

THE NATURE AND DEFINITION OF THE LITURGY

JOHN H. MILLER, C.S.C.

Holy Cross College, Washington, D.C.

AT FIRST glance the subject of this article might seem superfluous. By now we have had so many attempts at defining and explaining the nature of the liturgy that it hardly seems necessary to go into the question again. The liturgy is the public worship of the Church. Enough said. Yet, if we look into history, are we not forced to admit that much of the difficulty encountered by the liturgical apostolate was due to confusion on this very score? At the very beginning of this century the French Jesuit Navatel became the unwitting spokesman for that particular brand of opposition to the liturgical revival which rests squarely on a complete misunderstanding of the liturgy and which remains solidly entrenched even to the present day.

The liturgy will always have but an occasional and, in general, a very secondary role in the mysterious operation which opens a heart blind to the light of the gospel. Were we to include in this term the Holy Mass, the sacraments, and the divine office, the whole of religion would come into play. In that case, let us no longer speak of the liturgy but rather of the influence of religion. For then it is evident that all souls will be subject to the liturgy, since, as sacrificial, laudatory, and sacramental, it seizes and brings every Christian under its sway.¹

Even liturgiologists themselves have manifested a great deal of disagreement on a conclusive definition and its correct interpretation. Hence, a résumé of the ideas proposed will be of decided value. Indeed, a clear distinction between liturgical and non-liturgical prayer is of the utmost necessity if we are to arrive at an authentic concept of the liturgy and its role in the Christian life.

One more preliminary remark is in order. We cannot be satisfied with accidentals. The question must unfold in a realm far above prejudice, local usage, temporary expedient, or the practice and outlook peculiar to different religious orders. We are out to discover the essential, intimate property of the liturgy which differentiates it definitively from all other types of prayer.

¹ J. Navatel, "L'Apostolat liturgique et la piété personnelle," *Etudes* 137 (1913) 452-53.

THE TERM

The word *liturgy* comes from the Greek *leitourgia*, which is a combination of *laos*, an adjective which means pertaining to the people (*laos*), and *ergon*, a noun which means work. Hence, etymologically the word means any service done for the common welfare.

Since the term originated among the Greeks, it is only natural to look into their history to see what they meant by it. For them it designated any service rendered to the community at personal expense or at least without remuneration; e.g., preparation of war matériel, help rendered for public entertainment or education, etc. When generosity cooled and the state used pressure to force its citizens to perform such services, the word *liturgy* was broadened to include such forced-labor. From there on the concept grew consistently larger to embrace any number of actions which might have repercussions in the social and political sphere.²

With the Hellenization of other parts of the Mediterranean world this word found its way into Egypt. It was there that Hebrew and Hellenic culture met; there the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament was made. Hence it was there that the term *liturgy* made its way into the terminology of revealed literature. What did it mean for the translators? They used it almost exclusively for the great work of the people, the worship of Yahweh.³ Nevertheless they used it, though less frequently, when referring to something done for the people or its leaders, since the Jewish state was a theocracy: the Jews were God's chosen people, their rulers His representatives.⁴

The New Testament followed suit. Luke speaks of Zachary's *liturgy*.⁵ Paul speaks of himself in his role of apostle as the "liturgist of Christ Jesus to the gentiles."⁶ But he also uses the word in reference to the collection taken up for the poor Christians in Jerusalem⁷ and for the services rendered to his own person.⁸ Finally, in his epistle to the Hebrews, he uses the word *liturgy* in its specifically Christian sense,

² E. Raitz von Frenzt, "Der Weg des Wortes *Liturgie* in der Geschichte," *Ephemerides liturgicae* 55 (1941) 75.

³ E.g., Ex 28:43, 29:30; 2 Chr 13:10.

⁴ E.g., 3 K 19:21; 2 Chr 17:19, 22:8.

⁵ Lk 1:23 (text of A. Merk, *Novum testamentum graece et latine* [Rome, 1944]).

⁶ Rom 15:16.

⁷ 2 Cor 9:12.

⁸ Phil 2:30.

the priestly work of Jesus Christ, so different from the worship of the Jews, which was mere copy and shadow: "We have such a high priest . . . a minister (*leitourgos*, liturgist) of the Holies, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord has erected and not man But now He has obtained a superior ministry (*leitourgias*, liturgy), in proportion as He is the mediator of a superior covenant, enacted on the basis of superior promises."⁹ This is the work of the Christian people par excellence, since through it they are able to render to God acceptable worship and receive from Him the fruits of the Christian dispensation, grace.

In Christian antiquity the term was used both in the general sense of service as well as in the more spiritual sense of prayer and sacrifice—in the latter case more frequently as denoting an official or community service as opposed to the works of purely private piety; e.g., in the *Didache*,¹⁰ Clement of Rome,¹¹ the Synods of Ancyra¹² and Antioch.¹³ In the East, however, a tendency already showed itself to limit the word to the Eucharistic Sacrifice; e.g., in the *Euchologion* of Serapion of Thmuis¹⁴ and the *Apostolic Constitutions*.¹⁵ And even today one speaks of the Liturgy of St. James, the Liturgy of St. Basil, and the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, all the while meaning the Mass.

According to Odo Casel¹⁶ a mere transliteration of the Greek word was not entirely accepted in the West. In profane use (e.g., the jurists) as well as sacred (e.g., the sacramentaries) the Latin equivalent was not *liturgia* but *munus*. *Ministerium*, *servitus*, *officium* were also used. But according to the evidence that Casel uncovers we are led to conclude that *munus* had right of place. *Munus* means, therefore, not only "gift" but also "service." Even in the Middle Ages *liturgia* was lost to the language of Western ecclesiastical literature.

It was left to humanism, busy with the liturgical books of the Greeks,

⁹ Heb 8:1-6.

¹⁰ *Didache* 15, 1 (Funk-Bihlmeyer, *Die apostolischen Väter* 1, 8).

¹¹ *Epistola ad Corinthios* 40, 2-5 (Funk-Bihlmeyer 1, 57); 41, 1 (Funk-Bihlmeyer 1, 57).

¹² Canon 1 (Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles* 1 [Paris, 1907] 302).

¹³ Canon 4 (C. Kirch, *Enchiridion fontium historiae ecclesiasticae antiquae* [Barcelona, 1947] § 490).

¹⁴ *Praes missae euchologiae Serapionis* 10 (24), 11 (25) (J. Quasten, *Monumenta eucharistica et liturgica vetustissima* [Florilegium patristicum 7; Bonn, 1935] pp. 56-57).

¹⁵ *Constitutiones apostolorum* 8, 5, 1-8 (Quasten, *op. cit.*, p. 28, note 2).

¹⁶ Odo Casel, "Leiturgia-Munus," *Oriens christianus* 29 (1932) 289-302.

to rediscover it and give it a place of honor in the literature of the West. For the first time there appeared in 1558 a book of Cassander's bearing as its title, *Liturgica*. Pamelius followed him in 1571 with his *Liturgica latinorum*. Thereafter the word appears over and over again until finally in the Code of Canon Law it is used to designate the officially ordered worship of the Church. Today the word is on the lips of every ecclesiastic and many of the laity. Do they know what it means?

DEFINITION OF THE LITURGY

A brief conspectus of the definitions current in the first half of this century will show just how few really understand the meaning of liturgy. As we have seen, J. Navatel interprets liturgy as the "purely sensible, ceremonial, and decorative part of Catholic worship."¹⁷ He saw in it nothing more than an empty symbolism¹⁸ and therefore could attribute to it no inherent sanctifying power.¹⁹ C. Callewaert defines liturgy as "the ecclesiastical regulation of the exercise of public worship."²⁰ The definition as worded would indicate that liturgy is nothing more than rubrics, nothing more than a list of laws and prescriptions. Yet, in spite of the fact that his definition is the child of a rubricistic conception of the liturgy, Callewaert treats the liturgy in such a way in his entire text-book that it is clear he regards the liturgy as an *act* of worship. By no means esthetic or rubricistic, E. Mersch's idea is none the less novel. He calls the liturgy "the sacred context given to the Savior's sacrifice."²¹ In other words, the liturgy is but the ritual prolongation or surrounding of the consecration; the latter is not a liturgical act. "The traditional use of the word liturgy ranks the sacrifice among the major acts of the liturgy—the very first act," says Abbot Capelle.²²

The majority of liturgiologists define the liturgy as the public wor-

¹⁷ J. Navatel, *art. cit.* (supra n. 1) p. 452.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 455. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 456.

²⁰ C. Callewaert, *Liturgicae institutiones 1: De sacra liturgia universim* (3rd ed.; Bruges, 1933) 6.

²¹ E. Mersch, "Prière de chrétiens, prière de membres," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 58 (1931) 100.

²² B. Capelle, "L'Idée liturgique," *Questions liturgiques et paroissiales* 19 (1934) 162.

ship of the Church.²³ They carefully note that "public" or "exterior" does not exclude the interior or sanctifying element, but all coalesce to form one, sole, concrete liturgical act which is both external, because public, and interior both as regards the minister and recipient and the intrinsic power of sanctification of the act itself.

