

The Ecclesial Fruit of the Eucharist in St. Thomas Aquinas*

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CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY has generally sought, in ecclesiology as well as in sacramental theology, to highlight the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist. The work of Henri de Lubac is well-known for its important achievements in this rediscovery, especially with respect to the now-famous formula: “The Church makes the Eucharist, but the Eucharist also makes the Church.”¹ This organic relationship between the Eucharist and the Church, whose unity flows from the Eucharist itself, is at the heart of St. Thomas Aquinas’s theology of the Eucharist. Thomist authors generally have not failed to recognize this fact.² Thus it was with St. Thomas that Cardinal Journet showed that the grace or effect produced by the Eucharist is “the secret unity of the Church.”³ The ecclesial fruitfulness of the Eucharist, a theme present in the teaching of the Council of

* Translation by Therese C. Scarpelli, of “Le fruit ecclésial de l’Eucharistie chez S. Thomas d’Aquin,” *Nova et Vetera* 72 (1997): 25–40.

¹ Henri de Lubac, *Méditation sur l’Église* (Paris: Aubier, 1953), 113; cf. 129: “Au sens le plus strict, l’Eucharistie fait l’Église.” A critical study of this double relationship in the writings of Henri de Lubac is found in Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 1–120.

² Aloysius M. Ciappi, “Eucharistia: Sacramentum unitatis Ecclesiae apud D. Thomam et posteriores theologos OP” in *La Eucaristía y la Paz. XXXV Congreso eucarístico internacional 1952: Sesiones de estudio*, Vol. 1 (Barcelona: Planas, 1953), 282–86.

³ Charles Journet, *L’Église du Verbe Incarné*, vol. 2 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1951), 671; see “Le mystère de la sacramentalité,” *Nova et Vetera* 49 (1974): 161–214, especially 203–4.

Trent,⁴ was especially highlighted in the Second Vatican Council: The sacrament of the Eucharist *represents* and *effects* the unity of the faithful who form one single body or one single people in Christ.⁵

The Church celebrates the Eucharist and the Eucharist effects the Church's unity. These two statements are not at exactly the same level. Even though the first possesses a priority of exercise, the second expresses the mystery of the Church and reveals its very soul. This article will sketch the teaching of St. Thomas regarding this second statement.

The Ecclesial Dimension in All Aspects of the Sacrament

The ecclesial dimension first appears in all aspects of St. Thomas's analysis of the sacrament, whose symbolism and efficacy require, in a dynamic way, the adoption of a three-level structure: first, the sign itself; then the intermediary reality which is at once the sign and first effect of the sacrament; and finally the reality of grace effected and signified by the sacrament. The great scholastics (for example, St. Albert and St. Bonaventure) agree in the general application of this structure and acknowledge the mystical Body as the fruit of the grace of the Eucharist.⁶ Thus the principal elements of the doctrine which Thomas inherits are already in place, but the unfolding of this doctrine in his own theology deserves special examination.

The sensible sign of the Eucharist (sacramentum tantum)

On the level of sign, Thomas likes to recall an image from the *Didache*, developed in the West by Cyprian and then by Augustine, from whom Thomas derives it:

Our Lord has proffered his Body and his Blood in those things which, from a multitude, are reduced to unity, since the bread is one single

⁴ This fact is rarely emphasized in studies, but the reader will be easily convinced by examining several documents, notably the *Decree on the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist* (Session XIII, October 11, 1551) in the Preamble, ch. 2 and ch. 8, as well as the *Teaching on the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* (Session XXII, September 17, 1562) in ch. 7; cf. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 2, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press), 693–97 and 735.

⁵ Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 3, 11, and 26; *Christus Dominus*, nos. 11 and 15; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, nos. 2 and 15. Among the numerous works devoted to this topic, one can refer to the study of the texts and their sources (Fathers, liturgy, Magisterium) by Bruno Forte, *La Chiesa nell'Eucaristia: Per un'ecclesiologia eucaristica alla luce del Vaticano II* (Naples: M. D'Auria, 1988).

⁶ Albert the Great, IV *Sent.* dist. 8, a. 11–13; Bonaventure, IV *Sent.* dist. 8, pars 2, a. 2, q. 1.

reality made of many grains; while the wine is one single [drink] made of many grapes.⁷

Here, Thomas echoes Augustine's commentary on John: "O mystery of goodness, O sign of unity, O bond of charity!"⁸ The bread and wine, which constitute the matter of this sacrament, are here seen as the sign of that which the Eucharist effects: From a multitude, the Eucharist brings forth a single reality (*ex multis unum*).

This first aspect of the Eucharist—which Thomas frequently recalls⁹—is not inconsequential, since the sacrament effects that which is represented or signified, that is, the true Body of Christ and the unity of the mystical Body. Thus in Thomas, this ecclesial signification serves to show that the sacrament effectively produces such a grace.¹⁰ Other liturgical acts are mentioned in this context: for example, the commingling of water in the wine, which signifies the mystical Body, "the uniting of the members to their Head" or "the uniting of the Christian people to Christ."¹¹ Similarly, the breaking of the bread signifies the distribution of graces in the Church and the various states of the mystical Body (glorious, militant, and awaiting the resurrection).¹² The ecclesial symbolism associated with food will be

⁷ Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium* 6:56, tract. 26,17 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 36, 268); *Sermo* 227; 272 (PL 38, 1100; 1247–48). Cf. *Didache* IX,4 (Sources Chrétiennes 248,177); Cyprian, *Epist.* 63,13; 69,5 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 3C, 408–409 and 476–77). See Marie-François Berrouard, "Le symbolisme du pain et du vin," in *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, Vol. 72 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1972), 822–23. For the history of this eucharistic symbol, see Adalbert G. Hamman, *Études patristiques* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1991), 93–100.

⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, III q. 79, a. 1; cf. Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium* 6:50–52, tract 26,13 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 36, 266); cf. tract. 26,17 (*ibid.*, 268).

