

Understanding the Eucharist as a Way to Understand the Church

Abbot Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist*

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There are different approaches toward developing an understanding of the Church. The Church became a subject of reflection late in the 13th Century and early in the 14th Century amid the conflicts between the French monarchy of Philip the Fair and the pontificate of Pope Boniface VIII. The French monarch was beginning to challenge the rights of the exercise of papal authority in France. An attempt was made to kidnap the Pope in Anagni, in Italy. The controversies of the time led to questions and discussions about what is the Church apart from what exists as the State. We tend to understand a given thing more clearly when we must know how it differs from something else. For an early example of work in Christology, see Giles of Rome's *On Ecclesiastical Power: A Medieval Theory of World Government*. In the context of an Aristotelian form of analysis, we can begin with ends or objectives and from there proceed to an understanding of acts which lead to ends and objectives and then, from there, to an understanding of potencies or capacities. Acts are specified by objects. If the Church exists to satisfy ends or objectives which transcend earthy considerations, we can begin easily to understand which the Church is seen to exist as a something which is supernatural. The meeting of supernatural objectives requires ways and means which, similarly, possess a supernatural nature. The Church functions as an intermediary, working with created contingent things and then, through prayer, created contingent things are converted to serve supernatural ends, existing as channels of grace. Belief in the Church's divine foundation, as instituted by Christ, appears to have been first defined as a teaching belonging to the deposit of faith in 1870 by an act of the First Vatican Council: “the Eternal Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Peter 2, 25) resolved, in order to give permanent duration to the saving work of the Redemption, to establish the Holy Church, in which all the faithful would be welded together as in the house of the Living God, by the bond of the one Faith and of the one Charity.”¹

Why we begin with an understanding of the Eucharist is perhaps best explained if we attend to John 6, 53 where it is said that “the possession of Eternal Life is made dependent on the partaking of His body and blood.”² We are taught by the Church that, for our salvation, we must receive the Eucharist. We must receive the Eucharist since, according to the Church's faith, Christ instituted the unbloody sacrifice of the Eucharist ”in which that bloody sacrifice which was once offered on the Cross should be made present, in memory preserved to the end of the world, and its salvation-bringing power applied

¹Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans, Patrick Lynch; ed. James Canon Bastible (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books, 1974), p. 272. For evidence of traditional belief of the Church's divine foundation, see Thomas More, Speech at his trial, 1535: “...Forasmuch, my lord, as this indictment is grounded upon an act of Parliament directly oppugnant to the laws of God and his holy church, the supreme government of which, or of any part thereof, may no temporal prince presume by any law to take upon him, as rightfully belonging to the See of Rome, a spiritual preeminence by the mouth of our Savior himself, personally present upon the earth, to Saint Peter and his successors, bishops of the same see, by special prerogative granted; it is therefore in law amongst Christian men, insufficient to charge any Christian man...”

²Ott, p. 396.

to the forgiveness of the sins which are daily committed by us.”³ To understand the Eucharist, one must understand the act of meaning or the order of redemption which is brought into the world through Christ's suffering death on the Cross, Christ's passion as he experienced it in Jerusalem during the governorship of Pontius Pilate. If we can understand the meaning of Christ's saving death, we can understand the meaning of the Eucharist: how it exists also as an act of meaning and how, through it, an order of redemption is brought into the world and communicated to human beings. Bluntly put, if in Christ's saving death on the Cross, we have the basis or the first principle which leads to our redemption as human beings, then, in the celebration of the Eucharist, this redemption is perpetuated and continued through time and history. The Church exists to communicate this work of Christ. To understand the meaning or the intelligibility of Christ's saving death, look at how Bernard Lonergan speaks about the Law of the Cross in his *De Verbo Incarnato*: Thesis 17 on “Understanding the Mystery (The Law of the Cross).

In understanding the Eucharist, we accordingly begin with Abbot Vonier's little book, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist*. A religious event, a religious reality having very many ramifications, is approached in a manner which tries to exist as a point of departure.

Chapter 1 is about Faith, the necessity of faith. While it is possible to speak in an objective way, allegedly from a divine point of view, which attends to the relation which exists between God the Father and God the Son and how God the Father beholds the work of God the Son as Incarnate, Vonier begins by speaking about faith as the primary or first theological virtue. Faith refers to an interior psychic disposition which initially attaches a person to the work and being of Christ. If a person has faith, Christian faith, one is open to what can be known and experienced in faith. A person in mortal sin but who has faith is open to the possibilities of repentance and forgiveness. What is most to be regretted is infidelity since, with infidelity, a person is cut off from God save God's special intervention through operative grace and a willingness to accept this grace. With faith, everything else can begin and happen.

Chapter 2 is about the sacraments and how the sacraments communicate faith to recipients. If power exists in the having of faith (through faith we are attached to God in a preliminary proleptic kind of way), in the sacraments there is a power which builds and nourishes the power of faith since, through the sacraments which combine visible signs and symbols with words that are heard and deeds that are done, God's presence to persons is communicated in a more concrete way: made present in a manner which reflects how we exist as human beings (acts of sense interacting with acts of understanding). As had been the case in Old Testament days, sacraments can be seen to function as representations or as signs that point to the faith of the community. We have the sacraments of the Old Law and the sacraments of the New Law and both sets of sacraments, through the manner of their incarnate being, represent or communicate the truths and saving realities of true religious belief. However, in a point of difference which points to the uniqueness of the Christian sacraments, the sacraments are to be understood to exist as causes: causes of grace. Through the instrumentality of the Church's sacraments, through the mediation of the Church's sacraments, divine things are presented to human beings. Divine things are brought into the constitution of our human world to effect internal changes which exist within our world, changing our world. “The invisible is made visible.” As grace comes to us through Christ's incarnation (the mediation which exists in Christ's incarnation), grace comes to us through the incarnate being of the Church's sacraments which come to us from God, existing in a manner which

³Ott, p. 407.

points to their divine institution. If, in order to reach human beings in a manner which respects human freedom, God the Son took on a human nature (entering our human world in term of flesh and blood), it is along the same lines (for essentially the same reasons) that the Church's sacraments exist in the way that they do. Their manner of existence best meets the human situation and so best serves as means (as causes) for the bringing of divine things into our human world.