The definition proposed by Odo Casel and his school of thought does not differ essentially from that of the greater number of liturgiologists; it simply seeks to put the internal content of liturgy more in relief. He says: "The liturgy is the ritual accomplishment of the redemptive work of Christ in and through the Church."²⁴ He calls this the *Mysterium* and defines it further as "a holy ritual action in which a salvific act is made present in the rite and brings salvation for the worshiping community which participates in it."²⁵ Prescinding from the manner in which the salvific act is made present (this we will discuss later), this definition means nothing more than that the liturgy is the worship of the Church with special emphasis on what happens in that worship, removing it, therefore, decisively from the sphere of pure ceremonial.

Papal Teaching

Since the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* speaks of set purpose concerning the nature of the liturgy, it is only natural that we resort to it for help in this question. What does Pius XII say about the definitions thus far proposed?

Is the liturgy pure external? The Pope says: "It is an error, consequently, and a mistake to think of the sacred liturgy as merely the outward or visible part of divine worship or as an ornamental cere-

²³ Thus: M. Festugière, "La liturgie catholique," *Revue thomiste* 22 (1914) 44, 45; L. Beauduin, "Mise au point nécessaire," *Questions liturgiques et paroissiales* 4 (1913) 86; F. Cabrol, "Liturgie," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 9, 787; J. Braun, *Liturgisches Handlexikon* (Regensburg, 1924) p. 196; J. Hanssens, "De natura liturgiae ad mentem s. Thomae," *Periodica* 24 (1935) 159*; K. Stapper, *Catholic Liturgics* (Paterson, N.J., 1935) pp. 20-21; Lechner-Eisenhofer, *Liturgik des römischen Ritus* (Freiburg, 1953) p. 3; P. Oppenheim, *Institutiones systematico-historicae in s. liturgiam* 6: *Notiones liturgiae fundamentales* (Turin, 1941) 20, 21 ff.; M. Righetti, *Manuale di storia liturgica* 1: *Introduzione generale* (2nd ed.; Milan, 1950) 6; J. Jungmann, "Was ist Liturgie?," in *Gewordene Liturgie* (Innsbruck, 1941) pp. 1-2; *idem*, *Der Gottesdienst der Kirche* (Innsbruck, 1955) p. 1.

²⁴ Casel, "Mysteriengegenwart," *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft* 8 (1928) 145.

²⁵ Casel, "Mysterienfrömmigkeit," *Bonner Zeitschrift für Theologie und Seelsorge* 4 (1927) 104.

monial."²⁶ The definition, therefore, of J. Navatel can no longer be seriously sustained.²⁷ For that matter, neither can that of Callewaert,²⁸ for the Pope goes on to say: "No less erroneous is the notion that it consists solely in a list of laws and prescriptions according to which the ecclesiastical hierarchy orders the sacred rites to be performed."²⁹ And he explains the reason for this.

The worship rendered by the Church to God must be, in its entirety, interior as well as exterior. It is exterior because the nature of man as a composite of body and soul requires it to be so. Likewise because Divine Providence has disposed that while we recognize God visibly, we may be drawn by Him to love things unseen. Every impulse of the human heart, besides, expresses itself naturally through the senses.³⁰

But the chief element of divine worship must be interior. . . . Otherwise religion clearly amounts to mere formalism, without meaning and without content.³¹

It should be clear to all, then, that God cannot be honored worthily unless the mind and heart turn to Him in quest of the perfect life.³²

Nor is the liturgy simply the sacred context given to the sacrifice of Christ, as suggested by E. Mersch. Already in the very beginning of the Encyclical, writing of how the Church continues the priestly mission of Jesus Christ, the Pope says: "She does this in the first place at the altar, where constantly the sacrifice of the cross is represented and, with a single difference in the manner of its offering, renewed."³³ And later, when speaking of "the mystery of the Holy Eucharist which Christ, the High Priest, instituted, and which He commands to be continually renewed in the Church by His ministers," he calls it "the crowning act of the sacred liturgy."³⁴

We can say, however, that the definition which has become practically universal among liturgiologists is now the teaching of the Church itself, since the Pope proposes it in his Encyclical. "The sacred liturgy

²⁶ *Mediator Dei* (New York: America Press, 1948) § 25. All references to the Encyclical are to the paragraphs as numbered in this edition. The authentic Latin text may be found in *AAS* 39 (1947) 521-95.

²⁷ Navatel was immediately criticized for his false conception by Festugière, *art. cit.* (supra n. 23) pp. 39-64, and by Beauduin, *art. cit.* (supra n. 23) pp. 83-104.

²⁸ Cf. J. Hanssens, "La définition de la liturgie," *Gregorianum* 8 (1927) 204-28, for a refutation of Callewaert's position.

²⁹ *Mediator Dei* § 25.

³⁰ *Ibid.* § 23.

³¹ *Ibid.* § 24.

³² *Ibid.* § 26.

³³ *Ibid.* § 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.* § 66.

is, consequently, the public worship which our Redeemer as Head of the Church renders to the Father, as well as the worship which the community of the faithful renders to its Founder, and through Him to the heavenly Father. In short, it is the public worship rendered by the Mystical Body of Christ in the entirety of its Head and members."³⁶ Thus, the liturgy is the public worship of the Church, but the Church adequately understood as the Mystical Body of Christ, the worship of both Head and members: Christ worshiping the Father in and with His members, the members worshiping God in and through their Head, Christ. What does this mean?

Papal Definition Explained

"Liturgy is the public worship rendered by the Mystical Body of Christ in the entirety of its Head and members" is certainly a clearer statement than the usual definition, "Liturgy is the public worship of the Church." Yet it remains to be explained.

Worship is the acknowledgement of God's supreme excellence and the expression of man's submission to His dominion resulting therefrom. As such it pertains to the virtue of religion, the virtue, therefore, which inclines us to render to Almighty God the honor and service due to His supreme majesty. The three words, worship, cult, and latria, are very frequently used to designate the same action, though etymologically they denote aspects of the one action. Cult comes from *colere*, to cultivate or honor; *latria* is a Greek word whose Latin equivalent is *servitus*, service, submission, obedience; worship comes from the Anglo-Saxon word composed of *woerih*, worth, and *scipe*, render acknowledgment. Note that St. Thomas in his treatment of the virtue of religion speaks of the latter sometimes as the action by which we pay honor to God, sometimes as the *habitus* which inclines us to do so.³⁶ And he says that worship of God is based on our relationship to Him as creature to Creator.³⁷ We render to Him the honor and submission due to Him because of His supreme excellence as our Creator on whom we depend for our being as well as for everything we have.

Cult or worship can be considered in two ways: *what* is done to honor God (concrete acts, therefore), and *how* or the manner in which

³⁶ *Ibid.* § 20. ³⁶ *Sum. theol.* 2-2, q. 81. ³⁷ *Ibid.*, a. 1.

God is honored. The first is worship considered from the material aspect; the second is worship considered from the formal aspect.

St. Thomas' classification of the acts of religion according to their material and formal aspects appears on the following page. Worship is concerned with all of those acts and all of the modes of performing those acts. But the question arises: which of the acts enumerated in the first outline pertain to the sacred liturgy? All those in boldface in the first outline are or can be liturgy if they are performed in the manner boldfaced in the second outline.³⁸ Worship becomes liturgy when those certain acts are performed in the supernatural, exterior, common manner which Christ bequeathed to us. This we believe to be the mind of St. Thomas Aquinas. But note that he uses the word "common"; the papal definition contains the word "public." Are they one and the same?

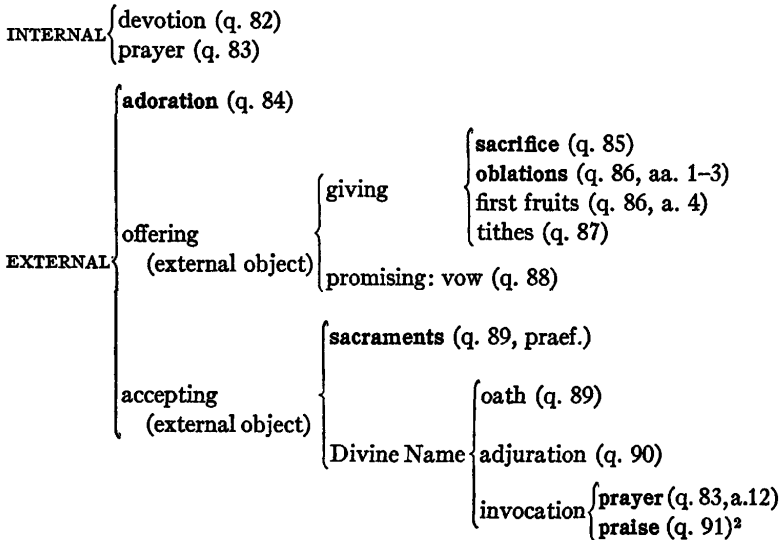
Public is a loose term. Many things are done in public, together, in the sight of all. Is this what public in the papal definition means? We do not believe this to be the intention of the Holy Father, for he states: "Though they [methods of popular participation] show also in an outward manner that the very nature of the sacrifice, as offered by the Mediator between God and men, must be regarded as the act of the whole Mystical Body of Christ, still they are by no means necessary to constitute it a public act or to give it a social character."³⁹ Hence the insistence on "the *entirety* of its Head and members," on the worship which the "*community* of the faithful renders."⁴⁰ Public here does not mean the number of faithful who attend divine services or only the external quality of these services. Public rather refers to the fact that what is done or said expresses and affects the whole body of the faithful. For St. Thomas "common" means that worship "*qui per ministros exhibetur in persona totius ecclesiae.*"⁴¹ In another place he says: "*Communis oratio est quae per ministros ecclesiae in persona totius fidelium populi Deo offertur.*"⁴² Hence, according to St. Thomas common prayer or worship is that which is offered in the name of the whole Church as opposed to what the individual does all alone.⁴³ The Code of Canon Law defines public worship in the same

³⁸ *Sum. theol.* 2-2, q. 83, a. 12; q. 93, a. 1. ³⁹ *Mediator Dei* § 106. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.* § 20.