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, IV *Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 1, q1a 1, arg. 2; dist. 11, q. 1, a. 1, q1a 1, arg. 2; dist. 11, q. 2, a. 1, q1a 2; dist. 11, q. 2, a. 2, q1a 1, arg. 4; *ST*, III, q. 74, a. 1; q. 75, a. 2, arg. 3; q. 79, a. 1; q. 79, a. 2; *Catena in Matth.* 26, lect. 7 (Marietti ed., 1953, 384); *In Ioan.* 6:52 (Marietti ed., #960); *Report. ined. Leon. in I Cor.* 11:23; *In I Cor.* 11:24 (Marietti ed., #654), see below, footnotes 79 and 81.

¹⁰ *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 1. This argument is only made after three other reasons, but this does not necessarily mean that we must interpret it as a marginal or extrinsic motif as Bruno Forte argues in "Contributo ad uno studio del rapporto fra l'Eucaristia e la Chiesa in S. Tommaso d'Aquino," in *Tommaso d'Aquino nel suo settimo centenario*, Vol. 4 (Naples: M. D'Auria, 1974), 409–20, here 410–13. Moreover, this symbolism is present everywhere in the works of Thomas, right into the office of *Corpus Christi*.

¹¹ IV *Sent.* dist. 11, q. 2, a. 4, q1a 1; *ST*, III, q. 74, aa. 6–7.

¹² IV *Sent.* dist. 12, q. 1, a. 3, q1a 3, c. et ad 1; *ST*, III, q. 83, a. 5, ad 7–9 (on the *corpus triforme* of Amalarius).

further developed with respect to the *res* of the Eucharist, since through communion the faithful are transformed into that which they eat: the Body of Christ. St. Thomas therefore holds firmly to the representing of the ecclesial reality (the unity of the mystical Body) by the eucharistic species which, as the sacramental matter, contribute to signifying and producing the grace of the Eucharist.

The Sacramental Body of Christ (res et sacramentum)

Thomas next emphasizes the ecclesial dimension in relation to the first effect of the sacrament, which is the *corpus verum*, the eucharistic Body of Christ (and his Blood). At the heart of the sacramental organism, the Eucharist substantially comprises all the treasure, *the spiritual good of the whole Church*; it comprises *the whole mystery of our salvation*.¹³ Thus in his commentary on the *Sentences*, Thomas invokes the ecclesial efficacy of the Eucharist to demonstrate that Christ is truly present there:

It is fitting that there be a sacrament in which Christ is contained not only by participation, but by his essence, in order that thus the union of the Head to his members may be perfect (*ut sit perfecta coniunctio capitis ad membra*).¹⁴ The perfection of the sacraments of the New Law demands that there be a sacrament in which Christ is joined and united to us in reality (*in quo Christus nobis realiter coniungatur et uniatur*), and not merely through participation in his virtue, as in the other sacraments.¹⁵

Thomas invokes the same argument to show the fittingness of the institution of the Eucharist. The Eucharist, considered under the aspect of the *verum corpus*, is “the sacrament which, really containing the Head conformed to his members, unites the mystical Body to its Head.”¹⁶

The perfection of the body requires that the members be united to their head; but by this sacrament the members of the Church are united to their Head (*membra Ecclesiae suo capiti coniunguntur*) . . . ; it was therefore necessary that this sacrament be instituted.¹⁷

¹³ *ST*, III, q. 65, a. 3, ad 1; q. 83, a. 4; cf. *IV Sent.* dist. 49, q. 4, a. 3, ad 4.

¹⁴ *IV Sent.* dist. 10, q. 1, a. 1 (texts are indicated following the edition of Maria F. Moos [Paris: Lethielleux, 1947]). Thomas receives this approach from Albert the Great (*IV Sent.* dist. 10, a. 1, sed contra 2; ed. Auguste Borgnet, Vol. 29, 244). In the *Summa theologiae*, this specifically ecclesiological argument will be replaced by a theme drawn from the perfection of the sacrifice of the New Covenant (*ST*, III, q. 75, a. 1).

¹⁵ *IV Sent.* dist. 9, q. un., a. 1, q1a 1. Cf. *ibid.*, sed contra 2; *ST*, III, q. 65, a. 3.

¹⁶ *IV Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 3, q1a 2, ad 1.

¹⁷ *IV Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 3, q1a 1, sed contra 1.

Insisting on the truth of Christ contained in the Eucharist, Thomas constantly reminds us that the true Body of Christ is also the sign, the representation, the likeness, the exemplar, and the figure of his mystical Body, which is the Church; in other words, it is the sign and the cause of that which the Eucharist procures.¹⁸ He never fails to attribute to the *corpus verum* the fundamental structure of the *res et sacramentum*: The true Body of Christ is at once *signum* and *res*. As sign, the Body of Christ denotes unity, the gathering of a multitude of members in unity. Ecclesial realism appears deeply rooted in eucharistic realism. Thus, showing the fittingness of the institution of this sacrament, Thomas closely links the substantial *conversion* of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ (transubstantiation) and our own *conversion* in Christ who is the end [*finis*] of this conversion:¹⁹ “It was fitting that this sacrament, in which the incarnate Word is contained in order to unite us to himself, be proposed to us under the figure of food, not so that he may be converted into us by his union with us, but rather so that, by our union with him, we may be converted into him (*nos in ipsum convertens*).”²⁰ Here we reach the third level, that of the sacramental grace proper to the Eucharist.

The Fruit of the Eucharist (res tantum)

Thomas formulates the proper effect of the sacrament in terms of nutrition or food (*cibus*). Here, however, the food is not transformed into the one who eats it, but rather the one eating is changed (*convertitur*) into the food which he eats. This understanding is clearly a development of Augustine’s thought.²¹ The effect proper to the Eucharist, as Thomas expresses it, is the transformation (*transformatio*) of man into Christ by love, the transmutation (*transmutatio*) of the one who eats into the food which is eaten, our *conversio* into Christ, a union or *adunatio* of man to Christ: in other words, incorporation into Christ.²² Such is the meaning of the *communio* or *synaxis*, which characterizes the Eucharist: “We enter into communion

¹⁸ All these phrases are Thomas’s own: III *Sent.* dist. 12, q. 3, a. 1, q1a 1, arg. 1; dist. 13, q. 2, a. 2, q1a 2, arg. 2 and ad 2; IV *Sent.* dist. 12, q. 1, a. 3, q1a 3, ad 1; dist. 13, *expositio textus*; ST, III, q. 82, a. 9, obj. 2; *In Ad Eph.* 4:13 (Marietti ed., #217).

