ Jesus' pastoral charity is his human will's complete conformity with the Father's will that all human beings be saved. It flows from his divine communion in the Holy Spirit with his Father and his human love, joy, and gratitude toward the Father. It leads immediately to his perfect obedience to the Father: that obedience with which he commits himself to his mission, carries it out single-mindedly, and lays down his life—the obedience which is the acceptable sacrifice that establishes the new covenant. And, since Jesus' pastoral charity is the principle of his single-minded fulfillment of his mission, it is the principle of all the elements of his lifestyle, each of which is an aspect of his ministry and/or a means of facilitating it and/or promoting its fruitfulness (see **A-2**, above).

Next, pastoral charity is love of neighbor on the part of those clerics who respond properly to a clerical vocation to holiness of the first form.²⁶⁵ It is the love with which they bind themselves over for service when they accept ordination and by which they

263. See OT 8 and the teachings cited in its fn. 14; John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 46, AAS 84 (1992) 738-40, *OR*, 8 Apr. 1992, XII-XIII.

264. On Jesus' pastoral charity, see John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 22, AAS 84 (1992) 690-91, *OR*, 8 Apr. 1992, VI.

265. On the pastoral charity of presbyters and bishops, see PO 14-17; John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 21-26, AAS (1992) 688-700, *OR*, 8 Apr. 1992, VI-VII; *Pastores gregis*, 11-13, AAS 96 (2004) 839-45, *OR*, 22 Oct. 2003, IV-V.

serve as well as they can for as long as they can. It is the conformity of their wills to Jesus' human will to save. It presupposes the love of God poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Spirit and is given specific form by the grace of the Holy Spirit given by ordination, which configures them to Christ, the Good Shepherd. As a grace constantly renewed, their pastoral charity flows mainly from the eucharistic sacrifice. It leads immediately to their special allegiance to Jesus insofar as he is the Church's head and chief shepherd: the allegiance with which they give themselves entirely to his Church, serve in cooperation with others according to the constitution he gave the Church, faithfully and carefully do in his person the acts he authorized, and with creative fidelity promote the fruitfulness of all his saving acts. Since pastoral charity is the dynamic, inner principle that shapes these clerics' entire lives of self-giving in service to the Church, it is also the principle of their special companionship with Jesus and their day-by-day living in a manner very like his.

It should be noted that some laypeople—for example, some catechists—who possess appropriate charisms are called to forgo marriage for the kingdom's sake and devote their lives entirely to collaborating closely in some aspects of clerical ministry. If they respond well to their calling, their holiness, which is very similar to that of holy clerics, shares in the same excellence.

Vatican II began its treatment of clerical celibacy with the proposition: "It is a sign of pastoral charity and at the same time a spur to it, as well as a unique font of spiritual fecundity in the world" (PO 16). In his encyclical on celibacy, Paul VI places his account of the reasons for it in a Christological context, and recounts how Jesus led the Twelve to share his lifestyle and commended celibacy to them. Today too, Jesus calls some to share in both his priestly service and condition of life.²⁶⁶ The Pope then develops Vatican II's fundamental proposition regarding celibacy:

The response to the divine call is an answer of love to the love which Christ has shown us so sublimely (see Jn 3.16, 15.13). This response is included in the mystery of that special love for souls who have accepted his most urgent appeals (see Mk 10.21). With a divine force, grace increases the longings of love. And love, when it is genuine, is all-embracing, stable and lasting, an irresistible spur to all forms of heroism. And so the free choice of sacred celibacy has always been considered by the Church "as a symbol of, and stimulus to, charity" (LG 42): it signifies a love without reservations; it stimulates to a charity which is open to all.²⁶⁷

In his apostolic exhortation on priestly formation, John Paul II also recalls and develops Vatican II's basic proposition. He shows that the Church's law on celibacy is not a mere arbitrary rule, for

the will of the Church finds its ultimate motivation in the *link between celibacy and sacred ordination*, which configures the priest to Jesus Christ, the head and spouse of the Church. The Church, as the spouse of Jesus Christ, wishes to be loved by the priest in the total and exclusive manner in which Jesus Christ her head and spouse loved her.