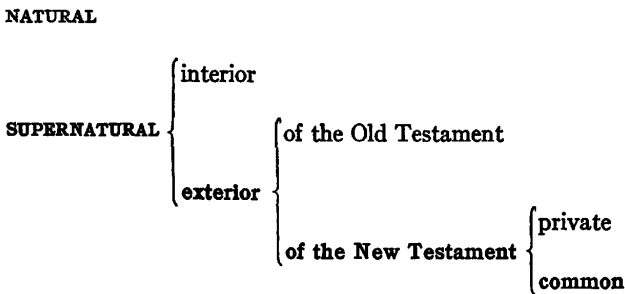
⁴¹ *Sum. theol.* 2-2, q. 93, a. 1. ⁴² *Ibid.*, q. 83, a. 12. ⁴³ *Loc. cit.*

CLASSIFICATION OF THE ACTS OF RELIGION IN ST. THOMAS

1. According to the material aspect:¹



2. According to the formal aspect:³



¹ All references are to *Sum. theol.* 2-2.

² Under this heading would also come the readings and instructions (*Sum. theol.* 3, q. 83, a. 4).

³ For the distinction between natural and supernatural, cf. *Sum. theol.* 1-2, q. 99, a. 3; between interior and exterior, and the Old Testament and the New, *ibid.*, q. 101, a. 2; and between private and common, *ibid.* 2-2, q. 83, a. 12; q. 93, a. 1.

strain: "Cultus, si deferatur nomine ecclesiae a personis legitime ad hoc deputatis et per actus ex ecclesiae institutione Deo, sanctis ac beatis tantum exhibendos, dicitur publicus; sin minus, privatus."⁴⁴ The Code, therefore, also understands "public" in the same way: what is done in the name of the entire Church. The Pope, St. Thomas, and canon law all are in accord. The liturgy is public worship in the sense that the *whole* Church offers it: i.e., the whole Church, not just its priests; they are only its instruments, its *ministri*, through which the whole Church works, does, prays. The quality of public, therefore, means that, regardless of the external appearance of any particular act of worship of the Church, each and every member of the Church prays and offers, on the one hand, and is affected for the better, on the other. Even if the Mass, for instance, were to be celebrated in the darkest, dingiest corner of a concentration camp with no one else present but the sacrificing priest himself, every Catholic throughout the world would be praying and offering through him. What a tremendous thing! Whether you advert to it or not, you are acting in and affected by every single liturgical act performed no matter where in God's great world. No other action of man can lay claim to such an awe-inspiring breadth: a liturgical act is truly the common act of the Mystical Body,⁴⁵ held and shared, done and enjoyed by every man made child of God through baptism! That is what "public" or "common" means when used in reference to the worship of the Church.

Of the Church. The concept of the Church has already entered our discussion of the word "public," but we must consider it in its own right. One obvious meaning of the expression "worship of the Church" is that it is worship regulated by the Church, ordered and arranged by her authority. But this is true only because it is the worship which the Church herself renders, worship in which the Church herself is the agent using ministers as her deputed instruments, worship performed in her name. But even then what exactly do we mean by "the Church"? Is she only the juridical organization which organizes and regulates worship, which deposes certain men as her instruments? Is she a more or less perfect human society in which few or many individuals unite their private prayers and adoration, which because of being offered

⁴⁴ CIC, can. 1256.

⁴⁵ T. Wesseling, *Liturgy and Life* (London, 1938) p. 33.

together becomes the prayer of all, only because, therefore, it is offered by a group of people physically united in one place and intentionally united in one action?

Pius XII says: "The divine Redeemer has so willed it that the priestly life begun with the supplication and sacrifice of His mortal body should continue without interruption down the ages in His Mystical Body which is the Church."⁴⁶ He continues: "That is why He established a visible priesthood to offer everywhere the clean oblation."⁴⁷ Already he introduces the idea of the Mystical Body and the priesthood in his concept of the liturgy. We have also seen him speak of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ in the definition quoted above. The Church in his definition, then, is not simply the Church considered as a perfect society or as a juridical organization. And in his Encyclical, *Mystici corporis*, we do not see him treat the unity of action and prayer of the members of the Mystical Body as a purely intentional unity or one based on physical togetherness in time or place. The Church, therefore, must be understood as the Mystical Body of Christ adequately taken. And what is that?

We know that the Mystical Body is some sort of union of the faithful with Christ resulting from the endeavor of the former to wend their way towards their eternal and supernatural destiny. Their union with Christ is based on the fact that the success of this endeavor depends on holiness or "godliness." But "holiness begins from Christ [from no one else]; by Christ it is effected [by no one else]. For no act conducive to salvation can be performed unless it proceeds from Him as its supernatural cause. 'Without me,' He says, 'you can do nothing.'"⁴⁸ The society of salvation which He started we call His body in some sense, for He founded it, He is its Head. But "as Bellarmine notes with acumen and accuracy, this naming of the Body of Christ is not to be explained solely by the fact that Christ must be called the Head of His Mystical Body, but also by the fact that He so sustains the Church, and so in a certain sense lives in the Church that it is, as it were, another Christ."⁴⁹ And He sustains the Church by sharing with

⁴⁶ *Mediator Dei* § 2. ⁴⁷ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁸ *Mystici corporis* (New York: America Press, 1943) § 63. All references to the Encyclical are to the paragraphs as numbered in this edition. The authentic Latin text may be found in *AAS* 35 (1943) 193-248.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* § 66.

it "His most personal prerogatives in such a way that she may portray in her whole life, both external and interior, a most faithful image of Christ."⁶⁰

How does He do this and what type of union arises thereby between Him and His members? The union that results is not such that the human person becomes identified with Christ: "In a natural body the principle of unity so unites the parts that each lacks its own individual subsistence; on the contrary in the Mystical Body that mutual union, though intrinsic, links the members by a bond which leaves to each intact his own personality."⁶¹ And yet it is not just a moral union of members: "In the moral body, the principle of union is nothing more than the common end, and the common cooperation of all under authority for the attainment of that end; whereas in the Mystical Body, of which We are speaking, this collaboration is supplemented by a distinct internal principle, which exists effectively in the whole and in each of its parts."⁶² Hence the union between Christ and His members is more than simply juridical or moral: "what lifts the society of Christians far, far above the whole natural order is the Spirit of our Redeemer, who until the end of time penetrates every part of the Church's being and is active within it. He is the source of every grace and every gift and every miraculous power."⁶³ The internal principle of unity in the Mystical Body, therefore, is grace and the infused virtues. And these are physical realities, physical bonds (not material, however, but physical in the sense of a real though spiritual quality). Hence our union is not simply moral; and though not a bodily union, it is truly physical, i. e., real but spiritual.

This physical (real but spiritual) union is further expressed by the fact that His Mystical Body can perform certain of Christ's very own actions: "in virtue of the juridical mission by which our divine Redeemer sent His Apostles into the world, as He had been sent by the Father, it is He who through the Church baptizes, teaches, rules, looses, binds, offers, sacrifices."⁶⁴ And what is it that enables a human being to perform certain of Christ's actions? Theology teaches us that it is the character imprinted on the soul in baptism, confirmation, and holy orders. And St. Thomas tells us that the character is a participa-

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* § 67.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* § 74.

⁶² *Ibid.* § 75.

