

# HOW FIFTH-CENTURY ROME ADMINISTERED SACRAMENTS

ST. INNOCENT I ADVISES AN UMBRIAN BISHOP

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THE early, and what we might term the formative, history of the Eucharistic rites in the Latin language, and the corresponding early Latin rites of the other sacraments, is an area singularly obscure and bare. Exploration therein is charted, as a rule, only by brief hints and casual references in sermons and tractates, so that anything like reconstruction is as scientific as the enlarging of a jawbone into a full-blown anthropology. It is therefore all the more welcome that an extant letter of St. Innocent I turns out to be a fairly comprehensive sketch of what we now call the sacramental system. The letter deals in the main with matters ceremonial, but has doctrinal and canonical interest as well. Famous for centuries, this letter is referred to in a good many connections bearing on the sacraments; Eisenhofer's *Liturgik*, for instance, has no less than nineteen source-references to it. But no complete version of it to my knowledge has yet appeared in English.

St. Innocent I, who was the son of his predecessor, Anastasius (St. Jerome, *Ep.* 130, 16), was sovereign pontiff from December, 401 to March, 417. This was an interval that witnessed the crumbling and collapse of imperial power, as symbolized by the capture and pillage of sacred and eternal Rome at the end of August, 410. St. Jerome was at the touchy height of his career all during this pontificate, and in its final years he was collaborating with the giant St. Augustine and many others, in East and West, to bring Pelagius and Celestius to book for their corroding error in the doctrine of grace. The obvious Saint of the century was a close friend of Innocent's, Paulinus, who had become Bishop of Nola when Innocent's pontificate was at the half-way mark, as, towards its end, another friend, "St." John

Cassian opened his famous abbey near Marseilles, a center St. Patrick was to know before he went back preaching to the Gaels.

It is almost a commonplace with Church historians that no pope prior to St. Leo I (440-61), "the calm, the strenuous, the majestic," can compare with St. Innocent I in shaping and forming the practical administration of the papacy in the new Europe. This immediate juxtaposition of St. Innocent and St. Leo suggests progress and advance rather than parallelism, and if the latter had gifts that were greater than the former's, it is also true that Leo was schooled in Innocent's example, and stood on Innocent's shoulders. If the very first picture that comes to anyone's mind of Pope Leo I is his intrepid advance against King Attila and the Huns at Lago di Garda, yet Leo as a boy had witnessed a similar, but unsuccessful, intervention by Innocent at Ravenna, before the Goths so shocked the world by taking Rome. If Leo exposed and frustrated the Robber Synod of Ephesus which had been the death of Flavian, Bishop of Constantinople, Innocent, too, had tried to no avail to undo the tragic deposition and banishment unto death of a former Bishop of Constantinople, St. John Chrysostom. Lastly, if Leo, *Doctor Ecclesiae*, composed that golden *Tome* on the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ, and had the greatest Council of antiquity, Chalcedon, define it word for word, he was thereby but more vigorous and more decisive in his dogmatic leadership than Innocent had shown himself in composing the Pelagian troubles. St. Leo is the Great, St. Innocent, the near-great, pope; but the papacy had perhaps to grow to St. Innocent's stature before it could produce a St. Leo. It is in the less spectacular fields of day-by-day administration that Innocent is seen in his proper light; the thirty-eight letters of his that are extant have cut a lasting channel for papal directives and church practices from his day to our own. It is one of those letters, the twenty-fifth, we herewith present in translation. It is a reply to a list of questions, having to do mostly with the sacraments, addressed to Innocent by Decentius, Bishop of Gubbio (Eugubium), lying roughly half-way between Spoleto and Rimini in Umbria. Beyond his connection with this letter perhaps little else is known of Bishop Decentius: we can be very grateful his questions evoked these answers.

Innocent to Bishop Decentius of Gubbio, Greeting:

1. If the priests of the Lord really wished to preserve ecclesiastical uses intact, as received from the holy Apostles, no diversity and no variation would be found in the ritual and ceremonial. But as long as each one thinks he should observe, not what has been handed down, but what seems good to himself, differing views will thence be found as to places, and differing observances in the churches. This causes scandal to the people, who, unaware that the ancient traditions have been presumptuously corrupted, are led to conclude, either that the churches do not agree among themselves, or that contrary uses have been received from the Apostles or the men of the apostolic era.

2. For who does not know, or does not advert to the fact, that what was given to the Roman Church by Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and is preserved even to this day, is what should be observed by all? Nor should anything be added, or anything unauthorized be introduced, nor should an exemplar be looked for elsewhere. This is particularly the case [in the West], for no one has established churches in Italy, in Gaul, in Spain, Africa, Sicily and the adjoining islands, save such as the venerable Peter and his successors had established as priests. Or let them read and see, if any other Apostle be found in these regions, or is reputed to have taught there. But if they do not read it, for they will nowhere find it, it behooves them to follow what the Roman church observes, from which they doubtless took their own beginning, lest by favoring adventitious opinions, they

Innocentius Decentio episcopo Eugubino salutem.