266. See *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 22-23, AAS 59 (1967) 665-66, PE, 276.22-23.

267. Ibid., 24, AAS 666-67, PE, 276.24.

Priestly celibacy, then, is the gift of self *in* and *with* Christ *to* his Church and expresses the priest's service to the Church in and with the Lord.

For an adequate priestly spiritual life, celibacy ought not to be considered and lived as an isolated or purely negative element, but as one aspect of a positive, specific and characteristic approach to being a priest. Leaving father and mother, the priest follows Jesus the good shepherd in an apostolic communion, in the service of the People of God. Celibacy, then, is to be welcomed and continually renewed with a free and loving decision as a priceless gift from God, as an "incentive to pastoral charity" (PO 16), as a singular sharing in God's fatherhood and in the fruitfulness of the Church, and as a witness to the world of the eschatological kingdom.²⁶⁸

Thus, beginning with Vatican II, the Church's magisterium has viewed priestly celibacy primarily as an element of the form of clerical life that shares unreservedly in Jesus' own pastoral charity and the entire lifestyle that flows from it.

This perspective differs from that of those who first formulated the disciplinary requirement—which later developed into the law of priestly celibacy—that married bishops, presbyters, and deacons must abstain entirely from conjugal intercourse. As Christian Cochini shows, using language that shows his agreement with the early legislators' assumptions, abstinence was required of "clerics working at 'the service of the altar' because they exercise an original function of mediation between God and man." That discipline, he explains, is a survival of Old Testament ceremonial law. When all the other "ancient rites of purification have been erased from the Christian memory, one thing only was remembered: at the very origins of the tribe of Levi . . . the divine law demanded from priests that they abstain from conjugal intercourse in order worthily to accomplish their duties." Rather than considering this requirement of ritual purity obsolete like the others, the Fathers "selected it as a distinctive mark of the priesthood inaugurated by Christ and generally strengthened its scope by making conjugal abstinence a daily necessity."²⁶⁹ On this view, the different discipline of many Eastern churches legislated by a regional council's late-seventh-century decree was due to the "schismatic climate prevailing then in Byzantium" and those bishops' failure to recognize "the divergence of their discipline from that of the early centuries."²⁷⁰ Thus, Cochini considers the Eastern discipline an aberration and concludes that "the continence demanded from the Levites of the New Testament is founded on the original character of priestly mediation" so that celibacy is required by the very nature

268. *Pastores dabō vobis*, 29, AAS 84 (1992) 704-5, OR, 8 Apr. 1992, VIII.

269. Christian Cochini, S.J., *Apostolic Origins of Priestly Celibacy*, trans. Nelly Marans (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), 429-30. Unlike Vanhoye, the careful and very able exegete of the Letter to the Hebrews, who shows the enormous difference between the Old Testament priesthood and the presbyterate of the new covenant (see section 8, above), Cochini assumes (434) that "the anonymous author of that letter" regarded the Christian priesthood as the "heir of the Temple."

270. *Ibid.*, 410. The relevant decree of the Council in Trullo never received papal approval but was widely regarded as valid Church law for the East.

of the priesthood and articulated by what is “in the full meaning of the term, *an unwritten tradition of apostolic origin.*”²⁷¹

But if Cochini proves anything, he proves too much. If he were right, complete sexual abstinence would be essential for clerics, and the Church could never regard marital intimacy as a component of the vocation of any of her clergy. However, those who dealt with celibacy in the early centuries intuited its excellence better than they argued for it. Vatican II, understanding ordained ministry more precisely than those who legislated the early requirement, clearly shows that celibacy is appropriate for priests, while teaching that it “is not required by the very nature of the priesthood, as is obvious from the practice of the early Church (see 1 Tm 3.2-5, Ti 1.6) and the tradition of the Eastern churches.” The Council also exhorts married men who have been ordained “to persevere in their holy vocation” (PO 16).