⁶³ *Ibid.* § 77.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* § 67.

tion in the priesthood of Christ.⁵⁵ He tells us further that this character is a spiritual power which enables a person to be an instrument—in this case an instrument of Christ to perform certain acts of divine worship.⁵⁶ As a spiritual power which resides in the powers of the soul,⁵⁷ the character is an *ens physicum*, a physical or real being, just as sanctifying grace. Thus we have another bond which unites us physically to Christ and to each other. The consequence? In the sacraments “the ministers act in the person not only of our Savior but of the whole Mystical Body and of everyone of the faithful.”⁵⁸ “When the sacraments of the Church are administered by external rite, it is He who produces their effect in the soul.”⁵⁹ “In virtue of that higher, interior and wholly sublime communication . . . Christ our Lord brings the Church to live His own supernatural life, by His divine power He permeates His whole Body and nourishes and sustains each of the members according to the place which they occupy in the Body, very much as the vine nourishes and makes fruitful the branches which are joined to it.”⁶⁰

Through sanctifying grace we are enabled to live Christ’s life; through the character we enjoy Christ’s priestly power of praising and sacrificing to Almighty God in such a way that He is infinitely pleased. There we have two physical (spiritual but real) powers which unite us to Christ and to each other. That is what we mean by the Church: a supernatural organism each of whose members is empowered to live the divine life (sanctifying grace and the infused virtues) and further enjoys divine power to posit divine acts of worship (the character which enables us to perform Christ’s own acts of praise, sacrifice, and sacramental sanctification).

Note the consequences for liturgy. It is not the worship of the Church as if she were acting independently of Christ her Head. Everything she does in liturgy is done precisely as the act of Christ. To do so priesthood is necessary. And that priestly power (power to act as Christ’s agent or instrument in some cultural action) is imparted by means of the characters. Every Catholic possesses at least one of them. Therefore every single action or word of the liturgy, whether it be an *Et cum spiritu tuo* on the part of the layman, or the most sublime act of all, the renewal of

⁵⁵ *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 63, a. 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, a. 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, a. 4.

⁵⁸ *Mystici corporis* § 97.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* § 63.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* § 67.

Christ's sacrifice on the cross on the part of the priest, is Christ's act—not a human one but a divine one. The participation of the laity as well as the action of the priest is liturgy because it is an act of Christ done by the power of the priesthood.⁶¹

If we wish to be theologically exact, of course, we must recognize different levels among the various acts of the liturgy. When we say that all the acts of the liturgy are divine, are Christ's, we must make a distinction between those which were instituted by Him and in which He is the *immediate* principal minister, and those which the Church, using the authority committed to her by Him, institutes and in which He is the *mediate* principal minister. This seems to us more than being His act imputatively, i.e., He is considered to act because He authorizes the Church to act for Him. In all her acts of worship the Church acts, not only in virtue of the commission given to her by Christ, but "in closest union with Him her Head"⁶² and through His mediation, *per Christum Dominum nostrum*, who is the one and universal mediator standing before the Father to intercede for us.⁶³ Thus, it seems to us, the character empowers us to act for Christ, not simply imputatively, but enables us to become His mouthpiece or instrument to join His members to His eternal mediation before the Father.

By way of synthesis we should note that there was in the priesthood of Christ a twofold movement: one directly towards God, another directly towards man. Each movement implies the other, for through His priesthood Christ not only appeased God's wrath but thereby brought man God's gifts. And man, in accepting God's gifts (sacraments), submits himself to God. This, according to the mind of St. Thomas, is worship, for by the submission implied in accepting God's gifts we declare and make manifest His supreme dominion over us.⁶⁴

⁶¹ The juridical act necessary to raise something to the dignity of Christ's act, therefore liturgy, will be treated later on.

⁶² *Mediator Dei* §§ 27, 144.

⁶³ *Ibid.* § 146. Cf. also: P. Oppenheim, *op. cit.* (supra n. 23) pp. 118-32; Lechner-Eisenhofer, *op. cit.* (supra n. 23) p. 3; C. Callewaert, *op. cit.* (supra n. 20) pp. 19, 22; L. Beau-duin, "La liturgie: Définition, hiérarchie, tradition," *Cours et conférences des Semaines liturgiques* 15 (1948) 131-34; in the same publication, J. Hild, "L'Encyclique *Mediator* et la sacramentalité des actes liturgiques," pp. 186-203.

⁶⁴ *Sum. theol.* 2-2, q. 81, a. 3, ad 2m: "Dicendum quod eodem actu homo servit Deo et colit ipsum: nam cultus respicit Dei excellentiam, cui reverentia debetur; servitus autem respicit subiectionem hominis, qui ex sua conditione obligatur ad exhibendum reverentiam

Hence two things are necessary for liturgy: that it give God glory and bring man God's life. In some actions of the liturgy one aspect may be more apparent, but the other is always implied and in some way realized. Thus in the praises of the divine office it is more apparent that we give glory to God, while in the sacraments our reception of God's grace is more apparent. Nevertheless, in the first by praising God we submit ourselves more efficaciously to Him and receive grace, and in the second by receiving God's grace we submit ourselves to His dominion and thus give Him glory. Liturgy, then, is the exchange of man's (really Christ's) homage and God's life.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN LITURGICAL AND NON-LITURGICAL

The definition of the liturgy given by the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* can now be considered the teaching of the Church, since it has thus received official pontifical sanction. Yet some still experience a certain amount of difficulty with it—not that, as Callewaert claims, it is only a nominal definition,⁶⁵ for it does proceed according to genus and specific difference.⁶⁶ It is simply that without intensive study and explanation the above definition does not yield the ultimate constitutive property of Catholic liturgy. What is that inner quality which definitively characterizes a particular act or prayer as liturgy and adequately distinguishes it from every other devotional practice? A simple conspectus of opinions regarding this distinction amply shows the confusion which can arise even from this excellent definition.

Criticizing Dom Wilmart, who, in line with the majority of liturgologists, admits a distinction between liturgical prayer and popular public devotions,⁶⁷ Henri Bremond denies any real distinction between them.

However justified, interesting, or necessary it may be, we must realize—and the learned Benedictine himself suggests this—that this distinction exists only on

Deo. Et ad haec duo pertinent omnes actus qui religioni attribuntur: quia per omnes homo protestatur divinam excellentiam et subiectionem sui ad Deum, vel exhibendo aliquid ei, vel iterum assumendo aliquid divinum.”

⁶⁵ Callewaert, *op. cit.* (supra n. 20) p. 9 and note *ibid.*

⁶⁶ According to Festugière “public or exterior worship” would be the genus while “of the Church” would be the specific difference; *art cit.* (supra n. 23) p. 44.

⁶⁷ Wilmart, “Pour les prières de dévotion,” *La vie et les arts liturgiques* 9 (1923) 481–86, 529–36.

the surface of things. From the point of view, no longer external or disciplinary, from which Dom Wilmart argues, but psychological, I would say properly religious, or even literary, which is mine, the difference between liturgical and private prayer becomes so fine as to almost disappear. Both of them equally correspond to the definition of prayer in itself, or pure prayer; both realize one sole experience, namely, a certain contact with the divine, a certain elevation of soul towards God.⁶⁸

As can be seen, according to Bremond, if there is a distinction, it is purely disciplinary—or we might say purely juridical. But he insists that the juridical point of view is too superficial. In reality there is no distinction. But is not Bremond's point of view, the literary one, also too superficial? Abbot Capelle once remarked that from a literary point of view many compositions of private prayer differ hardly at all from liturgical prayer. The criterion of style, however, characterizes liturgical prayer very imperfectly—in some cases not at all. After all, there are certain periods in the evolution of the liturgy in which contemporary emotional instability and sentimental approach to religion were allowed to creep into the liturgy. Hence, "it would be a mistake to distinguish the latter too absolutely on this account from the formulae of private prayer."⁶⁹

At one time⁷⁰ Jungmann was in agreement with Bremond in admitting no distinction between liturgical prayer and popular public devotions, but his reasons were just the reverse. Popular devotions are "liturgical in the canonical (juridical) sense; they may, however, lack a fitting style, and hence are scarcely liturgical in the esthetical sense."⁷¹ Even though Jungmann has moderated his opinion, it is none the less interesting and helpful for our understanding of liturgy to see how he arrived at his conclusions, and since his articles were serious scientific attempts to contribute to the solution of our problem, it is important that we trace his chain of thought.

⁶⁸ H. Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* 10 (Paris, 1932) 224.

⁶⁹ Capelle, "Liturgique et non-liturgique," *Questions liturgiques et paroissiales* 15 (1930) 9.

⁷⁰ He has consistently moderated his views on this distinction each time he has treated the subject: "Was ist Liturgie?," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 55 (1931) 83–102; its English adaptation, "What is Liturgy?," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 96 (1937) 584–610; *Gewordene Liturgie*, pp. 1–27; *Der Gottesdienst der Kirche*, pp. 1–3. In the latter he accepts the opinion that popular devotions are liturgy only in the broad sense (p. 3).

⁷¹ *Gewordene Liturgie*, p. 22.