¹⁹ This is not an exaggerated term: the use of the faithful is the end (*finis*) of this sacrament (ST, III, q. 74, a. 2); cf. ST, III, q. 74, a. 2, ad 2: *finis effectus*.

²⁰ IV *Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 3, q1a 1; cf. dist. 9, q. un., a. 2, q1a 4.

²¹ Augustine, *Confessions* VII,X,16, quoted for instance in IV *Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 3, q1a 1; ST, III, q. 73, a. 3, ad 2; *In Ioan.* 6:55 (Marietti ed., #972).

²² IV *Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 3, q1a 1, ad 3 (*transmutari*); dist. 9, q. un., a. 2, q1a 4 (*Christo incorporari*); dist. 12, q. 2, a. 1, q1a 1 (*conversio*); dist. 12, q. 2, a. 2, q1a 1 (*transformatio*); *ibid.*, q1a 3 (*unio*); *De art. fid. et ecclesiae sacram.* II (Leon. ed., vol. 42, 255: *adunatio*; *homo Christo incorporatur*); etc.

with Christ through the Eucharist; we share in his Flesh and in his Godhead; we enter into communion and are mutually united by it.”²³

With St. John Damascene, Thomas likewise speaks in this context of an “assuming of the divinity of Christ” effected by the Eucharist.²⁴ In Thomas, the ecclesial dimension of eucharistic grace is present to a remarkable degree, as is shown by other expressions which can be collected from the *Summa theologiae*. The breadth of Thomas’s vocabulary is worth noting. He refers to the effect which the Eucharist brings about (the *res* signified and not contained) as the mystical Body of Christ (*Corpus Christi mysticum*), or the unity of this mystical Body (*unitas corporis mystici*); the society of the Body [of Christ] and of his members (*societas corporis et membrorum suorum*), the union of the members with the Head, or the mutual union of the members of Christ with one another; the Church of the saints and the faithful, the society of the saints (*societas sanctorum*), or the Church constituted of diverse faithful (*Ecclesia ex diversis fidelibus*); very often: the unity of the Church (*unitas ecclesiastica*); the unity signified by the bread and the wine, or simply unity itself; the spiritual nourishment received through union with Christ and his members; peace and unity (*pax et unitas*); union with Christ or with God; transformation into Christ; the unity of the many in Christ (*multi unum in Christo*); the incorporation of people into Christ; the union (*unio*) or the reunion (*adunatio*) of the Christian People with Christ; communion (*communicatio*) with Christ and mutual communion of the faithful among each other.²⁵ For this reason, the Eucharist is called “sacrament of unity (of the Church)” (*sacramentum unitatis [ecclesiasticae]*), or “sacrament of unity and of peace” (*sacramentum unitatis et pacis*), peace being understood as the union of wills which charity brings about.²⁶ The Eucharist thus produces the same effect as did the coming of the Son into our world; it bestows on man all

²³ ST, III, q. 73, a. 4; quote from John Damascene, *De fide Orthodoxa*, c. 86,15 [IV,13] (Burgundio version, ed. Eligius M. Buytaert [New York: Franciscan Institute St. Bonaventure, 1955], 317). Cf. IV *Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 1, q. 3 (with a text from Dionysius).

²⁴ *Ibid.*; “the assuming” (*metalepsis*) is indeed a name for the Eucharist itself.

²⁵ All these expressions, a complete list of which would be extremely long, are collected from the treatise on the Eucharist (ST, III, q. 73–83). On this topic, see Godefridus Geenen, “L’adage *Eucharistia est sacramentum ecclesiasticae unionis* dans les oeuvres et la doctrine de S. Thomas d’Aquin,” in *La Eucaristía y la Paz*, 275–81; Felicísimo Martínez, “La Eucaristía y la unidad de la Iglesia en Santo Tomás de Aquino,” *Studium* 9 (1969): 377–404.

²⁶ ST, III, q. 67, a. 2; q. 73, a. 2, *sed contra*; q. 73, a. 4; q. 80, a. 5, ad 2; q. 82, a. 2, arg. 3 and ad 3; q. 83, a. 4, *corpus* and ad 3. Cf. Adolph Hoffmann, “*Eucharistia ut sacramentum pacis secundum S. Thomam*,” in *La Eucaristía y la Paz*, 163–67.

the goods which Christ gave to the world through his passion; it applies the work of our redemption. In short, it confers the whole mystery of our salvation.²⁷

In the same way, Thomas also reserves for the Eucharist the name “sacrament of charity” (*sacramentum caritatis*), because it represents charity and procures a growth in charity, a strengthening of life in the Spirit, and a most sweet and delectable spiritual refreshment.²⁸ The charity procured by the Eucharist is not limited to the *habitus*, but extends even to “charity in its act (*quantum ad actum*) which is stimulated by this sacrament.”²⁹ But we are not speaking here of a reality different from the preceding one. It is not as though there were an ecclesial effect of the sacrament on the one hand, and a personal and individual effect on the other hand, added to or juxtaposed with the first. In fact, the same reality of grace, that is, the incorporation of the person into Christ, is at once both the food of personal spiritual refreshment and, by its very nature, the building up of the Church, whose unity, founded in faith (Baptism), is strengthened and completed by charity. The close connection between the personal and ecclesial dimensions of the Eucharist, founded in incorporation into Christ, has been particularly well expressed by Cajetan:

When we hear that the fruit (*res tantum*) of the sacrament is grace, and that that which is to be received is the unity of the Church or the mystical Body of Christ, we do not see two separate realities there, since it is all nothing more than the grace of God in his faithful.³⁰

The Eucharist thus strengthens the unity of the mystical Body by intensifying man’s union with Christ and the mutual union of the members. We are now at the heart of Thomas’s vision of the Church. Baptism, the sacrament of faith, builds up the Church by incorporating the baptized into Christ and building them into one unified Church. It effects the initial incorporation into the Church which the Eucharist nourishes and completes.³¹ And in Baptism, the unifying power of the

²⁷ ST, III, q. 79, a. 1; q. 83, a. 1 and 4.