1. Si instituta ecclesiastica, ut sunt a beatis Apostolis tradita, integra vellent servare Domini sacerdotes, nulla diversitas, nulla varietas in ipsis ordinibus et consecrationibus haberetur. Sed dum unusquisque non quod traditum est, sed quod sibi visum fuerit, hoc aestimat esse tenendum, inde diversa in diversis locis vel ecclesiis aut teneri, aut celebrari videntur; ac fit scandalum populis, qui dum nesciunt traditiones antiquas humana praesumptione corruptas, putent sibi aut ecclesias non convenire, aut ab Apostolis vel apostolicis viris contrarietatem inductam.

2. Quis enim nesciat aut non advertat, id quod a principe Apostolorum Petro Romanae Ecclesiae traditum est, ac nunc usque custoditur, ab omnibus debere servari; nec superduci aut introduci aliquid, quod auctoritatem non habeat, aut aliunde accipere videatur exemplum? praesertim cum sit manifestum, in omnem Italiam, Gallias, Hispanias, Africam atque Siciliam, et insulas interjacentes, nullum instituisse ecclesias, nisi eos quos venerabilis apostolus Petrus aut ejus successores constituerint sacerdotes. Aut legant, si in his provinciis alius Apostolorum invenitur, aut legitur docuisse. Qui si non legunt, quia nusquam inveniunt, oportet eos hoc sequi, quod Ecclesia Romana custodit, a qua eos principium accepisse non dubium est, ne dum peregrinis assert-

overlook the real source of their own institutions.

3. Doubtless your charity has often come to Rome, and has associated with us in church, and so has learned what custom is to be followed, either in consecrating the [Eucharistic] Mysteries, or in performing the other sacred "secrets" (*in agendis arcanis*). This we should surely judge to suffice for instructing your own church, or for reforming it, if perchance your predecessors held differently in some details, had you not seen fit to consult us on certain points. We therefore reply, not that we think you do not know yourself, but that you may with greater authority instruct your subjects, should they have in some things strayed from the institutions of the Roman church, or that you may warn them, and not delay in informing us, that we may know who these are that bring in novelties, or feel that the use of some other church than Rome's should be followed.

4. You say that certain people hold that the *Pax* should be given to the people, or that the priests should give each other the *Pax*, before the [Eucharistic] Mysteries are consecrated: whereas, of course, the *Pax* ought to be given after completing all those "secret" things I may not disclose, by which it may be manifest that the congregation assents to all that is done in consecrating the Mysteries, and all that is done in the churches, and, when all is finished, they can illustrate this by the closing seal of the *Pax*.

5. But about reciting the names before the priest recites the [Canon] prayer(s), and so before he in prayer commends to God the oblations of those whose names are to be recited: your own

ionibus student, caput institutionum videantur omittere.

3. Saepe dilectionem tuam ad Urbem venisse, ac nobiscum in ecclesia convenisse, non dubium est, et quem morem vel in consecrandis mysteriis, vel in caeteris agendis arcanis teneat, cognovisse. Quod sufficere ad informationem ecclesiae tuae, vel reformationem, si praecessores tui minus aliquid aut aliter tenuerunt, satis certum haberemus, nisi de aliquibus consulendos nos esse duxisses. Quibus idcirco respondemus, non quod te aliqua ignorare credamus, sed ut majori auctoritate vel tuos instituas, vel si qui a Romanae Ecclesiae institutionibus errant, aut commoneas, aut indicare non differas, ut scire valeamus qui sint, qui aut novitates inducunt, aut alterius ecclesiae, quam Romanae, existimant consuetudinem esse servandam.

4. Pacem igitur asseris ante confecta mysteria quosdam populis imperare, vel sibi inter se sacerdotes tradere, cum post omnia, quae aperire non debeo, pax sit necessario indicenda, per quam constet populum ad omnia, quae in mysteriis aguntur atque in ecclesia celebrantur, praebuisse consensum, ac finita esse pacis concludentis signaculo demonstrantur.

5. De nominibus vero recitandis antequam precem sacerdos faciat, atque eorum oblationes, quorum nomina recitanda sunt, sua oratione com-

discretion will see how foolish it is, when you have not yet commended his oblation to God, that you should first insinuate his name to God, even though nothing be unknown to Him. Therefore, the oblations are to be first commended to God, and then the names of those whose oblations they are, are to be recited. The names are thus to be recited within the sacred Canon (*inter sacra mysteria*), and not among the other preparatory matters, by which we pave the way for the coming Mysteries (construing *futuris* with *mysteriis*)—by which we pave the way by the Mysteries for the prayers to come (construing *futuris* with *precibus*).

6. Now as to the anointing of neophytes [in confirmation], it is clear that this cannot be done by any save the bishop. For even if the presbyters are priests of the second order, they still do not possess the plenitude of priestly office. Not only the custom of the Church shows that only the fulness of the priesthood can confirm, or can impart the sacred Paraclete, but even that passage of the Acts of the Apostles [8:14–18], which asserts that Peter and John were sent to bestow the Holy Ghost on those already baptized. It is permitted priests, when they baptize, either apart from the bishop or in his presence, to anoint the newly-baptized with chrism (provided this has been consecrated by the bishop), but it is not allowed to priests to anoint the forehead with the same holy oil, this being the exclusive prerogative of the bishop in imparting the Holy Spirit. But as to the words [the “form”] of confirmation, these I may not speak, lest I seem rather to betray them than to reply to your question.

mendet, quam superfluum sit, et ipse pro tua prudentia recognoscis, ut cujus hostiam necdum Deo offeras, ejus ante nomen insinues, quamvis illi incognitum sit nihil. Prius ergo oblationes sunt commendandae, ac tunc eorum nomina, quorum sunt, edicenda; ut inter sacra mysteria nominentur, non inter alia, quae ante praemittimus, ut ipsis mysteriis viam futuris precibus aperiamus.