Chapter 3 tackles how we should best about the signification of the arguments: how it can be said that the sacrament re-presents divine things or, in other words, re-enacts or communicates afresh to us the truths of the faith in a way that is meant to effect changes in how persons think, understand, judge, and act. Sacraments must be understood to exist as signs or as signifiers of meaning which exist in a manner which is suited to the nature of our human cognition: how our acts of cognition exist and operate. In other words, we begin with acts of sense and what is known initially through our acts of sense but, while we begin with acts of sense, our acts of cognition are meant to beyond more than what is merely given to us in acts of sense. Through the acts and data of sense we move toward apprehensions of meaning which can be known or expressed through what exists as a word or meaning. Within the givens of sense which exist with respect to our acts of sense, if we begin with the combination of actions and words that is constitutive of a given sacrament (the performance of a sacrament), through sensing this combination, something internal is given and communicated to us. Something which exists in an internal way becomes known to us through what we are sensing. Something which exists in an internal way comes to exist within us also in an internal way. Words and actions are seen to have a symbolic significance and this significance can be grasped and expressed through our acts of understanding, beginning with our acts of sensing. The changes which occur within ourselves as this impinges on what is real and what is not real come to find an external form of expression which changes our human world. In the signification of the sacraments, we are not limited to effecting a change immediately within the consciousness of a person. Sacraments, in their signification, bring to us what exists as past, present, and future. Events that come to us from the past exist again in our present life; through sacraments, grace is caused within human souls (grace is brought to be within a person's life); and also through the sacraments, persons are orientated to what exists as future. We think about the last things: hell, heaven, and purgatory and the judgements which await us. Through the sacraments which have a kind of bodily base, the lives of souls are touched and transformed. Through matter, one moves towards the spirit as, from the spirit, one moves into matter and the configuration of material conditions which is constitutive of life as it exists within parameters of space and time.

Chapter 4 argues that, according to Catholic practice and belief, sacraments exist more than as signs but also as causes. We can distinguish between signification and causation but we cannot have one without the other. A point of view which restricts sacraments to functions of signification is to be regarded as too limited...truncated. Perhaps, we can say that the absence of this limitation in the Catholic understanding of the sacraments is grounded in the efficacy and the power of Christ's incarnation. Christ's incarnation is to be regarded as a species of paradigm: as *the paradigm*. And so, if we think about Christ's signification and the kind of causality which exists in Christ's incarnation (who he was as incarnate and what he did as incarnate), we can understand better why Christ's sacraments exist as more than signs. They exist as tools that are employed by Christ to effect certain ends or purposes. They exist as causes, effecting certain results within the interior life of human beings although, admittedly, the causality of the sacraments is grounded in everything which is signified in and through the sacraments: everything which refers to what has been given to us in salvation history. Old Testament roots should be obvious. If we want to understand how or why we can speak of a proper causality

which exists with respect to the Christian sacraments, we can refer to how they exist as perfect signifiers of meaning. From the perfection of their signification, we can refer to their causality or we can infer the existence of a proper causality. The presence of a perfect form of outward signification leads to consequences and ramifications with respect to what happens within human souls. How sacraments exist as both tools and causes is best understood if we refer to their divine author and how they exist as divine instrumental causes which work with the secondary causes which exist within the order of creation. Hence, in this context, we are to see Christ as their principle agent. Through secondary causes, Christ administers his sacraments. Our inability to cope with the fullness of Christ's presence in the context of our present life perhaps explains why, in the context of our present life, we can only relate to Christ in a manner which is appropriately sacramental (working through secondary causes).

Chapter 5 argues, about sacraments, that sacraments belong to an order of being or an order of reality which belongs somewhere between what exists contingently within our naturally existing world as a naturally existing thing and what exists non-contingently within a higher order of being and meaning which refers to an order of transcendence (supernatural being versus natural being). They have been instituted by Christ. Hence, they cannot be seen as conventionally existing things: things that we have made as human beings, things that we have made because they suit our fancy and so, in this context, they would exist as creations of our willing and not as creations of our thinking and understanding. They exist as a consequence of acts of understanding which belong primarily to God (acts of understanding that, to some extent, we can participate in through our acts of understanding which would exist as acts of obedience in a context which is conditioned by revelation and the events of Christ's incarnate life, a life which led to Christ's offer of self on the cross). These entities, these realities come to us from that which exists beyond a world which is constituted by physical, biological nature. But, while these things do not exist as naturally existing things, things that exist in a ready made fashion, they are brought into being by a working with naturally existing things that are adapted to serve new functions and purposes: existing as channels of grace. If we want to talk about the possible stability of a sacrament, yes, they lack the stability which belongs to naturally existing things although, on the other hand, they have a stability which comes to them, which belongs to them as measures (as effective or instrumental causes) which have been instituted by Christ, acting through his Church here in this way and time and here in this other way and time to achieve ends or goals which are greater than what exists *per se* as a sacrament, all sacraments existing to achieve higher, transcendent purposes. The sacraments, as constitutives of God's Church, cannot be abolished through any kind of ecclesial act. Contingent things have been divinized and lifted to serve divine ends. For example, in the Eucharist, we can speak about the reality of God's divine presence. However, the reality of God's sacramental presence is to be distinguished from the reality of God's divine presence which would exist in an unrestricted fashion. The sacramental presence exists to bring human beings toward union with an unrestricted presence which could be also given to them. If, with grace works within human beings to effect acts of faith which unite a human person to God, with respect to the sacraments, grace works from without to unite a human person to God. If we would prefer to speak in an idiom (employing an analogy) which refers to how acts of meaning function in human life and how, though our sensing, inquiring, thinking, understanding, and judging, we can move towards apprehensions of meaning that are constitutive of our human world (building our human world), in a like way, the Church's sacraments, Christ's sacraments are to be regarded as acts of meaning which are to be regarded as constitutive of God's Kingdom as this kingdom can exist for us as God's children. The carrying of meaning which exists through the instrumentality of the sacraments is a carrying which is constitutive.