There seems to be a tendency to widen our concept of liturgy whenever we take the past into consideration and to narrow it when we speak of the present.⁷² The liturgy of today seems to be synonymous with the forms of worship of the universal Church approved by Rome, while the liturgy of former times means whatever was anywhere a living form of worship, even though practiced only in a single Church.⁷³ The past offers so much diversity in liturgical practice that we can hardly speak of a supervision and regulation of divine worship by the Church, or, for that matter, of a commission whereby the minister was empowered to perform sacred functions in the name of the Church—if we understand here the universal Church.⁷⁴ We must therefore have a set standard whereby we judge a thing to be liturgical or not in both periods of the history of the Church. If we take the word "Church" in its widest sense in both cases, the difference in the two conceptions will be considerably lessened. The Church is the community gathered around its head, the bishop, who has, *ex officio*, the right to regulate the procedure in divine worship—and he has this power by reason of the canonical installation in his office and his communion with the universal Church. The latter is then the background of all his prayers. But what if the bishop does not personally officiate? Quite simple: he authorizes someone else to do so who has priestly powers.⁷⁵ The tendency to curtail the liberty of individual bishops on the part of Rome was expressed in a long struggle concluded only by the Code of Canon Law, which definitively makes the regulation of the liturgy and the approval of liturgical books a prerogative of the Apostolic See alone.⁷⁶ Were the rights of the bishops thereby entirely withdrawn? Jungmann sees in canon 1257 the reservation to the Holy See of only final supervision. The Code itself states: "omnes liturgicae leges vim suam retinent, nisi earum aliqua in Codice expresse corrigatur" (can. 2). And furthermore, there are the local *propria*, which have been fully approved by Rome. Besides, the Code still entrusts to bishops the supervision of a large number of laitreal acts: "Orationes et pietatis exercitia ne permittan-

⁷² This observation seems to be true, but the procedure should not be criticized; it is justifiable, as we shall see (cf. n. 76 below).

⁷³ *Gewordene Liturgie*, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷⁶ This seems to us to be the justification for the tendency noted above (n. 72). The Church has restricted the extension of liturgy by reason of the fact that she has restricted the exercise of liturgical right; cf. also *Mediator Dei* § 58.

tur in ecclesiis vel oratoriis sine revisione et expressa Ordinarii loci licentia" (can. 1259 § 1). And Jungmann says that this canon clearly has to do with "liturgical books" not approved by Rome.⁷⁷ There is, therefore, alongside the *universal* liturgy a diocesan liturgy as well as a liturgy proper to certain religious orders. The diocesan liturgy, further, comprises not only special feasts, peculiar rites for the administration of the sacraments, but also a whole assortment of evening devotions.⁷⁸ Included under the diocesan liturgy would naturally be the local liturgy, the liturgy of the parish church under the guidance of a pastor who is the representative of the bishop who truly possesses legislative power. Hence the pastor's Sunday announcements for the services of the following week can be compared to a local ordo, and the concrete acts of worship become the liturgy of the Church.⁷⁹

Jungmann brings these considerations to a close with a more ample formulation of the usual definition of the liturgy: "Liturgy is the worship of the Church, that is, it is not only the worship which the Church regulates, nor only the worship which the Church permits to be carried out, but the worship which she actually carries out. The *ecclesia orans*, the Church at prayer, is the concrete expression of the liturgy."⁸⁰

While Jungmann admitted no distinction between what we usually refer to as liturgy and the popular public devotions, he differs from Bremond in that he does see a distinction between liturgy and private prayer. If a prayer or any devotional exercise is offered or performed by an individual or an arbitrarily assembled group of individuals, it is not liturgy but only a private devotion.⁸¹

What, therefore, according to Jungmann, is the distinction between liturgy and private prayer? To be liturgy a prayer or action must be both regulated (i.e., at least tacitly approved) by the Church and carried out through her authoritatively deputed minister. The pivotal point of his reasoning is his rather large interpretation of canon 1257 and authority in the Church. This leads him to say that whatever is done by any Catholic group under the direction of a priest (supposing that he really has at least the tacit permission of his superiors for what he does on any given occasion) is liturgy.⁸² Therefore the finally decisive factors in characterizing something as liturgical for Jungmann are

⁷⁷ *Gewordene Liturgie*, pp. 10-13. ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15. ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19. ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19, note 32. ⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

ecclesiastical regulation and deputation (both understood in a very broad sense); the content of the prayer or action, however, has nothing to do with it, except in so far as it affects liturgical style.⁸³

Jungmann has remained somewhat singular in this position,⁸⁴ and after the appearance of *Mediator Dei* he changed it. The rest of the liturgiologists have always maintained a definite distinction between the liturgy and popular devotions.

Not always, however, are they in agreement as to what ultimately constitutes that distinction. One school of thought holds that the juridical element is the final, decisive factor: ecclesiastical regulation and deputation are the distinctive marks.⁸⁵ Close to this school, in fact dependent on it, is the opinion of those who qualify as liturgical only what the official liturgical books of the Church contain or what we have thus inherited from the ancient and medieval Church. We might call them the archeological school of thought.⁸⁶ Still others emphasize the external community character of a rite as the quality which makes it liturgical.⁸⁷ Finally, there is a group which insists that for an act to be liturgical it must have some necessary connection with the priesthood of Christ.⁸⁸

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁸⁴ The only other adherent to his position that we could find—at least in the printed word—was H. Keller, "Liturgie und Kirchenrecht: Zur Klärung und Vertiefung des Begriffes Liturgie," *Scholastik* 17 (1942) 342-84.

⁸⁵ Thus: C. Callewaert, *op. cit.* (supra n. 20) pp. 4-8; Lechner-Eisenhofer, *op. cit.* (supra n. 23) p. 4; Braun, *op. cit.* (supra n. 23) p. 196; Cabrol, *art. cit.* (supra n. 23) 9, 787; Hanssens, *art. cit.* (supra n. 28) p. 206; Capelle, *art. cit.* (supra n. 69) p. 12.

⁸⁶ Thus: Wilmart, *art. cit.* (supra n. 67) p. 486; J. Kramp, "Liturgische Bestrebungen der Gegenwart," *Stimmen der Zeit* 99 (1920-21) 316.

⁸⁷ Thus: J. Umberg, "Gemeinschaftsgebet und Liturgie," *Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik* 3 (1928) 240-52; J. Büttler, "Die Mysterienlehre der Laacher Schule im Zusammenhang scholastischer Theologie," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 59 (1935) 569.

⁸⁸ P. Parsch, *Volksliturgie* (2nd ed.; Klosterneuburg, 1952) p. 123; *idem*, *Liturgische Erneuerung* (Klosterneuburg, 1931) pp. 8-10; A. Schmid, "Unterschied zwischen liturgischer und ausserliturgischer Handlung," *Linzer Quartalschrift* 63 (1910) 308-11; C. Panfoeder, *Christus unser Liturge* (Mainz, 1924) pp. 17-18; Schüch-Polz, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie* 2 (Innsbruck, 1925) 319; R. Guardini, "Der Gesamtzusammenhang des christlichen Gebetslebens," in *Volksliturgie und Seelsorge* (Kolmar-im-Elsass, 1942) p. 19; G. Lefèbvre, *Catholic Liturgy* (rev. ed.; St. Louis, 1954) pp. 255-56; A. Vonier, "Liturgie," *Liturgische Zeitschrift* 3 (1930-31) 341-47; Oppenheim, *op. cit.* (supra n. 23) p. 20; J. Pinsk, "Alles Liturgie?," *Liturgische Zeitschrift* 3 (1930-31) 327-28; H. Elfers, "Was ist Liturgie?," *Theologie und Glaube* 34 (1942) 122-32; L. Beauduin, *art. cit.* (supra n. 63) pp. 123-44; A. Stenzel, "Cultus publicus: Ein Beitrag zum Begriff und ekklesiologischen Ort der Liturgie," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 75 (1953) 174-214.

Which school of thought is right? To decide this we cannot be satisfied with the limited viewpoint of some of the authors mentioned above. The question can never be solved by judging the liturgy from its appearances.

One difficulty in most of the treatments of the question is the confusion arising from the term "public." In most of the above definitions⁸⁹ the authors understand the term as meaning togetherness in time, place, and action. They equate it with exterior, before the public eye. But that, as we have seen, is not the meaning of the term in St. Thomas, Pius XII, or *CIC*. Furthermore, it does not mean a purely juridical type of public quality: neither a de facto communal character, e.g., many people worshipping actively together, though this is much to be desired; nor a de iure sort, e.g., the Church's ministers do this or that in liturgy, therefore all are *reputed* to act. No, the quality of public or common is based on the inner nature of the Mystical Body, namely, on the sacramental characters of baptism, confirmation, and holy orders.

We cannot overrate the work of Odo Casel for the role it played in bringing the discussion to a deeper plane of investigation. The Mysterium Theory has raised a storm of criticism, it is true. But it only served to draw minds once again to the core of the liturgical question: its priestly-sacramental content and all that that content implies. After all the smoke of controversy lifted, liturgiologists began to realize that Casel had hit upon something of prime importance both to the liturgical movement and to the liturgy itself: the inner realities upon which the whole structure of liturgical life depends and revolves.