6. De consignandis vero infantibus manifestum est, non ab alio, quam ab episcopo fieri licere. Nam presbyteri licet secundi sint sacerdotes, pontificatus tamen apicem non habent. Hoc autem pontificium solis deberi episcopis, ut vel consignent, vel paracletum Spiritum tradant, non solum, consuetudo ecclesiastica demonstrat, verum et illa lectio Actuum Apostolorum, quae assertit, Petrum et Joannem esse directos, qui jam baptizatis traderent Spiritum sanctum. Nam presbyteris, sive extra episcopum sive praesente episcopo cum baptizant, chrismate baptizatos ungere licet, sed quod ab episcopo fuerit consecratum, non tamen frontem ex eodem oleo signare, quod solis debetur episcopis, cum tradunt Spiritum paracletum. Verba vero dicere non possum, ne magis prodere videar, quam ad consultationem respondere.

7. That Saturday should be a fast day, the plainest reason shows. For if, out of reverence for the sacred resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we keep the Lord's Day sacred not only on Easter, but through all the course of the year we keep a "model" of that day each week, and if because of the passion of our Lord we fast on Friday, we ought not to pass over Saturday which seems to be set between the season's time of sorrow and time of rejoicing. It is clear, of course, that the Apostles spent those two days in mourning, and that they had hid themselves out of fear of the Jews. Doubtless, inasmuch as they fasted both Friday and Saturday, as the tradition of the Church has it, the sacred Mysteries are not celebrated in that two-day period. And this is the way the celebration is renewed through each successive week, the memory of that day to be observed forevermore. But if some feel that one should fast but once, and that on Saturday; then the observance of the Lord's Day and the Friday fast should be kept only at Eastertime. But if the memory of Easter is to be kept on each Lord's Day, and the thought of Christ's death is to be kept each single week, it is foolish to keep the custom as to those two days, while skipping over the intervening Saturday. The very same reason applies to all, from the Friday, on which the Lord suffered, and when He was in Limbo, that He might, by rising on the third day, bring back our joy after the two days' sorrow. We do not say, therefore, that Friday should not be a fast day, but we do hold that Saturday should be one, for both these days brought sorrow to the Apostles, and those that have followed Christ.

7. *Sabbato vero jejunandum esse, ratio evidentissima demonstrat. Nam si diem Dominicum ob venerabilem resurrectionem Domini nostri Jesu Christi non solum in Pascha celebramus, verum etiam per singulos circulos hebdomadarum, ipsius diei imaginem frequentamus, ac sexta feria propter passionem Domini jejunamus, sabbatum praetermittere non debemus, quod inter tristitiam atque laetitiam temporis illius videtur inclusum. Nam utique constat, Apostolos biduo isto et in moerore fuisse, et propter metum Judaeorum se occuluisse. Quod utique non dubium est, in tantum eos jejunasse biduo memorato, ut traditio Ecclesiae habeat, isto biduo sacramenta penitus non celebrari. Quae utique forma per singulas tenenda est hebdomadas propter id, quod commemoratio diei illius semper est celebranda. Quod si putant, semel atque uno sabbato jejunandum; ergo et Dominica, et sexta feria semel in Pascha erit utique celebranda. Si autem Dominici diei ac sextae feriae per singulas hebdomadas reparanda imago est; dementis est, bidui agere consuetudinem sabbato praetermisso; cum non disparem habeat causam, a sexta videlicet feria, in qua Dominus passus est, quando et ad inferos fuit, ut tertia die resurgens redderet laetitiam post biduanam tristitiam praecedentem. Non ergo nos negamus sexta feria jejunandum; sed dicimus et sabbato hoc agendum, quia ambo dies tristitiam Apostolis, vel his qui Christum secuti sunt, indixerunt. Qui*

But the Apostles, made so supremely happy on the Lord's Day, not only wished it to be the greatest of festivals, but even wanted it commemorated weekly throughout the year.

8. As concerning the *fermentum*, which we send on Sundays to the "title" churches, it is idle to consult us, as all *our* churches are located within the city. The priests of these churches, who by reason of their flocks are prevented from attending our Mass, receive by acolytes this *fermentum* consecrated in our Mass, lest, on that day in particular, they feel themselves cut off from us in communion. But I do not think this ought to be done throughout the dioceses, because the "Sacraments" are not to be transported a great distance (nor do *we* send the *fermentum* to the priests stationed at the various cemeteries [outside the city]); and the priests, of course, retain their own full right to consecrate.