Chapter 6 refers to the sacraments as rightly existing for the purpose of effecting our salvation. All the sacraments were instituted for this purpose as means for communicating grace to us as human beings. Through the sacraments, from that which exists as uncreated grace (the uncreated grace being God), we get that which exists as created grace. Something of God's grace enters into our created, contingent condition and so, for this reason, this grace can be lost and yet replenished through the causality which exists in the administration of the sacraments. But though it is true to say that the sacraments exist to effect our salvation, their divine origin points to purposes and ends which refer to the life and being of God. While nothing needs to be added to increase or to add to God's perfection, it cannot be doubted also that, in the administration of the sacraments, ends and purposes are achieved which do not belong to human ends and purposes. The worship of God, the giving of glory to God, exists as an end in itself. We invoke a principle which, philosophically, can be said to date from Aristotle who had said that certain things are good simply because they exist and not because of what they do or accomplish. To God is owed a devotion or worship which is not to be done for the purpose of achieving any higher object or aim. The cultic worship of God which occurs through the celebration of the sacraments recalls or points a metaphysical religious principle which unabashedly notes that "the angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory." Citing words from Viktor Frankl's work, *Man's Search for Meaning*: "love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire." As a basic first principle, to God everything properly belongs and so, through the institution of the sacraments, everything is brought to an order and a fulfillment which transcends that which we can understand by ourselves as human beings, effecting goods and values which only God grasps and understands. The law of Christian redemption as it exists and enters in human history is vectored or joined to a higher law which refers to God as he exists in himself. "Nothing is so useful to man as to adore God." In other words, when we think about how the sacraments were instituted by Christ as a means of bringing to us to himself, we see how all the sacraments reflect or, in a way, re-enact, bring into our own lives, the way of Christ: freely accepting suffering and death, dying with Christ, in order to rise with him. This kind of reception which occurs in baptism makes possible for us a further or heightened appropriation which can occur through the administration of the other sacraments, the celebration of the Eucharist existing as a summit or crown in the administration of the sacraments. Ordinarily speaking, God works through the sacraments; he works through the mediation of the Church and the kind of human cooperation which exists within the Church in order to being human acts of faith to a higher degree, level of perfection. While we can admit that, directly, through the communication of operative grace, God can directly work within human hearts and soul to effect a turning toward him and the existence of divine things, this initial turning is cultivated and nourished through the cooperative grace which exists in the corporate life of the Church. Human individuals are more fully, more perfectly brought into union with God through the self-offering or oblation which occurs at Mass in the celebration of the Eucharist. With Christ, we offer ourselves to God; we go through, we experience in ourselves a kind of dying, and, by this dying, we are saved, we are brought to new life.

Chapter 7 begins to address what belongs to the nature or the intelligibility of the Eucharist since, in its meaning and action and significance, the Eucharist exists as an intensification of why sacraments exist and what they seek to achieve. The Eucharist is "the sacrament *par excellence*." If we want to speak about the locus of this intensification, we refer to how Christ exists in the Eucharist. Christ exists through the cult of sacrifice and also through the reception which exists when Christ's body and blood is given to the faithful for their consumption. Aquinas conceives of sacrifice and the reception of sacrament together. Maybe we can see that these two aspects exist together in a way which each depends on the other in the context of a dynamic polar unity. Perhaps, we can say about Aquinas that

the Eucharist exists as the perpetuation of an historical event, a perpetuation which occurs in a sacramental way, using means that are sacramental as words, deeds, and material causes are used to represent transcendent realities. Aquinas employs three major concepts. First, past, present, and future are joined together: a past event is remembered in a way which directs persons toward eventual union with God. Second, human believers, human participants are healed and, at the same time, God is worshipped and glorified. Third, by means of external things that are present in words, deeds, and material causes, an inner reality is communicated (an inner reality is made present) and this inner reality is something which overcomes and overpowers the external means that are used to represent it and to communicate it.

Chapter 8 begins to look at the Eucharist from the viewpoint of Catholic doctrine and the viewpoint of devotional practice where both acknowledge the fact that only the Eucharist contains Christ's body and blood. The Eucharist is unique as a sacrament although it exists as one of the seven sacraments albeit, the most powerful of all the sacraments. As Aquinas argues, three factors can be mentioned: Christ's substantial presence in the Eucharist, the role of all the other sacraments to lead believers to the Eucharist, and the employments of rituals in such a way in the other sacraments in a manner which leads to the Eucharist. However, as Aquinas argues, all the other sacraments function as communicators of grace...as efficient causes or, in other words, all sacraments function as instrumental causes that are employed by Christ to communicate his grace through means which work with created, contingent things. "Now nothing prevents an instrumental cause from producing a more powerful effect." Christ's body and blood is conformed in the Eucharist in a way which turns it into an instrumental cause. We speak about sacramental signification (the *sacramentum*) and the thing or reality which refers to a final cause...the *res* (as the inner spiritual reality) which refers here to the grace of charity which builds the community of the Church as this grace is communicated by the Eucharist as distinct from the being of the sacramental matter which, in the case of the Eucharist, is the signifying power of Christ's real presence under the appearance of bread and wine.