²⁸ ST, III, q. 73, a. 3, ad 3; q. 74, a. 4, arg. 3; q. 78, a. 3, arg. 6 and ad 6; q. 79, a. 4, ad 3; q. 80, a. 5, ad 2 (sacrament of charity); cf. q. 78, a. 3, ad 6: “Hoc autem est sacramentum caritatis quasi figurativum et effectivum;” ST, III, q. 79, a. 1, ad 1; q. 81, a. 1, ad 3 (increase of habitual grace); ST, III, q. 79, a. 1, corpus and ad 2; q. 81, a. 1, ad 3 (delectation and sweetness); etc.

²⁹ ST, III, q. 79, a. 4. This is the reason for the Eucharist’s effacement of venial sins.

³⁰ Cajetan, *In Tertiam Partem Summa theologiae*, q. 73, a. 1 (Leon. ed., Vol. 12, 139).

³¹ ST, III, q. 39, a. 6, ad 4; q. 73, a. 3. See Martin Morard, “L’Eucharistie, clé de voûte de l’organisme sacramentel chez saint Thomas,” *Revue Thomiste* 95 (1995): 217–50.

Eucharist is already at work. In fact, of its very nature Baptism contains the desire or the *objective hunger* for the Eucharist—not necessarily proceeding from the psychological conscience—the desire to spiritually ingest (*manducare*) Christ, the desire for the transformation into Christ given in the act of faith completed in charity.³² The Eucharist is therefore dynamically included in all the other sacraments to such an extent that without this “objective hunger” for the Eucharist, no effect of grace can be obtained. To put it another way, the hunger for the Eucharist belongs organically to salvation.³³ A profound reason for this truth is supplied by the *res* of the Eucharist: “The effect of this sacrament is the unity of the mystical Body without which salvation cannot exist.”³⁴ At this deep level, the fullness of the fruit of the Eucharist is identical with the Church. Thomas can therefore explain:

Since in spiritually eating the Flesh of Christ and in spiritually drinking his Blood we become participators in the Church’s unity which is caused by charity [. . .], he who does not eat thus is outside the Church and consequently outside charity, and therefore does not have life in himself.³⁵

In Thomas, this close connection between Church and Eucharist is supported by two major theological motifs. The first pertains to the sacraments. Thomas sees the efficacy of the sacraments and the grace given through them as a function of incorporation into Christ: It is by incorporating man into Christ (and thus building up the Church) that the sacraments and the Eucharist produce the life of grace. The second motif pertains to Thomas’s understanding of the Church as essentially subsisting in the life of Christ’s grace given by the Holy Spirit; that is, faith operating through charity.³⁶ It is therefore in terms of faith and charity that Thomas illumines what it means to belong to the Church and explains its unity, just as it is in terms of faith and charity that he explains the fruit of the grace of the Eucharist. Both the Church and the

³² *ST*, III, q. 73, a. 3. Texts and analyses on this topic are found in Jean-Marie R. Tillard, “Le *votum Eucharistiae*: l’Eucharistie dans la rencontre des chrétiens,” in *Miscellanea Liturgica in onore di S. E. il Cardinale Giacomo Lercaro*, Vol. 2 (Rome-Paris: Desclée, 1967), 143–94.

³³ *ST*, III, q. 80, a. 11: “Et ideo sine voto percipiendi hoc sacramentum, non potest homini esse salus.”

³⁴ *ST*, III, q. 73, a. 3: “Res sacramenti est unitas corporis mystici, sine qua non potest esse salus.”

³⁵ *In Ioan.* 6:54 (Marietti ed., no. 969).

³⁶ Yves Congar, “L’idée de l’Église chez saint Thomas d’Aquin,” in Idem, *Esquisses du Mystère de l’Église* (Paris: Cerf, 1941), 59–91.

Eucharist are seen under the aspect of incorporation into Christ. Thus, commenting on John 6:57, Thomas designates the fruit of the Eucharist (the *res signata tantum*) as “incorporation into the mystical Body by the union of faith and charity.”³⁷ Likewise, in his homilies on the *Credo*, for example, Thomas explains the unity of the Church by means of faith, hope, and charity, the three theological virtues on which this unity is founded, and through which it is procured.³⁸ Here we find a profound “osmosis” between the interior dimension of the mystery and its accomplishment through the rite, achieved by an inclusion of the sacramental world and the nature of the Church with respect to the theological virtues.

Christology and Pneumatology

The power of the Eucharist, Thomas explains, derives primarily and principally from the fact that it contains the Word made flesh,³⁹ into whom the one who communicates spiritually is “converted.” As we have seen, this personal and ecclesial effect has as its sign and cause the double level of the *sacramentum tantum* (the eucharistic species with the words of consecration) and the *res et sacramentum* (the true Body of Christ), these two elements coming together in the unity of the sacrament itself (the first only concurring in producing grace by virtue of the second).⁴⁰ More precisely—leaving aside here the universal value of the Eucharist as sacrifice offered, which deserves to be considered on its own—it is the spiritual ingestion of the Body and the Blood of Christ which produces this spiritual effect: “The unity of the mystical Body is the fruit of the true Body of Christ which was received.”⁴¹

Thomas bases his teaching on numerous scriptural passages, notably John 6:57 [6:56] (“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him”) and I Cor 10:17 (“Since there is one single bread, we are one single Body, all we who have part in this single bread”).⁴² He also highlights the theme of the Church’s birth from the side of the

³⁷ *In Ioan.* 6:57 (Marietti ed., no. 976); cf. *In Ioan.* 6:64 (Marietti ed., no. 993).

³⁸ *In Symbolum Apostolorum Expositio*, art. 9 (Marietti ed., no. 973–975); cf. *ST*, III, q. 8, a. 3.

³⁹ *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 1: “Effectus huius sacramenti debet considerari, primo quidem et principaliter, ex eo quod in hoc sacramento continetur, quod est Christus”; cf. *In Ioan.* 6:55 (Marietti ed., no. 973).