9. As to the baptized, who through some vice or sin are overcome by Satan, your charity enquires whether they may be anointed (*designari*) by priest or deacon. This, unless the bishop order it, is not allowed. For hands are to be imposed [in absolution] only insofar as the bishop shall have authorized it. That this be done, it belongs to the bishop to order that [absolving] hands be imposed by either priest or other clerics. Otherwise could it not well happen that the afflicted person, in being brought at great inconvenience a long way to the bishop, could experience such a turn that he could neither be brought to the bishop, nor carried back home to his own?

10. As to those performing public penance, either on account of serious

die Dominico hilarati, non solum ipsum festivissimum esse voluerunt, verum etiam per omnes hebdomadas frequentandum esse duxerunt.

8. De fermento vero, quod die Dominica per titulos mittimus, superflue nos consulere voluisti, cum omnes ecclesiae nostrae intra civitatem sint constitutae. Quarum presbyteri, quia die ipsa propter plebem sibi creditam nobiscum convenire non possunt; idcirco fermentum a nobis confectum per acolythos accipiunt, ut se a nostra communione, maxime illa die, non judicent separatos. Quod per paroecias fieri debere non puto; quia nec longe portanda sunt sacramenta (nec nos per coemeteria diversa constitutis presbyteris destinamus) et presbyteri eorum conficiendorum jus habeant atque licentiam.

9. De his vero baptizatis, qui postea a daemonio, vitio aliquo aut peccato interveniente, arripiuntur, est sollicita delectio tua, si a presbytero vel diacono possint aut debeant designari. Quod hoc, nisi episcopus praeceperit, non licet. Nam eis manus imponenda omnino non est, nisi episcopus auctoritatem dederit id efficiendi. Ut autem fiat, episcopi est imperare, ut manus eis vel a presbytero vel a caeteris clericis imponatur. Nam quomodo id fieri sine magno labore poterit, ut longe constitutus energumenus ad episcopum deducatur, cum si talis casus ei in itinere acciderit, nec perferri ad episcopum, nec referri ad sua facile possit?

10. De poenitentibus autem, qui sive ex gravioribus commissis, sive ex

transgressions, or for more venial sins, if no sickness intervenes, the custom of the Roman church shows that they are to be reconciled on the Thursday before Easter. Moreover, it is the part of the bishop (*sacerdotis*) to judge as to the gravity of the offenses, to weigh the accusation of the penitent, to appraise the corrective of his weeping and his tears, and then to order him to be absolved, when he has seen an appropriate satisfaction. But if one shall have fallen sick, and his life is despaired of, he is to be absolved even before the Paschal time, lest he depart this world without Communion.

11. Since in this connection also your charity wished to consult us, our own son, the Deacon Celestine, has himself written us that your charity poses that passage written by blessed James the Apostle: "Is one of you sick? Let him send for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord's name. Prayer offered in faith will restore the sick man, and the Lord will give him relief: but if he be guilty of sins, they will be pardoned" (Ja 5:14, 15; Knox). Now there is no doubt that this can and ought to be understood of the sick faithful, who have been sealed with the holy oil of chrism, blessed by a bishop; not priests only, but all the faithful can use the holy oil in their own and their dear ones' necessities. Moreover the question here added strikes us as superfluous, to question as to the bishop's power in what is allowed the *presbyters*. For the Apostle spoke expressly of presbyters, because bishops, engaged in other occupations, cannot go to all who lie sick.

levioribus poenitentiam gerunt, si nulla interveniat aegritudo, quinta feria ante Pascha eis remittendum Romanae Ecclesiae consuetudo demonstrat. Caeterum de pondere aestimando delictorum, sacerdotis est judicare, ut attendat ad confessionem poenitentis, et ad fletus atque lacrymas corrigentis, ac tum jubere dimitti, cum viderit congruam satisfactionem suam. Vel si quis aegritudinem incurrerit, atque usque ad desperationem devenerit, ei est ante tempus Paschae relaxandum, ne de saeculo absque communionem discedat.

11. Sane quoniam de hoc, sicuti de caeteris, consulere voluit dilectio tua, adjecit etiam filius meus Coelestinus diaconus in epistola sua, esse a tua dilectione positum illud, quod in beati Apostoli Jacobi epistola conscriptum est: "Si infirmus aliquis in vobis est; vocet presbyteros, et orent super eum, ungentes eum oleo in nomine Domini: et oratio fidei salvabit laborantem, et suscitabit illum Dominus, et si peccatum fecit, remittet ei" [Ja 5:14, 15]. Quod non est dubium de fidelibus aegrotantibus accipi vel intelligi debere, qui sancto oleo chris-matis perungi possunt, quod ab episcopo confectum, non solum sacerdotibus, sed et omnibus uti Christianis licet, in sua aut in suorum necessitate ungendum. Caeterum illud superfluum esse videmus adjectum, ut de episcopo ambigatur, quod presbyteris licere non dubium est. Nam idcirco presbyteris dictum est, qui episcopi occupationibus aliis impediti, ad omnes languidos ire non possunt. Caeterum si episcopus aut



But if the bishop either can visit some such sick person, or sees fit to do so, and to bless him and anoint him with chrism, this he surely *may do*, he who himself consecrates the chrism. It [last anointing] may not be given to those who are performing public penance, because it belongs to the "sacraments." For how should *one* of the "sacraments" be considered "fit" for those to whom the others are denied?