True, the criticism offered revealed much in his theory that demands closer examination and more scientific proof (if it can be proved). That part of his thesis which deals with the pagan origin of the so-called "mystery language" in St. Paul—and in Christendom subsequent to him—is considered by many as no longer acceptable to any serious scholar.⁹⁰ The extent and manner in which the passion of Christ is made present in all the parts of the liturgical system of worship has

⁸⁹ Note particularly the definition of Festugière (supra n. 66).

⁹⁰ L. Bouyer, *Le mystère pascal* (Paris, 1945) pp. 16, 448; *idem*, *Liturgical Piety* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1955) p. 90; T. Klauser, *The Western Liturgy and Its History* (London, 1952) pp. 22-25.

yet to be explained to the satisfaction of all.⁹¹ But the core of his theory remains undeniable,⁹² for it is simply a fuller statement of what St. Thomas⁹³ and the whole Christian tradition has always taught: Christ redeems and sanctifies us through sacramental actions⁹⁴: *sacramenta efficiunt id quod significant*.

Hence, any complete solution to the problem cannot afford to overlook the profound insight into the essence of the liturgy gained by theology through Casel's work. Indeed, it is precisely the more theological side of the liturgy—as opposed to a purely juridical conception—which must come into its own, if we are to attain an exhaustive appreciation of the reality at hand. We must be guided by a deeper respect for the content of the liturgy and the demands which that content places on whatever aspires to be liturgy.

As regards Jungmann's former position, we must understand Church authority as the authority of the Holy See. Canon law is very definite on this point: "Unius Apostolicae Sedis est tum sacram ordinare liturgiam, tum liturgicos approbare libros" (can. 1257). No matter

⁹¹ J. Bütler, *art. cit.* (supra n. 87) pp. 546–71; T. Filthaut, *Die Kontroverse über die Mysterienlehre* (Warendorf i. W., 1947); L. Bouyer, *Le mystère pascal*, p. 452; J. Jungmann, "Die Gegenwart des Erlösungswerkes in der liturgischen Feier," *Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik* 3 (1928) 301–16; *idem*, *Gewordene Liturgie*, pp. 2–3; Hérís, "Note," *Maison-Dieu*, no. 14 (1948) 66.

⁹² H. Reinhold, "Schon wieder eine Enttäuschung?," *Die Seelsorge* 6 (1928–29) 390–91; L. Bouyer, *Liturgical Piety*, pp. 87, 88, 98; J. Jungmann, *Die liturgische Feier* (Regensburg, 1939) p. 18; even Casel's arch-adversary, J. Umberg, finally admitted that there might be something to it: "Mysterienfrömmigkeit," *Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik* 2 (1927) 265; A. Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (Westminster, 1951).

⁹³ *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 79, a. 1.

⁹⁴ It seems best to interpret a recent decree of the Holy Office in this way. Some authors were claiming that the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* fully sanctioned Casel's theory; cf. J. Hild, *art. cit.* (supra n. 63) pp. 187–88; *idem*, "L'Encyclique *Mediator Dei* et le mouvement liturgique de Maria Laach," *Maison-Dieu*, no. 14 (1948) 15, 19; B. Reetz, "Mediator Dei," *Klerusblatt von Salzburg* 81 (1949) 57–58. The decree of the Holy Office can be found in Bugnini, *Documenta pontificia ad instaurationem liturgicam spectantia* (Rome, 1953) pp. 167–68. It specifically states that the Holy Father did not make the Mysterium Theory his own but rather departed from it. The decree cites only paragraph 165 of the Encyclical, which speaks of the presence of Christ's mysteries in the liturgical year and indicates that the Holy Father rejects any doctrine which teaches a *real* (italics from decree) presence of mysteries in it. This decree should not, therefore, be stretched so as to be a condemnation of the whole of Casel's theory. Rather, the latter can be reconciled with the Encyclical as far as the sacramental doctrine is concerned.

what we find in local liturgy, the propers of orders, as well as whatever authority is left to the various bishops over matters strictly liturgical, it is still basically papal authority.⁹⁵ We must clearly distinguish between the authority of the bishops regarding the regulation of public worship in the sense of what is done exteriorly and together in a place of worship, and the regulation of what is done publicly in the sense of what is done by the whole Mystical Body, what is thus raised to the level and dignity of Christ's action through the power of priesthood. The first is that authority which safeguards the faith and morals of the local flock and concerns "exercitia pietatis" mentioned in canon 1259 § 1; the second is the authority of the Pope shared with bishops (when it can be proved that this authority is intentionally shared) to reserve something to the power of the priesthood, thereby involving the name and power of the entire Mystical Body. This is again the basic distinction between "public" as commonly used in the sense of exterior, and "public" in the entirely sublime sense of being common to the whole Church. The first is really private: the work of an individual or a group of individuals, even though done together and externally. The second, although done by one priest, is public: the common work of the entire Mystical Body. We believe this distinction is essential.⁹⁶

An indication that even Jungmann overlooked this distinction can be clearly seen in his original essay, where, speaking of what is included in liturgy, he says: "but the sacraments also are not excluded from the concept of liturgy, although they are directed to man, for in the solemnity [note: external and done by a group, if only two or three] and reverence which surround them, they breathe a spirit of adoration and presuppose the same in the recipients."⁹⁷ Unless we misunderstand the author, this sentence seems to say that the sacraments in their essentials are not liturgy, but only pertain to liturgy by reason of the laitrealic and external expressions that surround them. In a later publication he changed this. There we read: "The liturgy throughout is based on the work and efficacy of Christ and comprises the confection of the sacraments."⁹⁸ That is the essential thing: whatever is liturgy

⁹⁵ *Mediator Dei* § 58; A. Stenzel, *art. cit.* (supra n. 88) p. 199, note 79.

⁹⁶ Cf. A. Stenzel, who makes this same distinction throughout his entire article.

⁹⁷ J. Jungmann, "Was ist Liturgie?", *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 55 (1931) 84.

⁹⁸ J. Jungmann, *Gewordene Liturgie*, p. 3.

is such because it is done in one way or another (explained above) by Christ, not because it is done in an external way. As J. Pinsk remarks: "Any definition of the liturgy which considers the sacraments as a mere appendage of the liturgy cannot possibly be correct. A definition which saves the liturgical character of the sacraments only through a benevolent consideration of the surrounding (therefore peripheral) actions in their administration is as unliturgical as possible."⁹⁹

Let us follow Pinsk further. Sacrifice and sacrament, as life-giving actions of Christ, are liturgical acts in the strictest sense, for in them—and in the sacramentals to a degree—the action of Christ is made present for us in a form in which we can receive it and carry it out. Not every prayer is liturgy without further ado, not even if it is officially commanded for the entire Church and offered by a community.¹⁰⁰ Two things are intrinsically required in order that a prayer can become liturgy formally speaking. First, it must have an inner essential relation to an act which is truly a mystical act of Christ. Secondly, it must express in sensible signs the conferring of life on the part of Christ and the reception of life on the part of the Church. In short, it must visibly express the exchange of life between Christ and the Church. In real liturgical acts the priest acts throughout as the representative of Christ, as Christ's instrument for the begetting of life.¹⁰¹

H. Elfers also disagrees with Jungmann's position. He says:

The Church, in the sense of a cult-community, is not present where societies of our modern Church organization assemble to pray, but where the community, engrafted onto Christ through baptism, confirmation, and holy orders, represents a living symbol, a permanent sacrament, as it were, of the High Priest. Through the character imprinted on the soul in these sacraments, which gives a share in Christ's priesthood, the cult-community becomes the image of Christ's priestly life and continues His priestly mediation.¹⁰²

With Pentecost Christ's objective work or redemption came to a close. The only thing wanting was the application of this redemption to the individual men of future generations. This is the part of His work which the Church continues. The historical Christ accomplished two things in His priesthood. He brought man God's grace, and as the second Adam, the head of the human race, He offered God the Father

⁹⁹ J. Pinsk, *art. cit.* (supra n. 88) p. 328.

¹⁰⁰ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

¹⁰² H. Elfers, *art. cit.* (supra n. 88) p. 124.

man's submission and homage which were His due. Both these aspects of Christ's priesthood perdure, and visibly so, in the cult-community. By means of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and particularly holy orders, the community is conformed to the priesthood of Christ in such a way that the ordained liturgist symbolically-sacramentally represents the Head of the Mystical Body thus continuing the communication of divine life to the members of the Body and, in turn, the offering to the Father of the worship of His people.¹⁰³ How? Through symbolical actions this holy exchange of God's life and man's homage continues from generation to generation.¹⁰⁴

Therefore, according to Elfers, only that is liturgy which, first of all, symbolically (hence visibly) represents our Mediator and Priest, Christ and, secondly, gives symbolical expression to this *sacrum commercium*, this holy exchange of divine life and human homage.