⁴⁰ *IV Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 1, q1a 1, ad 2.

⁴¹ *ST*, III, q. 82, a. 9, ad 2: “Unitas corporis mystici est fructus corporis veri percepti.”

⁴² See for instance *IV Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 3, q1a 1, sed contra; *ST*, III, q. 73, a. 2, sed contra; q. 74, a. 1; q. 75, a. 1; *In Ioan.*, c. 6, lect. 7.

crucified Christ, from which flow water and blood (John 19:34),⁴³ representing the sacraments by which the Church is built (*fabricata*), instituted (*institututa*), consecrated (*consecrata*), or saved (*salvata*).⁴⁴ The effect of the Eucharist is that of Jesus' passion, whence the sacraments acquire their efficacy and to whose fruits they give access.⁴⁵ Church and sacrament are here inextricably tied by their source: "Christ has suffered his passion, out of charity, in order to unite himself to the Church as a spouse."⁴⁶

In order to illuminate the transforming and unifying power of the Eucharist, Thomas also draws on the explanation of Cyril of Alexandria which defends the incarnation of the Word with respect to the passion of Jesus:

The life-giving Word of God, uniting himself to his own Flesh, makes it life-giving as well. It was thus fitting that he should unite himself in a certain way to our bodies by his holy Flesh and by his precious Blood which we receive as a living benediction in the bread and wine.⁴⁷

The Eucharist derives its power from the life-giving power of the Flesh of the incarnate Word. In the Eucharist, the life-giving Flesh of the Logos comes to unite itself to our own, to confer on it immortal life. Having sanctified his own Flesh, the Word sanctifies the believer who, through spiritual and sacramental communion, unites himself to this divinized Flesh of Christ. This fundamental reference to the Word appears

⁴³ We have found eight occurrences of this theme in the treatise on the Eucharist in the *Tertia pars*: q. 74, a. 6; q. 74, a. 7, arg. 2, c., ad 2 and ad 3; q. 74, a. 8, arg. 1 and corpus; q. 79, a. 1.

⁴⁴ All these expressions are Thomas's own: IV *Sent.* dist. 1, q. 1, a. 4, q. 3, sed contra 1; dist. 18, q. 1, a. 1, q. 1; *ST*, I, q. 92, a. 3; *ST*, III, q. 62, a. 5, sed contra; q. 64, a. 2, ad 3; q. 66, a. 3, arg. 3 and ad 3; q. 66, a. 4, arg. 3 and ad 3; *In Ioan.* 19:34 (Marietti ed., no. 2458). For the many patristic sources of this theme (which Thomas develops especially with reference to Augustine and Chrysostom), see Sebastian Tromp, "De nativitate Ecclesiae ex corde Iesu in Cruce," *Gregorianum* 13 (1932): 489–527; Alban A. Maguire, *Blood and Water: The Wounded Side of Christ in Early Christian Literature* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1958).

⁴⁵ *ST*, III, q. 62, a. 5; cf. IV *Sent.* dist. 8, q. 1, a. 1, q. 3; *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 1: "Et ideo effectum quem passio Christi fecit in mundo, hoc sacramentum facit in homine."

⁴⁶ IV *Sent.* dist. 26, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3: "... caritatem, per quam pro Ecclesia sibi in sponsam coniungenda passus est" (about marriage; Vivès ed., Vol. 11, 72).

⁴⁷ *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 1. Thomas quotes this passage more at length in *Catena in Lucam* 22:19 (Marietti ed., 1953, 286); cf. Cyril, *In Lucam* 22:19 (PG 72, 907–912). On this topic, see Jean-Marie R. Tillard, *L'Eucharistie Pâque de l'Église* (Paris: Cerf, 1964), 60–83.

in the explanation of the efficacy of the words of consecration: They retain their power from the fact that they are, properly speaking, the words of the incarnate Word. It is through the words of the incarnate Word, pronounced by the priest acting in the Person of Christ, that the substantial change takes place: "The sacrament is accomplished by the words of Christ."⁴⁸ Does this fundamentally Christological understanding obscure the action of the Holy Spirit? This question, over and above the problem of the epiclesis, directly concerns the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church.

Thomas's attention to the pneumatological dimension of the sacrament must be clearly acknowledged: "The Body is in this sacrament . . . in a spiritual manner (*spiritualiter*); i.e., in an invisible manner and by the power of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁹ The words pronounced by the priest are the instrument through which passes the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰ From a Trinitarian point of view, Thomas explains the unity of the action of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist, by means of the theme of the Son's operating through the Holy Spirit (understood in close connection with the *Filioque*): Christ the Priest accomplishes the eucharistic conversion by the Holy Spirit. It is in this manner that Thomas appropriates transubstantiation to Christ who operates and at the same time to the Holy Spirit through whom Christ acts.⁵¹ As for the grace of configuration and of incorporation into Christ, that is, the personal and ecclesial fruit of the Eucharist, Thomas attributes it to the Holy Spirit by full right.⁵² Commenting on John 6 in the context of the Eucharist, Thomas explains: "He who eats and drinks spiritually becomes a participator in the Holy Spirit, by whom we are united to Christ in the union of faith and charity, and through whom we become members of the Church."⁵³ Thomas first underlines the presence of the Holy Spirit, who works this spiritual communion, in the Flesh of the incarnate Word himself. The following passage of his commentary on John is worth examining for the very evocative illumination it provides on the pneumatology of Thomas's eucharistic doctrine:

⁴⁸ ST, III, q. 78, a. 1, sed contra; q. 75, a. 7, arg. 3; q. 78, a. 2, arg. 2; q. 78, a. 4, sed contra. St. Ambrose, *De sacramentis* IV, IV, 14s (Sources Chrétiennes 25 bis, 108–13).

Cf. Pierre-Marie Gy, *La liturgie dans l'histoire* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 211–21.

⁴⁹ ST, III, q. 75, a. 1, ad 1.

⁵⁰ ST, III, q. 78, a. 4, ad 1.

⁵¹ IV *Sent.*, dist. 10, *expositio textus*: "Appropriatur [transsubstantiatio] Filio sicut operanti, quia ipse est sacerdos et hostia; Spiritui autem Sancto sicut quo operatur, quia ipse est virtus de illo exiens ad sanandum (Luke 6:19)."