12. So, dearest confrère, we have been at pains to reply as best we may to all the questions your charity wished answered by us, so that your church may be in a position to keep and observe the customs of the Roman church, from which yours derives. As to the other matters you bring up, they are things it is not permitted to write about: mention them again, when present, and we shall be able to discuss them orally. It is within the Lord's reach to procure that you instruct your own church well, and our own clerics also, who exercise their sacred ministry within your episcopacy, and that you afford others the example they should imitate. [Dated, March 19, 416]

This, then, is Innocent's letter. If the Roman chancery had not yet achieved that lapidarian precision of language that would be enshrined soon in the collects of the Missal, still its Latin reflects a polished and a forceful medium for framing papal programs.<sup>1</sup> It is a tone that can readily combine severity and indulgence, and, the immediate question answered in fewest possible words, can adroitly

potest, aut dignum ducit, aliquem a se visitandum, et benedicere et tangere chrismate; sine cunctatione potest, cujus est chrisma conficere. Nam poenitentibus istud infundi non potest, quia genus est sacramenti. Nam quibus reliqua sacramenta negantur, quomodo unum genus putatur posse concedi?

12. His ergo, frater charissime, omnibus quae tua dilectio voluit a nobis exponi, prout potuimus, respondere curavimus, ut Ecclesia tua Romanam consuetudinem, a qua originem ducit, servare valeat atque custodire. Reliqua vero, quae scribi fas non erat, cum adfuersis, interrogati poterimus edicere. Erit autem Domini potentiae, etiam id procurare, ut et tuam Ecclesiam et clericos nostros, qui sub tuo pontificio divinis famulantur officiis, bene instituas, et aliis formam tribuas, quam debeant imitari. Data xiv kalendarum Aprilium, Theodosio augusto vii et Palladio viro clarissimo consulibus.—*PL XX*, 551-61.

<sup>1</sup> Once Leo's (440-61) perfect style had set the mold, it became, as it were, the set standard for the papal chancery, and as early as 468 the stylist, Gelasius, himself to be pope later on, began his long service as master of the chancery, as Koch has set out in detail: H. Koch, "Gelasius im kirchenpolitischen Dienste seiner Vorgänger der Päpste Simplicius und Felix III.," *Sitzungsberichte der bayer. Akad. der Wiss.*, Phil.-hist. Abt., 1935 (H 6), 85, cited by Capelle, *Rev. Bén.*, LVI (1945-46), 17.

suggest in Peter's name respect for Peter's See. If St. Innocent's historical perspective strikes us as unwittingly foreshortened, it is fair to remember that in an age of widespread collapse and reconstruction, the precise age and provenance of minor liturgical practices is hard to segregate. When the central core of the faith and the overlying liturgical practices derived from apostolic times, it was quite natural for the possessive Roman's outlook to embrace all he had then and there and proudly say: "All this was bequeathed to me by Peter!"

The fifth century, as a matter of fact, and the sixth, were periods of unparalleled liturgical developments, in the East and West. To limit present considerations to a very few items: everyone recalls that St. Ambrose, in the year 386, by way of fighting Arianism, introduced into Milan the new Eastern mode of antiphonal song, with brilliant success, "the congregations throughout the other parts of the world following therein," as Augustine records (*Confessions*, ix, 5), Africa not excepted, nor Rome. The same St. Ambrose, as scholars now know with full certainty, thanks to Dom Connolly, had quoted in his Easter-week sermons about that same time (he died in 397), the core of the Roman Canon of the Mass, to let his neophytes know how Rome celebrated Mass.<sup>2</sup> When St. Innocent was pope, then, Rome had the Canon of the Mass substantially completed, and was hard at work rounding out what we call the Ordinary of the Mass. About 430 the Introit was to be added, as the *Liber Pontificalis* assures us, and, by the century's end, the same source records Rome was to have the *Gloria* on Sundays and Martyrs' Feasts.<sup>3</sup> The Collect of the Mass was also an ordinary feature of the Proper by Gelasius' time, at the end of the century.<sup>4</sup> Under the same Gelasius (492-96) the old and widely known Peoples' Prayers, which we say now only on Good Friday, but which were then a regular feature of every mass, were to be dropped in favor of a striking new litany, of which all that has survived St. Gregory's subsequent change is the refrain, *Kyrie eleison*.<sup>5</sup> Yet none of these developments

<sup>2</sup> R. H. Connolly, *The De Sacramentis, A Work of St. Ambrose* (Oxford: Alden, 1942): reprinted from *Downside Review*, LXIX (Jan. 1941).

<sup>3</sup> *Lib. Pontif.*, Introit, Pope Celestine I (422-32); *Gloria*, Pope Symmachus (498-514).

<sup>4</sup> B. Capelle, "Messés du Pape Gélase dans le Sacramentaire léonien," *Rev. Bénédictine*, LVI (1945-46), 12-41.

<sup>5</sup> B. Capelle, "Le Pape Gélase et la Messe Romaine," *Rev. d'Hist. Ecclés.*, XXXV (1939), 22-34.

would have been in any way possible if Innocent's rule of nothing new were rigidly interpreted as choking off liturgical growth.