Paul VI greatly develops the Council’s explanation and defense of celibacy in his encyclical on that subject. At the same time, he repeats and expands on the Council’s appreciation of the discipline of the Eastern churches, which he believes was due to a different but not aberrant historical situation, “which the Holy Spirit has providentially and supernaturally influenced.” He also recognizes among the married clergy of the East “examples of fidelity and zeal which make them worthy of sincere veneration.”²⁷² In this encyclical, Pope Paul also allows for two exceptions to the traditional discipline of the West: ordination to the priesthood of married non-Catholic ministers who are received into full communion with the Catholic Church and desire to serve her as sacred ministers; and the ordination to the permanent diaconate of married men.²⁷³

The encyclical made a major shift in the perspective in which celibacy is understood, compared with what Cochini describes with approval. In 1974, seven years after the encyclical and seven years before Cochini’s book was first published, there was a sign of that shift in the way Pope Paul’s Congregation for Catholic Education distanced itself from the old perspective: “The Church is not prompted by reasons of ‘ritualistic purity’ nor by the concept that only through celibacy is holiness possible.”²⁷⁴

Thus, there is a second form of the clerical call to holiness—the vocation of those called to both marriage and ordination as presbyters or permanent deacons. In some important respects, it is the same as the first: Both require resignation to the Father’s will, conscious dependence on the Spirit’s grace, and regular self-examination and repentance. But clerics whose call to holiness is of this second form and who are bound to fulfill marital and familial responsibilities cannot commit themselves to use all their

271. Ibid., 427 and 439. Stefan Heid, *Celibacy in the Early Church; The Beginnings of a Discipline of Obligatory Continence for Clerics in East and West*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 333-47, also makes clear the very important role of ritual purity, which he defends, in the development of celibacy.

272. *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 38, AAS, 59 (1967) 673, PE, 276:38; cf. sec. 17, AAS 663, PE, 17.

273. Ibid., 42, 663; AAS 674, PE, 42.

274. “A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy,” 13, in National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Norms for Priestly Formation*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1993), 162; EV 5 (1974-76), 198.

gifts as fully as possible in serving the Church and Jesus, her chief shepherd. As Paul says, their “interests are divided” and they cannot give “undivided devotion [undistracted attention] to the Lord” (1 Cor 7.34-35). Inasmuch as they are called to holiness, however, they can love him with undivided hearts. They can conform in their ministry to his precepts forbidding ambition and domineering, and imitate his meekness, obedience, and humble service.²⁷⁵ Moreover, they can practice the detachment and simplicity of life required of all Christians, and their generosity in providing ministry either without remuneration or with only a modest family wage can yield many of the benefits of the austerity of holy, celibate clerics.

If a man called to this second form of a cleric’s vocation to holiness responds to it, his life also is evangelical in the sense defined in **1-G-10**, above; yet his holiness does not have the distinctive excellence of a saintly person who more fully shares Jesus’ lifestyle. Pastoral charity inspires and informs the married cleric’s presbyteral or diaconal service, but his love of neighbor also takes other forms. His vocation continues to unfold throughout his lifetime, but within the complex framework of his multiple commitments. Rather than resolve the tensions that complexity generates by systematically subordinating either set of responsibilities to the other, he must weave the elements into a seamless whole by systematically discerning and fulfilling God’s will.²⁷⁶ The challenge involved in this integrating is not very different from the challenge to celibate clerics who must look after aged parents or married men who must fight for their country or work far from home to earn a living.

Since married candidates cannot be ordained without their wives’ consent, a holy married cleric would have remained a layman if his wife had not given it.²⁷⁷ If she, too, is holy, she discerned that God wanted her to support her husband’s commitment to ministry and help him fulfill it. As such a holy couple share many of their other friendships, they share an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus and constantly grow in their commitment to his person and mission. Their close cooperation in fulfilling the husband’s clerical responsibilities is their spiritual parenting of the faithful he serves, while his pastoral love embraces the members of his own family as he promotes their faith and salvation. The couple’s conjugal love makes their marriage not only exemplary

275. See Congregation for Catholic Education and Congregation for the Clergy, op. cit., 24-25, 28, 41-42, 62, 67, 70, 101-3, 109-13, 132 (*Basic Norms*, 5, 11, 30, 72, 85, 89; *Directory*, 37-38, 43-47, 67). While these documents specifically concern permanent deacons, on this matter their provisions are equally relevant for all clerics. Those ordained presbyters and bishops always also remain deacons, so that every holy cleric always is “a living icon of Christ the servant within the Church” 28 (*Basic Norms*, 11).