⁵² ST, III, q. 63, a. 3, ad 1; *In Ioan.* 6:57 (Marietti ed., no. 976).

⁵³ *In Ioan.* 6:55 (Marietti ed., no. 973; cf. no. 972).

The Flesh of Christ is capable of accomplishing many things in many ways insofar as it is united to the Word and to the Spirit (*ut coniuncta Verbo et Spiritui*). . . . If we abstract divinity and the Holy Spirit, this Flesh is no more powerful than any other flesh; but if the Spirit and divinity are present, this Flesh is capable of accomplishing many things because it makes those who take it live in Christ: in fact, it is through the Spirit of charity that man lives in God. . . . If you attribute this effect of the Flesh to the Spirit, and to the divinity united to the Flesh, then it procures eternal life, as we see in Gal 5:25: "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk also in the Spirit." And this is why Christ adds: "The words which I have spoken to you are Spirit and life" (Jn 6:64 [6:63]). We must therefore refer them to the Spirit united to the Flesh; and understood thus, they are life, which is to say, the life of the soul. For in the same way as the body lives by a bodily life through a bodily spirit, so the soul lives by a spiritual life through the Holy Spirit: "Send forth your Spirit and they will be created." (Ps 103:30)⁵⁴

These texts, to which many others could be added,⁵⁵ show us that Thomas's eucharistic theology, far from being reduced to a "christomonism," upholds the presence of the Spirit at all levels: in the Flesh of the Lord, in his eucharistic Body and in his ecclesial Body for which the Spirit procures, through faith and charity, that unity which constitutes the fruit of the Eucharist. The Eucharist nourishes and strengthens the communion of the faithful with the Lord and with one another, by the *communicatio* of the Body and Blood of Christ. It is indeed by the power of the Holy Spirit that this communication of the incarnate Word strengthening the members of his Body in unity is accomplished.⁵⁶

The Eucharist and Forgiveness

At the heart of the deepening of ecclesial unity which it effects, the Eucharist contains a purifying power as well as a demand for reconciliation, to which Thomas draws attention. In the *Summa theologiae*, after

⁵⁴ In *Ioan.* 6:64 (Marietti ed., no. 993). The source of this exegesis is found in Augustine, *Tractatus* 27, 5–6 *On the Gospel of John* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 36), 271–72.

⁵⁵ See notably Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Vol. 2: *Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 175–99: "The Heart of the Church."

⁵⁶ In *II Ad Cor.* 13:13 (Marietti ed., no. 544): "Communicatio vero divinorum fit per Spiritum Sanctum. . . Et ideo Spiritui Sancto attribuit communicationem." On this topic see Jean-Marie R. Tillard, "La marque de Thomas d'Aquin sur le dialogue oecuménique," in *Ordo sapientiae et amoris, Hommage au Prof. J.-P. Torrell OP*, ed. Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1993), 625–54, especially 643–53.

having discussed the grace of the Eucharist and its eschatological implications, Thomas devotes to this theme the majority of the articles in the question dealing with the effects of the Eucharist (IIIa, q. 79). At the root of the sacramental symbolism of food, belonging to Christ by grace appears as an indispensable precondition for the fruitful reception of the sacrament: The Eucharist is a *spiritual food* for the growth of the living (that is, those who live by grace). Nevertheless, the Eucharist contains within itself a reconciling power which can be described as total: "This sacrament possesses of itself (*secundum se*) the virtue of remitting all sins by the passion of Christ who is the source and cause of remission of sins."⁵⁷ Therefore no obstacles to the vivifying power of the Eucharist can exist on the part of the sacrament, but only on the part of the recipient, who can be incapable of perceiving its fruit. Grace does not constrain man, but each must enter into it freely.⁵⁸

Furthermore—and we want to emphasize this aspect—Thomas understands the relationship between the Eucharist and sin in terms of the fruit of ingesting the Eucharist: That is, in terms of union with Christ (with the Father) and of the mutual communion among the faithful. "Whoever takes this sacrament signifies by that very act that he is united to Christ and incorporated into his members, which occurs through faith informed [by charity], and this is incompatible with mortal sin."⁵⁹ Thomas discusses the incompatibility between the state of mortal sin and the fruitful reception of the Eucharist explicitly in the light of "the mystical Body of Christ which is the society of the saints."⁶⁰ The Eucharist, the sacrament of consummation, nourishes and deepens the communion of the Church, in its two dimensions of relation to the Head and fraternal unity of the members. The Eucharist presupposes in its members an already constituted ecclesial communion, of which it is the sacrament. The absence of this communion, if it exists, impairs the *signification* of the sacrament and the *reality* of its effect. In pneumatological terms, Thomas elsewhere explains that "the Spirit is only given to those who are in Christ Jesus . . . ; the Holy Spirit does not come to the man who is not united to Christ the Head."⁶¹ The sacrament of Penance is ordered

⁵⁷ ST, III, q. 79, a. 3.

⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Thomas adds that this sacrament can remit mortal sin, either by the "hunger" or "longing" (*votum*) for the Eucharist, or, if the sinner neither attached to nor conscious of his sin, by the fervor of charity which the Eucharist confers (ST, III, q. 79, a. 3).

⁵⁹ ST, III, q. 80, a. 4.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ In Ad Rom. 8:2 (Marietti ed. no. 605).

precisely to true and full participation in the Eucharist, in the totality of its ecclesial nature.

Similarly, at the depth of this fundamental theological perception we can grasp the forgiveness of “light” sins, which the Eucharist achieves. In effecting fervent charity, it purifies the members of the Church by uniting them more closely to Christ and to one another. In other words, it is by intensifying their union with Christ and their fraternal charity that the Eucharist purifies the members of the Church of their venial sins. And again, it is by effecting union with Christ that the Eucharist fortifies the spiritual vitality of the Church’s members in protecting or preserving them from future sins.⁶² Indeed, Thomas brings the ecclesial dimension of forgiveness into special prominence, in the light of the Eucharist and of the incorporation into Christ which this sacrament effects.