Chapter 9 notes that, while Aquinas speaks about the Eucharist as a sacrament (as a *sacramentum*) and this is always his context, he notes that sacrifice (how the Eucharist exists as a sacrifice) exists as a kind of first principle that enjoys a perfection that is proper to it. A priest celebrating Mass accomplishes something which is of infinite value apart from any use that is made of the sacrament in terms of distribution (although the use or application exists as a perfection, albeit, a second perfection). Hence, what is key is the consecration which occurs during the celebration of Mass: a consecration which takes bread and wine as substances (as truly existing things) and, by introducing an order of meaning that is given in words of consecration, the bread and wine lose their reality as things or substances because, now, they are brought into the being of another greater intelligible unity which is the being of Christ's Body and Blood, the being of Christ's reality, his real presence. Vonier refers to making the sacrament or what could be described as words that could be translated to mean: "confecting the Eucharist." This is what is central at Mass. In the sacrament as sacrifice, the Eucharist accomplishes why or how it exists as a sacrament. In any subsequent distribution or partaking of the sacrament, we have a use of the sacrament and the achievement of a second perfection.

Chapter 10 deals with how, subjectivity, we are to experience and receive the aforementioned teaching which says that, in the Eucharist, we have a perfect sacrifice. There is no immolation (no destruction) and, as a sacrifice, it is utterly unique. It is not a natural event. It is not a natural sacrifice but a sacrifice which can only be understood from a supernatural perspective, working with laws and an intelligibility that belong to another dimension: something which is absolutely supernatural and not

relatively supernatural. Its basic first principle is that which is known through faith and not through our proportionate acts of human cognition as these exist in our acts of sensing, understanding, and judging. Between a natural sacrifice and a sacramental sacrifices, very great differences exist. The latter is unbloody. A mystical drama. The only point of identity is Christ as the sacrificial victim. The spiritual sacrifice at Mass represents the earlier, historical, natural sacrifice but it does not complete it. It represents Christ's historical sacrifice but in a manner which greatly differs from how the first sacrifice was put into effect and executed. All gruesomeness is removed. It is possible for us to drink Christ's blood and eat his body because of how the sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated. Christ's makes our communion possible; it does it in a way which respects our human condition: what we are able to do and what also holds us back and restricts us.

Chapter 11 argues that the words, gestures, and rites of the Mass indicate that a sacrifice is occurring in the celebration of the Christian Eucharist. One does not move from the reality of Christ's body and blood and then, from there, go the external forms that present in the Eucharist in the consecration of bread and wine to form or to become Christ's body and blood. From that which occurs externally or materially, we move to that which exists interiorly. We move from that which is given to us in our acts of sense to that which is given to us in how our acts of understanding are tied to our acts of faith. Both refer to that which exists as something that is not directly accessible to our acts of sense. A real change occurs but not through some form of crude imposition from above (an imposition which resembles an arbitrary exercise of authority). An exercise of authority does exist but it would with created things and the intelligibility of created things to take these same things and put them in a new context: a context which refers to a higher level or being of reality. It is suggested that a fitting relation exists between the use of bread and wine and the introduction of words of consecration. The Eucharist exists because it has been instituted by Christ and it is implied that the use of bread and wine is not to be seen as some sort of convention but, instead, as a wise choice that had been eternally intended by God. It is suggested, along these lines, that substitutes can be conveniently used in the place of bread and wine. Christ's authority can work in a simple way (it can be simply imposed) but this is to be distinguished from an exercise of authority that works with created things and which respects the nature of created things, working from one species of being to a higher, larger, more comprehensive specification of being. The signification of the rite points to an inner reality which is as real as proximate function or proximate purpose of the signification.

In chapter 12, it is noted that questions are about how we are to conceive of the sacrifice of Christ: how we to speak about the offering of Christ which occurs in the Eucharist. At the Last Supper, Our Lord offers himself. Christ is both the one who sacrifices and he is the one who is sacrificed. Now, if at Mass, this sacrifice of Christ is perpetuated through time, we can ask more precisely how we are to see Christ as the victim who is offered. It is acknowledged that the priest functions as an *alter Christus* in offering up the eucharistic sacrifice (another Christ). However, a problem has arisen in Catholic theology. Vonier notes that, in response to Protestant conceptions which downplay the realism of the Eucharistic sacrifice (denying that any real sacrifice occurs and denying the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist), many Catholic theologians have responded through proposing an ultra form of realism which wants to say that Christ himself is sacrificed in the Eucharist. This proposition, of course, is not entirely wrong. However, there is a tendency to avoid introducing a qualification which speaks about Christ's sacramental presence. Yes, Christ is really present but he is present not in a natural way but in a sacramental way. What is sacrificed is not so much Christ, the person of Christ, but Christ's body and blood. We recall that, to speak about person, is to speak about a distinct substance or thing that exists with an intellectual nature (having an intellectual nature). We use a definition that Aquinas