One more instance. St. Augustine tells us (*Retractations*, 2, 37) how he himself had appointed psalmody to accompany the offertory procession, and when this novelty appeared in Carthage, as it did also in Rome, a certain layman, named Hilarus, made so much fuss that to silence him the bishop of Hippo wrote his little work *Against Hilarus* (CSEL 36, 2, 144). This music to accompany the bringing up of the gifts was a good means to a good end, and so very legitimately introduced. Yet Augustine, aggravated against purely symbolical ceremonial novelties, was convinced "whenever it is possible all those should be abolished without hesitation which neither have a warrant in Holy Writ, nor are found to have been appointed by councils of bishops, nor are confirmed by the practice of the universal Church, but are so infinitely various (*innumerabiliter variantur*), according to the different customs of different places, that it is with difficulty, if at all, that the reasons which guided one in appointing them can be discovered."<sup>6</sup> In the face of so much liturgical change on every side, Rome itself not excepted, it would be fantastically unrealistic for Innocent to plead for rigid adherence throughout the West to Rome's original liturgical inheritance from Peter. His words surely mean no more than that Western churches ideally "follow" Rome's lead.

If there is one thing crystal-clear in Innocent's letter it is the hampering restriction of the *disciplina arcani*, that quasi- "sacramental seal" touching the Christian mysteries and sacraments. His expressions, "in consecrandis mysteriis"; "in agendis arcanis"; "post omnia quae aperire non debeo"; "verba dicere non possum ne prodere videar"; "quae scribi fas non erat, poterimus edicere"—these turns of thought leave no doubt that he feels constrained, even in a personal letter to a bishop, to avoid all direct disclosure of what we might style the matter and form of the sacraments. The same *disciplina*, with regard to the Eucharist at least, is a commonplace in the sermons of St. Augustine, and it seems here to be in fullest vigor in Rome in 416. This self-imposed secrecy was post-Constantinian in origin, and was destined soon to disappear. When St. Leo was pope, only a generation after Innocent, he could preach before any non-baptized who chanced to be

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 55, 35(*PL XXXIII*, 221).

there, and he could write to his fellow bishops without any of the restrictions or circumlocutions so scrupulously observed in this matter by Augustine and Innocent. The "secret" was soon at large.<sup>7</sup> A few features of the letter invite comment.

§4: *The Pax during the Mass.*—Edmund Bishop, that exemplar of caution in interpreting liturgical descriptions, expresses himself with some reserve as to the precise meaning of St. Innocent's words about the *Pax*: "There may be some doubts as to the position of the kiss of peace in the early Roman Mass owing to the transfer made by St. Gregory of the *Pater noster* to its present position. But in view of the terms used by St. Innocent I it would seem more probable that the *Pax* was given at this point immediately at the close of the Canon."<sup>8</sup> Kennedy and authors generally are less hesitant: "The *Pax* was to be given at the end of the Eucharistic prayer . . . [and not] before this prayer. . . . This refers to the Gallican rite in which the *Pax* was still given before the Offertory, as was done originally in Rome (cf. St. Justin)."<sup>9</sup> Fortescue adds the observation and the surmise: "This is the first mention we know of the present place of the Roman *Pax* after the Consecration. . . . It was perhaps not long before the time of Innocent I that its place at Rome was altered."<sup>10</sup>

§5: *On the naming of names aloud at Mass.*—This paragraph on the public and official recitation of the names of offerers in the course of the Mass is easily the most famous part of this letter, because authors for ages debated just what Innocent meant. Latterly, light has fallen on this matter also. Before taking up the linguistic problem, it will be helpful to give brief consideration to the general liturgical background, admirably supplied by Bishop in discussing the use of diptychs, or officially inscribed lists of names to be read. The passage is long, but both important and graphic:

We know from St. Jerome that in his day the names of persons who had made offerings to church funds, *etc.*, were publicly read out in church: 'she offers so much,' 'he has promised so much.' Although he does not expressly say so, yet from all analogy, and from the use made by him of the specific term, '*offerentes*,' it is only

<sup>7</sup> G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster: Dacre, 1943), p. 439.

<sup>8</sup> E. Bishop, *Liturgica Historica* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1918), p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> V. L. Kennedy, *The Saints of the Canon of the Mass* (Rome: Vatican, 1938), pp. 22ff.

<sup>10</sup> A. Fortescue, *The Mass, A Study of the Roman Liturgy*; revision by H. Thurston (New York: Longmans, 1937), p. 132.

reasonable to conclude that this recitation of the names was made at the time of the Mass. In Jerome's view this practice was gravely abusive, the rich man who has made money by unjust means shames the poor by such ostentation of charity, and that which might cover his sins is made an occasion of vain glory<sup>10a</sup>. . . . His words imply nothing more than would be the reading out of a subscription list today; nor does he indicate what local churches or what country he may have in mind. But already nearly a century before a canon (§29) of the Council of Elvira (about 305 or 306) is evidence that the recitation of the names of 'offerers' at the altar in connection with the oblation there made (that is offerers of bread and wine for the Eucharist) was a recognized practice in the Church of Spain; and this Church, it may be well to remember, was then the best established and organized Christianity in the West.