The Eschatological-Ecclesial Implications of the Eucharist

Finally, the ecclesial effect appears in the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. It is the sacrament of our pilgrimage toward the Fatherland, the sacrament of hope.⁶³ This eschatological dimension is written into the structure of all the sacraments. For Thomas, the sacraments are at once commemorative signs (Passion of Christ), demonstrative signs (present gift of grace), and announcing signs (future glory). They bear the historical event of the Passion of Jesus, whence they procure the fruit of grace in the present moment, while announcing the fulfillment whose seed they possess. For Thomas, this eschatological signification is not reduced to a secondary aspect or a mere periphery to the sacrament, but rather belongs to it formally and expressly.⁶⁴

This eschatological effect, which the Eucharist prefigures in the manner of an anticipatory (*praefigurativum*) sign, constitutes its ultimate effect (*ultimus effectus*),⁶⁵ which the sacrament “does not produce immediately but which it signifies:” the spiritual ingestion of God in the face-to-face vision and perfect charity found in eternal life.⁶⁶ Thomas

⁶² *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 4 and 6.

⁶³ *ST*, III, q. 75, a. 1; q. 79, a. 2.

⁶⁴ *ST*, III, q. 60, a. 3. See Jean-Marie R. Tillard, “La triple dimension du signe sacramentel (À propos de *Sum. Theol.*, III, 60,3),” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 83 (1961): 225–54; Pierre-Marie Gy, “Avancées du traité de l’Eucharistie de S. Thomas dans la *Somme* par rapport aux *Sentences*,” *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 77 (1993): 219–28, cf. 225.

⁶⁵ *ST*, III, q. 74, a. 6.

⁶⁶ *IV Sent.* dist. 9, *expositio textus*. The theme of spiritual ingestion (*spiritualis manducatio*) through blessed vision and charity, evoked in this passage, is developed with regard to the angels in *ST*, III, q. 80, a. 2.

develops it notably in regard to the name “viaticum” which designates the Eucharist,⁶⁷ but references to it are found throughout the treatise on the Eucharist. He explains it thus: The Eucharist delivers us from whatever hinders our entry into glory; it prepares the obtaining of glory, the blessed enjoyment of God in the Fatherland, the eternal inheritance, the entrance into the Kingdom of heaven and into eternal life, the glory of the soul and the resurrection of the body.⁶⁸ Here the ecclesial implications of the sacrament are even more clearly outlined: The Eucharist signifies the union of Christians, through Christ, with the Father and with the Church triumphant; it announces the “transfer” into the Church triumphant.⁶⁹ Following Augustine, Thomas here links the patristic theme of the “medicine of immortality” with the theme of the Church in glory:

My Flesh is truly food (John 6:56) [*and my Blood drink*]. Since men expect that food and drink will cause them to be no longer hungry or thirsty, this result is truly achieved only by this food and this drink which makes those who take it immortal and incorruptible, in the companionship of the saints where total and perfect unity and peace will reign.⁷⁰

The connection between the enjoyment of God and the unity of the society of the saints expresses, from the aspect of hope, the double dimension of the ecclesial communion recalled earlier with regard to the *res tantum* of the sacrament. “In the glory of heaven, two things will most delight good men: the enjoyment of the Godhead and the common society of the saints; for there is no joyful possession without society.”⁷¹ As for the resurrection, it too appears as a fruit of the life-giving power of the Eucharist. Following the *Ambrosiaster*, Thomas explains that the life of the soul flows into the body for salvation in this present life, and for incorruptibility in the life of glory.⁷² At a deeper level, the eschatological implications of the Eucharist are founded on the incarnate and resurrected Word who is contained therein: true God and true man, the Word-made-flesh

⁶⁷ *ST*, III, q. 73, a. 4.

⁶⁸ These are the phrases which Thomas uses in *ST*, III, q. 73, a. 4; q. 73, a. 6, arg. 3; q. 74, a. 6; q. 78, a. 3, c. and ad 3; q. 79, a. 1, ad 3; q. 79, a. 2; q. 80, a. 2, ad 1; q. 83, a. 5, ad 9.

⁶⁹ *ST*, III, q. 83, a. 4, ad 9; cf. IV *Sent.* dist. 13, *expositio textus*.

⁷⁰ *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 2; cf. Augustine, *Tractatus* 26, 17 *On the Gospel of John* (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 36, 268).

⁷¹ *In Ad Hebr.* 12:22 (Marietti ed., no. 706). Cf. *Ia-IIae*, q. 4, a. 8.

⁷² *ST*, III, q. 79, a. 1, ad 3; cf. q. 74, a. 1; *Ambrosiaster*, *In I Cor* 11:26 (PL 17,243).

resurrects and vivifies both souls and bodies through his risen flesh.⁷³ Once again, at the heart of the ecclesial gift of the Eucharist, we discover the action of the Holy Spirit. Commenting on John 6, Thomas explains: “The Holy Spirit makes the unity of the Church: ‘One single Spirit and one single Body’ (Eph 4:4)—he who is the ‘pledge of our eternal inheritance’ (Eph 1:14). Wonderful, then, are the benefits of this food which gives eternal life to the soul; but they are wonderful also because they likewise give life to the body. . . . The Spirit makes us merit the resurrection.”⁷⁴

Theology, Preaching, and Liturgy

Thomas carried these themes of “academic” or scholarly theology into his liturgical writings and preaching activity. Among other examples, we may take as witnesses the sermon *Homo quidam fecit cenam magnam* (sermon of the second Sunday after Trinity Sunday), of which a good edition exists,⁷⁵ as well as the liturgy of Corpus Christi, whose attribution to Thomas seems well established.⁷⁶

The sermon *Homo quidam fecit cenam magnam* is devoted to the theme of spiritual refreshment. Here Thomas clearly emphasizes the ecclesial effect of the Eucharist, that is, the unity of the mystical Body, in relation to the faith and charity by which God dwells in the hearts of the faithful. In particular, this sermon confirms that the theme of refreshment and delectation is understood properly in direct reference to the Church. Eucharistic symbolism is likewise presented here in its anamnetic dimension (Passion of Christ), in its present reality and in the hope of its future fulfillment (the beatitude of eternal life):

The present effect [of the Eucharist], signified and not contained, i.e., the unity of the Church, is delectable. What is there indeed which causes more joy than this unity? *How good and pleasant it is for brothers*, etc. (Ps 132:1). This Supper produces the greatest delectation, whether one looks to the past, to the present, or to the future. . . . It unites us to God and makes us dwell in God. This is why it is said in John 6:57

⁷³ *In Ioan.* 6:55 [6:54] (Marietti ed., no. 973); cf. *ST*, III, q. 56, a. 1–2.