proposed and worked with. Hence, within this context, to avoid confusion, we distinguish between that which exists as a person and that which exists as body and blood. The two are not the same. Person, as a specification of being, is something greater. It transcends that which exists as body and blood. Hence: Christ's being, Christ's personhood is a greater thing. If, in Christ's natural death, we have a separation of body from blood (the shedding of Christ's blood separates the body and blood of Christ), in the eucharistic sacrifice, this death is re-enacted sacramentally where, also in the eucharistic sacrifice, body and blood are separated. Bread and wine is offered up in terms of Christ's body and blood and so, in the change which occurs, we have a change in that which exists as bread and wine. It is taken up into a higher order of things. These become Christ's body and blood. Change occurs in this context but there is no change in who and what Christ is as a distinct person; nor can we speak about any kind of intrinsic change when we speak about Christ's body and blood as this exists in itself (in a natural way). In the sacrifice which If we turn to the principle of concomitance, we find a way to say that in either the reception of Christ's Body or in the reception of Christ's Blood, Christ is fully given to a communicant. To fully receive Christ, it is not necessary to receive both the Body and the Blood, the consecrated bread and the consecrated wine. Where, in terms of sacrifice, we cannot go beyond that which exists as Christ's Body and Blood, if we attend to Christ's Body and Blood as a point of departure, then within the context of this perspective, we can speak about our fully receiving Christ. As we admit that, in his natural state, Christ can exist in different states (as living but mortal, as both dead and mortal, and as resurrected), then, from this perspective, in the Eucharist we experience Christ as he is within a given natural state. However, as we have noted, the making or confecting of the eucharistic sacrifice does not effect these differing natural states. Vonier concludes that the Church's belief in the existence of sacrifice in the Eucharist is a theological deduction that has entered into the Church's faith. No special revelation is claimed in affirming the existence of sacrifice. Instead, if we attend to the eucharistic rite as this has come down to us from Our Lord and the Apostles, then we must conclude that everything points to the existence of a sacrifice that is enacted in the Eucharist. As Our Lord sacrificed himself at Calvary, in representing this sacrifice, the Church re-enacts this sacrifice through the ministrations of sacrificing priesthood.

In chapter 13, Vonier address three questions; he seeks to speak about three distinct things: representation, application, and immolation. With respect to representation, the historicity of Christ's Incarnation and the historicity of Christ's saving death at Calvary is emphasized. During the Eucharist, the separation of Christ's Body and Blood is represented or it is presented again as this separation occurs at the time of Christ's saving death. Through the sacramental elements of the Eucharist, we are directly related to Christ's Body and Blood as this was separated at the time of this sacrificial death and, by this means, we are linked to Christ's divine person (however, not in terms of Person as this relates to Christ before his death nor in terms of Person as he now exists in Heaven). Even in death, despite the separation in death of Christ's Body and Blood in death, Christ's person is joined to these elements in a way which explains why we cannot speak about the absence of Christ in his personhood. We note in this context that care always needs to be exercised here since we must distinguish between a devotional species of language and theological specifications of meaning which employ a different kind of language and which may tend to say something that differs from devotional language. We avoid misunderstandings if we understand the Eucharist in constant tandem with the events and setting of his saving death as this occurred on Calvary. Vonier emphasizes again how the Eucharist represents Christ's saving death in a special, unique way because, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, we have also the thing or the reality of Christ's Body and Blood. With respect to the question of application, it is briefly noted, through the immolation of Christ on the Cross and through the perpetuation of this same immolation which occurs in the celebration of the Eucharist, a good is achieved which is the value or

the worth of Christ's saving death: a death that is wrought to achieve divine purposes for us that cannot be achieved in any kind of better way. We admit that there is a good which exists in Christ's saving death. We talk about Good Friday and so, if there is a good in Christ's saving death, when we participate in this death by participating in the offering of Christ, representing it in such a way that the good of Christ's saving death is communicated to us, entering our human world to introduce a vector which can change our world from within. We have already distinguished the good of the Eucharistic sacrifice as this exists in itself from the good which exists in the reception of Christ in the distribution of Communion. When referring specifically to Christ's immolation on the Cross at Calvary (and none of us denies this immolation: what happened to Christ on Mt. Calvary), because in this Eucharist, this immolation of Christ is perpetuated (it is part of what happens in the effecting of Christ's death), for this reason we speak about a sacramental form of immolation which occurs whenever the Eucharist is celebrated. Hence, when the sacramental reality becomes present for us at Mass, Christ's presence or we say that the mode of this presence is that of Christ who has just been put to death. Christ's death is immediately ordered to our possible reception of it that would occur by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Although, we have admitted, through the consecrated Eucharistic elements we are directly related to Christ's person as he is joined to His Body and Blood (incarnationally and sacramentally), it should be noted too that, through the principle of concomitance, since in receiving the Eucharist and any element therein we receive Christ, we can go on to say that, through this mediation, we also receive Christ as he exists in his glorious state, in a condition of resurrection. In this way, through this kind of mediation, we can say and perhaps understand why the meaning and sense of devotional language is not entirely without truth and worth. Indeed, through the Eucharist, Christ who exists in Heaven comes down to us and makes himself present to us in the Eucharist.