That this Spanish custom prevailed also in Rome and in Upper Italy appears from the famous letter of Innocent I to Decentius, bishop of Gubbio of the year 416. In this letter there is no question of the recitation of the names of the dead; the names are of those only who actually made offerings of bread and wine at the Mass that is being said. In neither of these two last-cited documents is it stated that the names were said aloud and publicly; this must be matter of inference from Jerome's words and later usage.<sup>11</sup>

So there is a public naming of names within the Mass; now let us see how Innocent wanted it regulated.

Here we proceed through the paragraph without difficulty, until we come to the final, summing-up sentence, which suddenly seems to confuse all that had gone before. This is the sentence, with certain key-words set in italics: "Prius ergo oblationes sunt commendandae, ac tunc eorum nomina, quorum sunt, edicenda; ut inter sacra mysteria nominentur, non inter alia, quae antea praemittimus, ut ipsis *mysteriis* viam *futuris precibus* aperiamus." This was ordinarily translated, as by Fortescue: "So first the offerings should be made, and then those whose offerings they are should be named; they should be named during the holy Mysteries, and not in the part that comes before, so that we may open the way for the prayers that follow by the Mysteries themselves."<sup>12</sup>

That was the version commonly accepted some years back. It

<sup>10a</sup> Jerome, *Comm. in Jeremiam proph.* 2, 11 (PL XXIV, 784); *Comm. in Ezech.*, 6, 18 (PL XXV, 175).

<sup>11</sup> E. Bishop, "The Diptychs," Appendix, *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai: Texts and Studies*, 8 (Cambridge: University, 1909), 98, 99.

<sup>12</sup> A. Fortescue, *The Mass, A Study of the Roman Liturgy* (New York: Longmans, 1937), p. 132.

seemed to be demanded by the original, even if its lack of logic was very patent; it makes the consecration of the Eucharist (*mysteria ipsa*) something accessory and preparatory to the enunciation of the names of those contributing bread and wine. Batiffol wrestled with this problem for pages, knowing some emendation was demanded.<sup>13</sup>

A re-examination of the whole matter convinced Dom Connolly that "futuris," despite its position, is to be construed with "mysteriis", not with "precibus." "I believe," he said in a passage that made history, "that the current translation of the last clause is a mistaken one. It arose not unnaturally out of the collocation of the two words '*futuris precibus*,' which has given the impression that they belong together and are a pair of datives. The truth is, I am persuaded, that though '*futuris*' is a dative, it agrees, not with '*precibus*,' but with '*ipsis mysteriis*'; while '*precibus*' and not '*ipsis mysteriis*' is the instrumental ablative: and what Innocent says is, not that by the mysteries we may open the way for prayers that follow; but something much less unexpected, namely, that by our prayers we may open the way for the mysteries themselves that are to follow. This is the sense that the whole tenor of the passage prepares us for, and the sense that must be adopted if the Latin will bear it."<sup>14</sup>

Suffice it to say that he argues so convincingly for this version that subsequent scholars now gratefully follow his lead here. Prior to publishing his article, Dom Connolly sought confirmation from Armitage Robinson and from Dom André Wilmart: both supported his linguistic arguments, and the latter added further reasons drawn from the study of Innocent's *cursus*. So the names are to be named within the Canon, before the consecration of the Mysteries—in all likelihood just where we make the *Memento* of the living.

§6: *The Minister of Confirmation*.—The surprising papal decree of August 20, 1946, authorizing pastors, in certain circumstances, to act as extraordinary ministers of confirmation, lends special timeliness to the fact that Innocent's letter enshrines the first papal resistance to the

<sup>13</sup> P. Batiffol, *Leçons sur la Messe* (Paris: Gabalda, 1918), pp. 218–24.

<sup>14</sup> R. H. Connolly, "Pope Innocent I 'De Nominibus Recitandis,'" *Journal of Theological Studies*, XX (1919), 215–26. It can be simply stated in this connection that this article takes all ground away from the theory of the 'dislocation' of the Canon of the Mass, whose only 'real' argument was the supposed intercession for the offerers towards the end of the Canon that was being read into Innocent's letter mistranslated. The theory has withered away!

presumed administration of confirmation by any priest. At first both East and West followed the ordinary procedure that the bishop presided in person (or by delegate) at the Christian's initiation, and after baptism had been administered usually by some one else, the bishop anointed the forehead with chrism in imparting the Holy Spirit. It was the bishop, also, who then celebrated Mass, at which the *modo geniti infantes* communicated. About the year 400, it seems, owing to the multiplication of parishes, such a solemn initiation ceased to be the exclusive rule, and then priests began to confirm. In the East they acquired what we may call a tacit delegation. In the West ecclesiastical authority, Innocent in the van, steadily resisted the assumption of this "right" by unauthorized priests. Gelasius later, and Gregory I, repeat the provisions of Innocent's letter.<sup>15</sup> By and by the Schoolmen distinguished between the ordinary and the extraordinary minister, the terminology that is defined. Pius X (1910) and Pius XII (1946) both assert that an unauthorized priest invalidly confirms.