This is also the opinion of A. Stenzel: "Only that worship is liturgy in which the 'people of God as a people' acts in its proper condition of holy cult-community."¹⁰⁵ And when is that? "When someone appointed through the sacrament of holy orders and hierarchically chosen from among the people [which itself is already hierarchically constituted through the power of orders: the three characters of baptism, confirmation, and holy orders, and through the power of jurisdiction] acts as the minister of Christ."¹⁰⁶ And he quotes St. Thomas: "minister . . . gerit typum Christi, Christum repraesentat."¹⁰⁷

An objection comes almost automatically to mind. Does not the individual Christian in his private prayer pray in the spirit of Christ and in mystical union with His Body? Indeed he does—or at least he should. The liturgy, however, adds something more: this mystical union with Christ the Mediator receives an external-ritual expression,¹⁰⁸ thereby assuming an altogether special character, that of Christ's own prayer. We must emphasize once again the fact that liturgical acts are not simply human actions, but divine-human ones which give grace. Christ Himself is the agent in every liturgical act—in different degrees, to be sure—thereby giving to the latter a higher efficacy. Private prayer cannot make this claim.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 128. ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129. ¹⁰⁵ A. Stenzel, *art. cit.* (supra n. 88) p. 190.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 202. ¹⁰⁷ *Sum. theol., Suppl.*, q. 40, a. 4, ad 3m.

¹⁰⁸ H. Elfers, *art. cit.* (supra n. 88) p. 129, note.

But this only opens the way to another objection. It is easy to see that this holy exchange as well as the mediatorship of Christ receives a ritual expression in sacrifice and sacrament, that these therefore are liturgy. But where do we discern such a thing in the rest of the prayers and actions which we usually call liturgical: the divine office and the sacramentals?

An easy way out of this difficulty would be to have recourse to a juridical act: the Church says this is liturgy; therefore it is. But the answer is not quite so easy as all that. The very practice of the Church insists on more than a mere juridical act, whether that act be concerned with designating something as liturgical or with deputing someone as minister. Over and above the canonical deputation as minister, the person so deputed must also possess a spiritual qualification or power to perform certain acts,¹⁰⁹ which is imparted through a consecration or at least a blessing. Where do we find these? In minor orders, the consecration of virgins, and the character of baptism. The first two, true enough, are not effected *ex opere operato*, but *ex opere operantis ecclesiae*, through the intercessory power of the Church. The bishop's consecratory power should not be limited to the sacramental forms properly speaking. Persons can also achieve a spiritual qualification for mediatorial acts through the prayers and actions of the sacramentals, which are backed up (given efficacy) by the intercessory power of the Church. Hence, the divine office sung by consecrated virgins, the blessings given by lectors, and the other services rendered by those in minor orders are all liturgical acts because, in addition to a juridical commission given them, the Church also equips them with a spiritual power. They therefore continue the priestly activity of Christ in a symbolical-ritual fashion.

Elfers makes no mention of the liturgical role played by the laity. But that role naturally comes into question here. They too are empowered to perform *certain* liturgical acts implied in their participation in the Mass, the sacraments, and in the solemn prayer of the Church; they receive this spiritual qualification to do so through the character of baptism. The exercise of this character, however, is essentially dependent on the exercise on the part of the priest of his character of holy orders—except in the case of baptism of necessity and matrimony.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

The foregoing considerations amply provide for the minister. Ritual expression of Christ's priesthood is satisfied. But what about the actions they perform and the prayers they offer? Do these give ritual expression to the holy exchange of divine life and human-divine homage mentioned above?

Let us return to Elfers. Just as Christ chose for symbols and signs certain actions which do not necessarily belong to the essential permanence of His work of redemption, so the Church does not limit herself to the dispensation of the redemptive work alone. Rather she has developed a system of sacramentals, holy signs and symbols which ritually prepare for, accompany, enlarge, and prolong the essentials of the sacraments. Hence, even here in the sacramentals we find ritual expression of this holy exchange, not in its essence, but in prayers and ceremonies directly connected with it.¹¹⁰

In conclusion, Elfers proposes a fuller definition in which he tries to express the relationship between the juridical and priestly elements necessary for liturgy: "Liturgy is the juridically regulated worship in so far as the continuous mediation of Christ between God and man receives symbolical expression in the cult-community."¹¹¹

It seems to us that in this conception both the juridical element and the priestly-sacramental element receive their rightful place. A juridical act of the Church—of the Holy See, to be more exact—is necessary for any particular action or prayer to become liturgy. This act of the Church places a laetific act among her own priestly acts; she thereby reserves it to her power of priesthood. In other words, through her juridical decision the Church not only declares a prayer or action suitable to aid in Christ's mediation of God's grace and man's homage, but also makes this act a part of Christ's priestly mediation. She elevates this act or prayer to the dignity of being performed by her priestly power, thus involving the name and power of the entire Mystical Body, the priesthood of Jesus Christ Himself. But notice that this juridical act does not enter into the intrinsic constitution of the liturgical act; it remains extrinsic to it. The priestly-sacramental element, however, does enter into the intrinsic constitution. That is *what* a liturgical act is: the exercise of Christ's priesthood. The juridical deci-

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-32. ¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

sion of the Church is *how* some laitretic act acquires such a relationship to the priesthood of Christ.

Elfers' conception of the liturgy has the support of many authors besides Pinsk and Stenzel. Already in 1910 A. Schmid insisted that a liturgical act must always be a ritual action of Christ with and through the priesthood.¹¹² Dom Panfoeder¹¹³ and Schüch-Polz¹¹⁴ require the same. And Parsch has this to say:

Liturgy is not only an affair of man, a work *on* God; it is also a work *of* God on us human beings.¹¹⁵

On the human side, liturgy is like a court service before the divine king. On the divine side, it is an operation of God, the influx of grace, of the redemptive work of Christ, as well as its continuation.¹¹⁶

Liturgy, therefore, represents the form in which the holy exchange between God and man is accomplished. The Christian renders God the highest veneration; God, on the other hand, comes down to man and gives him His grace. Hence liturgy is the *commercium divinum*, the divine transaction of man with God and vice versa. But Christ is the Mediator of this exchange. He, as the Head of the human family, offers God the most perfect honor and adoration, and, on the other hand, distributes grace to all the members of His Mystical Body.¹¹⁷

The question naturally comes to mind: what does Pius XII have to say about this aspect of the liturgy? The very way the Pope phrases the usual definition of liturgy indicates that he wishes to emphasize the priestly-sacramental element. The moment the notion "Mystical Body" is used, the priesthood comes into play. And this thought is expressed in the words, "it is the worship which our Redeemer as Head of the Church renders to the Father, as well as the worship which the community of the faithful renders to its Founder, and *through Him* to the heavenly Father."¹¹⁸ How does He worship in the liturgy and how does the Church worship through Him except through the power of priesthood? The Pope is even more explicit when he says:

The liturgy is nothing more nor less than the exercise of this priestly function of Christ.¹¹⁹

¹¹² A. Schmid, *art. cit.* (supra n. 88) p. 309.

¹¹³ C. Panfoeder, *op. cit.* (supra n. 88) pp. 17-22.

¹¹⁴ Schüch-Polz, *op. cit.* (supra n. 88) p. 319.

¹¹⁵ P. Parsch, *Volksliturgie* (2nd ed., 1952) p. 123.

¹¹⁶ P. Parsch, *Liturgische Erneuerung*, pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁷ P. Parsch, *op. cit.* (supra n. 115) p. 123.

¹¹⁸ *Mediator Dei* § 20 (italics added). ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* § 22.

It is an unquestionable fact that the work of our redemption is continued, and that its fruits are imparted to us, during the celebration of the liturgy, notably in the august sacrifice of the altar.¹²⁰

Very truly, the sacraments and the sacrifice of the altar, being *Christ's own actions*, must be held to be capable in themselves of conveying and dispensing grace from the divine Head to the members of the Mystical Body.¹²¹

Along with the Church, therefore, her Divine Founder is present at every liturgical function.¹²²

The Holy Father's thought, therefore, fully supports the more complete conception of the liturgy which makes it consist in sacramental and priestly acts regulated by ecclesiastical authority.¹²³

We believe that the most serious research on the part of liturgiologists results in the conclusion that the ultimate distinction between liturgy and every other type of devotional practice must lie in the liturgy's priestly and sacramental quality. It is not the juridical element alone, though the latter is necessary to determine the concrete manner in which the Church's priesthood shall be exercised and will ultimately decide which acts of devotion will be elevated to, accepted, inserted into the liturgical order, thereby taking on a priestly-sacramental character, acquiring a definite relationship to the priesthood of Christ. Hence, whatever does not have this necessary connection with the priestly and sacramental worship of God and dispensation of grace, divine life, cannot be considered liturgy in the strict sense of the word.

WHAT FORMS OF WORSHIP ARE LITURGICAL?

Now that we have examined the definition of the liturgy, have seen exactly how that definition is to be understood, and have determined the ultimate constitutive property of liturgy, we must now decide what concrete manifestations of worship are to be considered liturgical.

Authors are unanimously agreed that liturgy in its strict sense is to be found only in the Mass, the divine office, the sacraments, and the sacramentals. And here again the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* reflects this

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* § 29. ¹²¹ *Ibid.* § 31 (italics added). ¹²² *Ibid.* § 20.