In chapter 14, Vonier addresses a question which asks about how we can speak about a oneness which exists between Christ's sacrifice at Calvary and the sacrifice which occurs every time a priest says Mass. Kind of fascinating that he begins by referring to a Protestant objection which tends not to see how this oneness can be properly conceived and understood. On the one hand, they and we also refer and believe in the sufficiency of Christ's saving death as this occurred historically at the time of his saving death on Mount Calvary. Hence, if we grant this sufficiency, it is not necessary, it should not be necessary to speak about a second sacrifice that occurs whenever a Catholic Mass is said. The plurality or multiplicity should point to a lack of oneness and, in one way, this is true. If we attend to these questions, if we attend to the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary and the sacrifice that occurs whenever a Mass is said, our senses refer to the presence of a multiplicity. If we speak about one or oneness, Christ's sacrifice on Calvary is one sacrifice and, at subsequent Masses, we have two, three, and so on. One refers to an instant or instance. However, if we refer to the sacramental nature of every Mass, if we refer to how the Eucharist, how its celebration exists as a sacrament, then we can begin to see and understand that the sacrifice which occurs at Mass perpetuates or communicates Christ's saving death as it has occurred on Mount Calvary. The representation is not a second natural act which could be added to a first natural act of sacrifice as Christ experienced his sacrifice on Mount Calvary. Instead, at Mass, Christ's historic sufficient sacrifice is communicated through time and space. An historic event, the same historic event, is being made present continually and this representation cuts across the limitations of space and time. Vonier adds a caution by speaking against a point of view which speaks about how each Mass exists as a component or a part that is leading to some kind of universal sacrifice. As Vonier notes, at the Last Supper, the sacrifice that is given or represented takes its meaning or its reality by an anticipation of the death, the sacrifice, which occurs at Mount Calvary (that which was then a future event). What is key is the salvific significance of the historical death and how, sacramentally, this same death is being always made present at the celebration of every Eucharist at

Mass. As an aside: this sacramental union, in turn, helps to explain why women cannot be ordained as priests. In Catholic sacramental theology, a connatural relation must exist between the use of signs and what signs are meant to represent. A reason of some kind exists to explain why water is used in baptism and not some other kind of fluid and the same kind of reasoning explains why wine is used at Mass instead of water in the celebration of the sacrament. Since every Mass represents or makes present Christ's sacrifice at Calvary to the extent that this is possible for us (working with contingent incarnate causes), we better understand why it is unthinkable to take a woman and to then think of her as someone who, at Mass, acts in the person of Christ as an *alter Christus*. Such a move would undermine the notion and belief that, at Mass, an event which occurs within time and space is communicating to us and making present another event which also occurs within time and space. Sacramental causality needs to be clearly distinguished from other kinds of causality that exist since, here, we use naturally existing signs to represent or to make present supernatural realities of one kind or another, working from a possible connatural relation (an intelligible link) which would exist between a given thing which exists within our contingent world order and moving to eternally existing things through the kind of mediation which exists in and through the concrete singular reality of Christ's Incarnation. The means or medium is that which we mean and which we revere and worship when we think and speak about Christ's sacred humanity (the reality of this humanity).

In chapter 15, Vonier elaborates on how or why we should speak about the oneness which exists between Christ's sacrifice in Calvary and the eucharistic sacrifice which occurs at Mass, arguing this oneness by referring to the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas and also noting that this same teaching was incorporated and adopted by the Council of Trent when, in 1551, it issued a decree on the Eucharist, cited as the *Decree Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist*. Vonier refers to a discussion in the *Summa Theologiae* where Aquinas argues that Christ is immolated in a natural and in a historical way on Mount Calvary and that he is also immolated sacramentally whenever Mass is said. However, what explains this immolation? And, in response, it is noted that it is the same body which is being immolated. The body which is immolated on Mount Calvary does not differ from the body that is immolated at Mass although, at Mass, the body which is present and which is immolated in sacramentally present as a perfect image. Images can be imperfect. But, if they are perfect, how can we distinguish between what they image or reflect and the image as it exists in itself? Is not a perfect image something that is essentially referential to what it images or represents? A perfect image has nothing in it which takes away or which distracts from that which it images. So much depends or so much is meant or defined if we can speak about the presence of a perfect image and how this type of imagery is to be understood. To understand this argument more fully, and as a kind of aside, one can delve into Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, which first appeared in its German edition in 1960. Gadamer was not too satisfied with the kind of neo-Kantian theory of aesthetics that was then commonly accepted in Germany. According to this theory, given Kant's understanding of human cognition, the subjectivity of this cognition was divided or it was separated from that which exists as the order of subjectivity – within this context, in attending to the role and work of art, in beholding a work of art, one refers or one attends to the consciousness of the responsible artist. One is moved to think about an artist's subjectivity and what exists within it. However, in a reversal of perspective, Gadamer returns to an earlier theory of art that appears to be grounded in the philosophy of Plotinus. In experiencing any great work of art, our consciousness is not primarily turned to think about the consciousness of an artist but that which a work of art represents or which, in some way, it points to. If we behold somebody's portrait, do we not think about the person that a portrait portrays? In some way, is not the person who is portrayed somehow present to us through the portrait? Do we not have a sort of communion which exists between that which a work of art points to and a person who is perceiving

and appreciating a given work of art? I think that we find this kind of thinking in Aquinas when he speaks about what we have whenever we have a perfect image of something. Beginning in the Old Testament and more strongly in the New Testament and then subsequently through the Mass and the priesthood, the person of Christ is being represented. The being of Christ is always being made present in an incarnate way in a number of different ways although, most especially, through the celebration of Mass. Through the person of the priest, Christ is being represented and also through the consecration of bread and wine Christ is being represented or presented although, in this case, we refer specifically to Christ's body and blood. Given Christ's saving death on Mount Calvary and the celebrations of Mass since then, always, at Mass, Christ's saving death is functioning as an instrumental cause, effecting our salvation, communicating the saving graces that come to us through the repetition, reiteration, and perpetuation of Christ's saving death and which come to us in a heightened way through the reception of Christ's body and blood in communion. The Council of Trent, through its language, reiterates this teaching that we can find if we look at the earlier teaching of Aquinas. A key factor here is an understanding about what is meant by remembering. In remembering certain key events in our human history, do not our acts of remembering or re-enactment restate anew or continue to repeat the message or meaning of an earlier event? For an example here, think about how, in the civic order, in the US on every July 4, the 1776 Declaration of Independence is read to assembled persons. We notice how everyone claps and cheers after this document is read and we find that, again, as before, the authority of the British Crown is being rejected. On this note, is there really any difference between the initial, original reading and proclamation in 1776 of the Declaration of Independence and whenever this Declaration is read again in later years? Throughout, we continue to find the same disobedience that the original document manifests... On this point, nothing has really changed.