§7: *Every week a "little" Holy Week.*—The most interesting item in this paragraph is that Rome in 416 still did not have Mass on Fridays and Saturdays, and that Innocent felt Mass on those two days would be incompatible with apostolic tradition. What of the Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays? Nothing is said of them. The lead in gradually filling in the weekdays in the Mass calendar in the West was taken by Africa, and by Innocent's time, as both Augustine and Cassian indicate, Africa had already filled in every day as a Mass day.<sup>16</sup> The late Dom Morin thought that during Lent, at least, in the second half of the fifth century, Rome, too, had arrived at Mass for all days but Thursdays and (as in Innocent's time) Saturdays.<sup>17</sup> It was not until the time of Gregory II (715–31) that Rome filled the last lacuna of the a-liturgical Thursdays. In the West only Good Friday is Mass-less.

§8: *Acolytes bring absent priests the fermentum.*—The beautiful and

<sup>15</sup> Canon George, "Confirmation," *Six Sacraments*. Cambridge Summer School Lectures (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930), pp. 111–30.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *Confess.* 5, 9: *CSEL*, 33, 1, 104; Ioan Cass, *Collat.* 21, 26: *CSEL* 13, 2, 602. Cf. W. Roetzer, *Des heiligen Augustinus Schriften als Liturgie-Geschichtliche Quelle* (München: Hueber, 1930), pp. 11, 12.

<sup>17</sup> G. Morin, "Liturgie et basiliques de Rome au milieu du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'après les listes d'Évangiles de Würzburg," *Rev. Bén.*, XXVIII (1911), 296–328.

ancient custom of the bishop sending a fragment of the consecrated species of bread to priests celebrating Mass elsewhere in the city, of which we have witness for Rome as early as the first quarter of the second century, was destined to last on in Rome itself, on greater days, until the ninth century. While Innocent did not encourage its adoption elsewhere, where churches lie outside the city-limits, the usage did have a wide vogue in the West, particularly in France, where remnants of the rite persisted through Reformation and Revolution. The mention by Innocent that it is the acolyte's duty to carry the *fermentum* recalls that St. Augustine, in acknowledging a letter sent to Bishop Aurelius of Carthage and the other bishops of Africa by Innocent's successor in 418, speaks of it as sent by "your acolyte, Leo," a reference that is nearly always interpreted as the first entrance into history of that great Leo, "the calm, the strenuous, the majestic."<sup>18</sup> If, so soon after Innocent's death, this Leo was sent off on such an important errand, he had doubtless often fulfilled the happy task of carrying the *fermentum* from Innocent to the city pastors.

§9: *Absolving by episcopal mandate*.—While it belongs to the bishop alone to authorize the absolution of sinning Catholics, other than those performing public penance, it is not at all necessary that such individuals be brought before the prelate to be reconciled by him personally, this can be done by a priest, "or other clerics." This would not mean that deacons could remit sin, but that they might be authorized to bestow the external signs of reconciliation. Cyprian (*Ep.* 18, 1) had authorized priests, in the case of death-bed urgency, to impose the hands in absolution: the third century marks the gradual transition of absolution imparted by the priests delegated by the bishop, instead of, as earlier, by the bishop himself.<sup>19</sup>

§10: *Concerning public penitents*.—Clearer light is also falling little by little on the administration of public penance in patristic times. In this connection it will not be without interest to note, with Jungmann, that Innocent's statement that Rome reconciled the penitents

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 191, 1 (*PL* XXXIII, 867). Cf. T. Jalland, *The Life & Times of St. Leo the Great* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), pp. 33–36.

<sup>19</sup> P. Galtier, *De Paenitentia* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1923), pp. 398–402; citing among others, Laurain, *De l'intervention des laïques, des diacres et des abbesses dans l'administration de la pénitence* (Paris, 1897), pp. 78 ff.



on Holy Thursday is the earliest such reference on record.<sup>20</sup> In another of his letters, Pope Innocent I has one of the fullest early discussions of current mildness as compared and contrasted with earlier rigor (*Ep.* 6 [*PL* XX, 495–502]).

§11: *Last Anointing*.—Innocent covers more ground in respect to last anointing than to some of the other sacraments, owing to the wider variety of questions put to him. His approving quotation of the celebrated passage from St. James is at once, and very energetically, applied in several ways. His reference to the “access” of the laity to the holy oil is usually taken as meaning that in Rome there were still extra-sacramental uses of the oil, besides its use in extreme unction. That bishops, as well as priests, can administer the sacrament, seems self evident: do not the bishops consecrate the oil? But public penitents may not receive this sacrament before being absolved. It is presumed, too, that the recipients of the rite are so seriously sick that death might overtake them, if it were attempted to bring them to the bishop.

In other letters, Pope Innocent deals with matrimony and with holy orders; in the latter connection (*Ep.* 17) his influence, Saltet says, has been deep and lasting.<sup>21</sup>

Thus a fifth-century letter of St. Innocent I to Bishop Decentius of Gubbio turns out to contain a wealth of information bearing on many different phases of the Church’s sacramental life.

<sup>20</sup> J. A. Jungmann, *Die lateinischen Bussriten* (Innsbruck: Rauch, 1932), p. 74.

<sup>21</sup> L. Saltet, *Les Réordinations: Étude sur le Sacrement d’Ordre* (Paris: Gabalda, 1907), pp. 68–73.