¹²³ The Holy Father devotes a long passage to the juridical element (§§ 44-65) only after insisting on the priestly nature of the liturgy. And after the appearance of the Encyclical, the commentators who were not concerned merely with looking for criticisms of the liturgical movement recognized this in the papal teaching. Cf., e.g., A. Stenzel, *art. cit.* (supra n. 88) pp. 202-14; L. Beauduin, *art. cit.* (supra n. 63) p. 125; *idem*, "L'Encyclique *Mediator Dei*," *Maison-Dieu*, no. 13 (1948) 12-13; J. Hild, *art. cit.* (supra n. 63) pp. 195-201.

common opinion. "Such is the nature and object of the sacred liturgy: it includes the Mass, the sacraments, the divine office."¹²⁴ The sacramentals are not specifically mentioned in this place, but in paragraph 27 the Pope uses the word "sacramentals" explicitly. He says later on that there are other exercises of piety which do not belong strictly to the sacred liturgy,¹²⁵ and by such he means the modern popular public devotions.

When it is a question of those parts of the liturgy which are of divine institution, it is obvious that we have present an action which symbolically and ritually represents the redemptive act of Christ, the exchange of human praise and divine life, through the power of sacramental actions, and also the symbolical representation of Christ the Priest through the power of priesthood. But when it is a question of those acts of worship which the Church has instituted, we cannot deny that we are faced with a certain amount of ecclesiastical positivism. Some of these acts, it is true, have a more or less direct relationship to the actions of Christ mentioned above, in so far as they prepare for them, accompany them, enlarge or prolong them. Some of them even bear such a close resemblance to the sacraments that early Scholastics called them *sacramenta minora*. These, therefore, certainly meet the requirements of a liturgical act: they ritually represent the holy exchange between God and man effected through the visible representative of Christ the Priest. But there are other acts which can be exercises either of private or of public prayer. The Church, "acting always in closest union with her Head,"¹²⁶ has decided that these acts in certain circumstances, i.e., when performed in a certain manner and by her ministers, shall be her own prayer. As Stenzel remarks,¹²⁷ there are four categories of acts of worship: (1) acts which belong to the individual as such, which can be characterized by our Lord's words: "Go into thy chamber, close the door, and pray to thy Father in secret" (Mt 6:6); (2) acts which by their very nature can be made part of the liturgical order but which without a positive acceptance on the part of the Church cannot be called her own prayer: e.g., the breviary prayed by the priest in private, or the *Pater*, the Creed; (3) acts which by their very nature can be and *are* recognized by the Church as her prayer: e.g., the

¹²⁴ *Mediator Dei* § 171. ¹²⁵ *Ibid.* § 182. ¹²⁶ *Ibid.* § 27.

¹²⁷ A. Stenzel, *art. cit.* (supra n. 88) pp. 210-11.

breviary prayed by the priest in private, the *Pater* and Creed in certain instances; (4) acts which necessarily belong to the liturgical order: e.g., the Mass and the sacraments. Needless to say, acts falling in the second category must be suitable to the liturgical order. Should the Church wish to use something belonging to the first category, it should be fairly obvious that she must adapt them, reshape them to a degree, and make them compatible with the exigencies of prayer in common. In such cases the Church, by a positive act of her juridical power, removes something from the realm of private prayer and connects it with the exercise of her priestly power, thus making it Christ's prayer.

Some authors divide the various acts and prayers of the liturgy into essential, integral, and accidental. While this is justifiable, all of them are related to the Sacrifice of the Mass; in the latter they find their *raison d'être*. In the cross is salvation. On Calvary Christ achieved His great redemptive work. His sacrifice is the source and fount of all grace and sanctity. Since in the Mass we renew that sacrifice, the Mass is the center and source of all liturgical worship as well as sanctity. Whatever else is done in the liturgy is meant either to prepare us for the Mass in which the saving sacrifice is renewed and represented, or to channel off the graces gained in that sacrifice. In the beginning the Mass was the germ from which the entire edifice of liturgical worship sprung and the point towards which everything converged. At least matins of the divine office seems to have arisen out of the primitive nocturnal synaxes which prepared for the celebration of Mass. In fact the Mass and the divine office constitute one *officium diei*; the office prepares for or continues the action of the Mass. The sacraments offer the same prospect: baptism, confirmation, penance, holy orders prepare us and qualify us for participation in the Mass, while the other sacraments increase and preserve for us the grace we have received in the Mass. The entire liturgical year finds its ultimate origin in assembling to celebrate the Lord's Supper on the day of the Lord's resurrection, Sunday, which overflowed into a system of sanctification for the entire week and year. Many of the consecrations and blessings are given during the Mass, and still, when not thus conferred, they retain their meaning as a preparation for or as an extension of the Mass; yes, as a channeling off of the power of the Mass into even the material world about us. Thus, indeed the Mass is the "end and consummation of all

the sacraments,"¹²⁸ the summary of the mysteries of the Incarnation and redemption, the synthesis of Christianity, the very reason for our priesthood.¹²⁹

MODERN DEVOTIONS LITURGICAL?

While saying that the public popular devotions are not strictly liturgical, the Pope states that they "may be considered in a certain way to be an addition to the liturgical cult."¹³⁰ What does he mean? They are not liturgy; still they are somehow considered inserted into the liturgical order. The Holy Father gives us some clues as to how they enjoy this dignity:

they have been approved and praised over and over again by the Apostolic See and by the bishops . . . they make us partakers in a salutary manner of the liturgical cult, because they urge the faithful to go frequently to the sacrament of penance, to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion with devotion, and encourage them to meditate on the mysteries of our redemption and imitate the example of the saints.¹³¹

Long before the appearance of *Mediator Dei*, some liturgiologists proposed similar ideas. Already in 1910 A. Schmid made a distinction between the strictly liturgical, extra-liturgical, and mixed acts.¹³² The strictly liturgical acts are those which are a ritual act of Christ with and through the minister. The extra-liturgical acts are those in which the people themselves take the place of the liturgical minister. In this connection he mentions specifically the rosary, the way of the cross, and evening devotions, and says that, even were a priest to conduct these services, he would do so only as a private person, not as the representative of Christ and the Church. Finally, the mixed acts are had when something which belongs to the second category is joined to something of the first category: e.g., rosary and benediction, or singing hymns at Mass. He explains further that in such a case priest and people may pray together, but their prayer or action does not constitute an organic whole.¹³³

In Lechner-Eisenhofer we find that popular devotions can belong to

¹²⁸ *Sum. theol.* 3, q. 63, a. 3.

¹²⁹ Cf. Callewaert, *op. cit.* (supra n. 20) pp. 8, 166; Oppenheim, *op. cit.* (supra n. 23) pp. 420-25.

¹³⁰ *Mediator Dei* § 182: "quodammodo inserta censeantur."

¹³¹ *Ibid.* §§ 182-83. ¹³² A. Schmid, *art. cit.* (supra n. 88) p. 310. ¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

liturgy in a broad sense only in so far as they are approved by ecclesiastical authority, or commanded by that same authority, conducted by a person deputed to this end, or framed by strictly liturgical forms of worship.¹⁸⁴

From these various statements we can draw the following conclusion: popular devotions are liturgical only in a metaphorical sense, that is, they *resemble* the liturgy in some respect, but they are not liturgy. They resemble the liturgy because (1) they are approved by some Church authority and may be even commanded; (2) they are performed in common and in a sacred public place; (3) they may be led by a priest, though this is not necessary, for they have not been reserved to priestly power in the sense we have already explained (the local bishop might *de facto* reserve them to the priest by reason of the fact that they are performed in a church and under ecclesiastical auspices); (4) they may imitate liturgical style. They are not really liturgy because (1) they are not instituted by the Church, i.e., they have not been authoritatively made part of her prayer; (2) the presence of the priest is not really necessary for their validity or even liceity; (3) they might even lack that basic suitability which is necessary before a prayer or action is accepted by the Church as her own. Hence, even though they may resemble liturgical forms of worship, they are not liturgy, but rather private prayer performed by a group of individuals together.

To sum up, the liturgy is the public (in the sense of being done by and for the whole Mystical Body) worship of the Mystical Body in the entirety of its Head and members, worship which is Christ's prayer and action, effecting a holy exchange of God's life and human homage, through holy, symbolical actions done by a person spiritually qualified as well as juridically deputed to be the instrument of Christ the priest, ultimately organized and constituted by the Holy See exercising the divine authority committed to it by Jesus Christ, invisible Head of the Mystical Body; worship which is concretized in the Mass, the sacraments, the divine office, and the sacramentals; worship, finally, which inserts the members of Christ into the heavenly current of adoration, propitiation, thanksgiving, and petition carried on by our glorified Redeemer before the throne of the Father for all eternity.

¹⁸⁴ Lechner-Eisenhofer, *op. cit.* (supra n. 23) p. 4.