Chapter 16 on the sacrifice of the Cross indicates that, although, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross has often been alluded to (it exists as a kind of backdrop for us) and although its truth has been admitted (at Mass, Christ's body and blood is offered to God the Father as a sacrifice), some thought needs to be given when now we try to speak about the nature of Christ's sacrifice. We have the natural sacrifice on Mt. Calvary and we have the eucharistic sacrifice in the celebration of Mass. Vonier notes that he questions the value of beginning with some kind of general theory about sacrifice and then attempting to apply this toward a possible understanding of Christ's unique sacrifice. As he speaks about this kind of approach, one takes something that exists at a lower level and one tries to understand something which exists at a higher level. Vonier, however, does not advert to the fact that, in analogical acts of understanding which occur in theology, there being no other kind of understanding which is proper to the kind of understanding which occurs in our theological labors, we must work from an adequate knowledge of contingent things and from there move toward an indirect understanding of divine things. Why, here, he questions the value of this approach seems to lie in this belief that, in this context, this approach takes away from the efficient causality of Christ's sacrifice. So great is the causality of Christ's sacrifice, so massive and extensive are the effects that we do not do it justice if we try to apply the considerations of a philosophy of sacrifice to what needs to be considered when we attend to a theology of sacrifice. Too much would be omitted. And so, if we focus our gaze and tend to the primordial character of Christ's sacrifice, it is from the perspective of this sacrifice that we understand the sacrifices of the Old Law. If the sacrifices of the Old Law exist as prefigurations of Christ's sacrifice, it should be obvious to us that we do not study the sacrifices of the Old Law in order to understand Christ's sacrifice but, rather, the sacrifices of the Old Law are understood if we begin with what is contained in Christ's sacrifice. Hence, if we focus on Christ's sacrifice, we should not forget (should not omit) its bodily nature. The sacrifice does not consist essentially of a sacrifice of the mind (that which is given in Christ's understanding) nor does this sacrifice consist essentially in some kind

of sacrifice which exists with respect to Christ's will. We know of course (scripture tells us this) that, in Christ's life, if we recall Christ's agony in the garden, we can behold the sacrifice of Christ's mind and the sacrifice of his will. These things are not absent. However, even if they are there, they are preparatory to a sacrifice which is the sacrifice of Christ's body. Sacrifices of mind and will lead to another form of sacrifice that is somehow more basic or fundamental. Maybe we can use a vulgarized way of speaking about this when we say that, when Christ offers his body and blood, it is in this sacrifice that the "rubber meets the road." As human beings, we know that what we do in our deeds, what we do with our bodies, speaks more loudly than what we say with our words, what we do with our tongues. As Christians, as Catholics, we are asked to communicate, spread the Good News but only if it is absolutely necessary, we use words. Our deeds speak more profoundly. In any case, when we return to the offering of Christ's body and blood, we advert to a sacrifice of something that is entirely pure and unblemished and, because this is so, the offering, the sacrifice, is more pleasing to God. While Vonier notes, early on, that the sacrifices of the Old Law are covenanted (in some way, they are prescribed by God), this suggests to us that, in some way, Christ's own sacrifice is demanded or it is prescribed by God the Father. No other kind of sacrifice will do even if the giving of other sacrifices is not entirely without value. Hence, if Christ's sacrifice is specifically covenanted, if that which is put into effect by God to achieve a redemptive work that only he adequately understands, then, again, we say or we refer to a quality of divine institution which belongs to Christ's sacrifice. For some strange reason that we do not understand, God the Father choose this way of effecting our salvation. Christ's sacrifice of self best indicates how we are to follow in Christ's way, being ready and willing to sacrifice ourselves in the same way. I would draw this inference. Now, as a point of complication, it is to be noted that Vonier refers to other elements that are distinguished when we try and speak articulately about Christ's passion. The sacrifice is not the only variable that is in play. References are made to such as charity, redemption, satisfaction, and merit. It is no easy task to enter into an understanding which can know what these different things are and how they all relate to each other. If we are aware of sacrifices that occur with respect to mind, will, and flesh, perhaps we can understand or can better understand why, from these distinctions, other distinctions are to be noticed and attended to. Easily, for the sake of simplicity, we are tempted to take Christ's sacrifice of himself and to equate this with just about everything else. It is commonly believed that, from Christ's sacrifice of self, there exists our redemption. This is all quite true but, for the sake of a greater clarity or a deeper understanding, we want to find an order which distinguishes these things and which joins these different things to each other. The sacrifice of Christ is one variable among other variables even as we note and admit that Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is something which sits at the center of things. Because it exists as something that is willed by God as a way of reconciling us with himself (it is more pleasing to God than anything else), conversely or appositely, it best indicates to us how we may respond to God in the manner of our own life and living. The bodily focus or the bodily nature of this sacrifice indicates the extent or the range of the demands which are made. The incarnateness or the embodiedness of the sacrifice more tightly bonds us as incarnate beings with Christ in his incarnate being. An interpretation that is overly spiritual or which is too spiritual is too insufficient.