⁷⁴ *In Ioan.* 6:55 [6:54] (Marietti ed., no. 972–973).

⁷⁵ Louis J. Bataillon, “Le sermon inédit de saint Thomas *Homo quidam fecit cenam magnam*. Introduction et édition,” *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 67 (1983): 353–69.

⁷⁶ Pierre-Marie Gy, “L’Office du Corpus Christi et S. Thomas d’Aquin. Etat d’une recherche,” *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 64 (1980): 491–507; idem., “L’Office du Corpus Christi, oeuvre de S. Thomas d’Aquin,” in *La Liturgie dans l’histoire* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 223–45; Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Vol. 1: *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 129–36.

[6:56]: *He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood . . . remains in me*, that is to say, by faith and charity, *and I in him*, by grace and the sacrament.⁷⁷

We cannot look here in detail at the various elements of the liturgy of Corpus Christi. A brief outline of several examples allows us nevertheless to discern a remarkable continuity between Thomas's teaching labors and his liturgical works. In the office *Sacerdos*, we can immediately note the signification of the Church's unity by the multiple grains and grapes from which are confectioned the single bread and wine of the Eucharist; we can likewise observe there the eschatological signification of the Eucharist, that is, the immortality and incorruptibility of eternal life, for which we hope as the perfect *societas sanctorum* where peace and unity will reign fully (Augustine on John 6:55).⁷⁸ We also find there the theme of the divinization of the faithful accomplished by the only Son, as well as the theme of purification from sins. And Thomas takes care to link the Eucharist to the action of the Holy Spirit: It is to the Spirit that the Acts of the Apostles attributes the fidelity of the first Church breaking bread in the grace of Pentecost.⁷⁹

The ecclesial signification of the gifts is manifested in the Secret of the Mass *Cibavit*: "Grant, Lord, to your Church, the gifts of unity and peace which are signified as a mystery by these offerings."⁸⁰ As for the eschatological-ecclesial dimension, it is present throughout Thomas's liturgical works, but appears notably at the end of the sequence *Lauda Sion*.⁸¹ Fr. Gy,

⁷⁷ Latin text in the edition given by Fr. Bataillon, "Le sermon inédit," 362. Note that the eschatological signification is presented, as in the *Summa theologiae* and in the Office of Corpus Christi, in reference to the food eaten by Elias for his journey to Horeb (I Kgs 19:8; *ibid.*, 363).

⁷⁸ Lesson from Matins (a homily of Augustine; Vivès ed., Vol. 29, 339; Marietti ed., *Opuscula theologica*, Vol. 2, 1954, 278). Cf. Pierre-Marie Gy, "L'Office du Corpus Christi," 233–34, footnote 28. Also see the texts quoted from the ms. *Paris B.N. lat 1143*, copied at the beginning of the study of each section of the office in Ronald J. Zawilla, *The Historiae Corporis Christi attributed to Thomas Aquinas: A Theological Study of Their Biblical Sources* (Diss. University of Toronto, 1985).

⁷⁹ *Legenda Immensa divinae largitatis* from Matins (Vivès ed., vol. 29, 336–37; Marietti ed., 276–77); see the text in Pierre-Marie Gy, "L'Office du Corpus Christi," 244–45 (cf. 233, note 28). The Holy Spirit appears in many other parts of the office, starting with the antiphon of the *Magnificat* in the first Vespers for the feast: "O quam suavis est, domine, spiritus tuus . . ." (in Zawilla, *The Historiae*, 216).

⁸⁰ "Ecclesie tue, quesumus Domine, unitatis et pacis propicius dona concede, que sub oblatiis muneribus mystice designantur. Per Dominum nostrum" (in Zawilla, *The Historiae*, 319; cf. Vivès ed., Vol. 29, 342; Marietti ed., 281).

⁸¹ "... Tu nos bona fac videre/In terra viventium./Tu qui cuncta scis et vales/Qui nos pascis his mortales/Tuos ibi commensales/Coheredes et sodales/Fac sanctorum civium.—Amen" (Vivès ed., Vol. 29, 342; Marietti ed., 281).

emphasizing this movement to eschatology, surmises that “one would hardly find the like in any contemporary theologians.”⁸² The attention paid to this eschatological dimension is fully consistent with the deep movement of St. Thomas’s theology toward the vision of God, toward the plenary revelation of the mysteries in the fulfillment of the Church: This is exactly what Thomas put at the heart of his doctrine of the Eucharist. This too brief liturgical and homiletic sketch certainly deserves a more thorough study. But it confirms the theological, spiritual, and pastoral importance that Thomas accorded, in every field in which he was active, to the theme of the unity of the Church that the Eucharist effects.

The theology of St. Thomas bears witness to a profound connection between the Eucharist and the Church, which his theology takes into consideration at every level on which he analyzes this sacrament, under the aspects of both its signification and its efficacy. His doctrine of the Church’s unity as the *res* of the Eucharist draws deeply from the Fathers, and from Augustine in particular. This “osmosis” between eucharistic realism and the realism of the Church involves the major themes of his eucharistic doctrine, especially his understanding of the efficacy of the sacrament through incorporation and conversion in Christ, as well as his grasp of the mystery of the Church according to this same theme of incorporation by means of faith and charity, in its double dimension of union with Christ and of fraternal unity among the members by the action of the Holy Spirit. In St. Thomas the Eucharist appears in its fullness (*Tantum ergo sacramentum!*) as the very soul of ecclesial life. N V

⁸² Pierre-Marie Gy, *La liturgie dans l'histoire*, 277.