276. Ibid., 124 (*Directory*, 61): Since married deacons’ other responsibilities limit their ministry, “it will be necessary to integrate these various elements in unitary fashion, especially by means of shared prayer.” The holy married cleric does not carry out that discernment individualistically but on the basis of constant communication with both the members of his family and fellow clerics.

277. See *CIC*, 1031, §2; *CCEO*, 769, 2°. The remainder of this paragraph articulates the ideal, from which, of course, some married clerics and their wives fall short.

but an unmistakable sacrament of the union of Christ and the Church, a sign that clearly proclaims the splendor of the heavenly wedding feast.²⁷⁸

There is yet a third form a cleric's vocation to holiness can take. Two groups are called to it: some who imprudently committed themselves to clerical service and life without having the appropriate charisms and some who had the charisms but were so unfaithful to their commitments in being ordained that they can no longer fulfill them. Clerics of both kinds receive a new vocation to holiness if, moved by grace, they acknowledge their folly and/or infidelity, sincerely repent, and believe, as they ought, that the merciful Father is ready to forgive all their sins.

Like the other forms of a clerical vocation to holiness, this one, too, requires resignation to the Father's will, conscious dependence on the Spirit's grace, and regular self-examination and repentance. It also is likely to involve special requirements—for example, answering honestly every legitimate question asked by ecclesiastical superiors, complete candor in sharing with them evidence of the impossibility of fulfilling certain commitments, patience with burdensome conditions imposed for the Church's good, and faithful performance of penances.

The new vocations of such clerics will differ greatly depending on differences among their records, defects, and situations, as well as differences in how ecclesiastical superiors deal with such cases. Some will lose the clerical state by a penalty of dismissal, while others will seek and receive from the Holy See the favor of being removed from the clerical state (see *CIC*, 290).²⁷⁹ Some others will remain in the clerical state, bound by their promise of celibacy, but excluded from engaging in ordained ministry by others' decision or their own conscientious judgment. Some will continue in ordained ministry, but within limits and under safeguards.

Some who are deficient only in respect to charisms may receive them in answer to their and/or others' prayers, and thus become able to respond to the first or second form of the clerical vocation to holiness. But prayers for charisms may not be answered. Charisms are for service, and God may wish some to serve in other ways—for example, by the witness of a life of holiness as a cleric excluded from ministry. In every case, however, if such clerics pray earnestly for divine help and do the best they can, they will receive the graces they need to avoid sin (see *DS* 1536/804, 1568/828). No matter what their past follies and sins may have been, they can live that life to

278. Congregation for Catholic Education and Congregation for the Clergy, *op. cit.*, 48, requires the director of formation to make sure that families of married applicants are open "to accepting, sharing, and accompanying the vocation of their relative"; 53, calls for "a program of formation for the wives of candidates" (*Basic Norms*, 42 and 56); 115-16, says (unfortunately, without mentioning wives) "deacons must know Christ intimately so that he may shoulder the burdens of their ministry" and that they should organize their ministry and other obligations "so as to grow in their commitment to the person and mission of Christ the Servant" (*Directory*, 50); 124-25, says that wives' nurturing conjugal love and cooperating in exemplary married and family life significantly contributes to their husbands' ministry (*Directory*, 61).

279. Those whose apparent ordination is determined to have been null are not dealt with here. Those excluded from ministry and even those who lose the clerical state remain clerics; they rightly hear the confessions of penitents in danger of death and validly absolve them from any censures and sins (see *CIC*, 976).

which they now are called and, with God's grace, persevere in grace and grow in holiness. Indeed, if a man with this third form of a cleric's vocation to holiness rejects none of the graces God offers but responds fully to his calling, even his life is evangelical in the sense defined in **1-A-10**, above.