Chapter 17 on transubstantiation concludes on a note which refers to the limits of "sentiment and imagination" and how we best move toward a true understanding of transubstantiation if we attend to metaphysics and if we work with metaphysical categories that are initially grounded in the kind of world or the kind of being which belongs to our human acts of cognition. Our human acts of cognition are proportionate to that which we know through our human acts of cognition and, on the basis of that which we know, we can move toward an understanding of things that transcends what we can properly know through those actions which are constitutive of our cognition. By a kind of implication, we move

to analogical acts of understanding. In discussing transubstantiation, Vonier begins with an emphasis that points to the power of God. This power is a very great thing and it is expressed in different ways. Its primacy serves as our best point of departure if we are to be at peace with the Church's belief that bread and wine at Mass is changed to become Christ's body and blood. If Our Lord at the Last Supper did this very thing and if he told us to do this same thing in memory of himself, we should be surprised that, through the power of God as this works through the consecration of priests, bread and wine is can be changed into Christ's body and blood. The focus, as Vonier notes, is not on the bread and wine (which would exist as secondary causes) but on the primary causality of what God does with bread and wine and what he can do with bread and wine. Transubstantiation best explains the change. It is not the sacrament itself. It is not the Real Presence itself and how it exists in a sacramental way. But, instead, it is the explanation. The principle of sufficient reason can be invoked to talk about how or why certain things exist. The direct causality of God is invoked to explain the creation of the rational human soul and so, in the same way, this causality is invoked to explain the change which occurs at Mass when, through gestures using certain material means, certain words are spoken. As changes within human souls are effected in baptism, a change is effected in the identity of bread and wine. Reference is made to the appearance of bread and wine and how the appearances do not change. But, the reality that the appearances refer to changes. The nature changes. The intelligibility changes. The focus on this reality, identifying it as something that cannot be directly known or associated with appearances – this is what is key in the meaning and the truth of transubstantiation. What which was once this now becomes something else entirely. If changes can occur in the indwelling of a given nature, if a given nature that exists within a thing is replaced by another another nature which exists within the same thing, do we not have the kind of change which exists in transubstantiation? Transubstantiation has a basis which exists within the kind of change which occurs within our natural world – the world that is known by us through our created acts of human reason – although, now, the context is a production that ensues from an uncreated cause, works from an uncreated cause. The unrespected power of this agency cannot be set aside or ignored...it is in fact the main thing if we are to understand what happens in the transubstantiation of bread and wine. A reality which does not belong to the things of this world comes to exist within the things of this world. The change, in a way, does not exist as a horizontal kind of change. Certainly not limited to the things of this world. But, rather, what we have is something that comes from above in a sacramental way through a manner of being which refers to the order of our salvation and redemption (an order which supposes the order of created being but which works with this order to change it from within).

Chapter 18 on difficulties, after referring to Berengarius as the author of a heretical belief which denied the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, focuses on a difficulty that is experienced when we admit that, in transubstantiation, not everything is changed. A change of substance occurs but not a change of accident. It is admitted that, before we can speak about such a thing, it is difficult for us to understand how we are to think about changes of substance where this type of change is so total that nothing remains in substance from what had been before. Totally, the reality of what had been before no longer exists. We have already referred to a kind of change which exists as an annihilation. However, there seems to exist a tension when we think about the totality of this kind of change versus the absence of totality in change when we speak about the difference which exists between that which is a substance and that which refers to accidents. However, as a point of reference that Vonier refers to on more than one occasion, these difficulties exist for us as our problems because of a failure that exists within our understanding. We tend to work with apprehensions of meaning that are tinged with material analogies of one kind or another. Vonier does not explicitly refer to “material analogies.” I borrow the term from Augustine's work *On the Trinity*. But, where Augustine speaks about material

analogies and their lack of value in the work of theology, Vonier speaks about the limitations of our human understanding and how we often confuse one order of being with other orders of being because we fail to distinguish between different orders of meaning that can be experienced by us through our acts of understanding. More Thomistically, we would speak about a lack of philosophical grounding that is missing in a sense and use of a good metaphysics. A lack of differentiation in metaphysics leads to a certain lack of differentiation in our theology and confusions which emerge and exist as pseudo-problems. From a philosophical or metaphysical perspective, we can say that no real distinction exists between Christ's natural body and Christ's sacramental body as this exists in the Eucharist. And, at the same time, we can say that a difference in mode exists between the two. Because being is known through acts of understanding and not through acts of sensing, we can identify or speak about an identity in being which exists between Christ's natural body and Christ's sacramental body. Our senses refer us to a difference that exists between the two. Our senses note this difference; apprehend this difference. But, when we shift into our acts of understanding, through our reflective acts of understanding, our judgments, we know that Christ is present to us either way: whether through the presence of his natural body or the kind of presence which exists within the sacrament. Through either kind of presence, we have Christ's real presence. However, on the other hand, we can speak about the presence of a real distinction, a distinction which refers to different modes of presence. The manner of presence varies and, at the same time, the fact or actuality of Christ's presence is something that we may not doubt. We better understand how and why natural being and sacramental being can differ from each other and why and how they are ordered to each other if we can determine a kind of hierarchy which exists within the order of things, the order of being, when we think about Christ in his divinity, Christ in his humanity, and Christ as He is present in the Eucharist. We encounter three modes. In terms of being, in referring to the person of Christ, an identity exists across these three modes even as real differences exist among the modes.

Chapter 19 on concomitance introduces a principle that is to be added to what is known by us when we refer to the Eucharist as a sacrament. Vonier notes that, in all the other sacraments, a perfect union exists between what a sacrament means (what it signifies) and what it accomplishes or what it effects. In the sacrament of baptism, in the use of words and in the rite of baptismal washing, a soul is cleansed of the guilt of sin (personal and original). Nothing more, nothing less. But, if we turn to the Eucharist, as a consequence of transubstantiation, we are in the presence of realities that exist independently of ourselves, of the actions that have brought these same realities into being. The change of bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood transcends the saying of words and the performance of the rite. If, in the presence of Christ's body and blood, we thus have Christ's presence (Christ's sacramental presence, no more no less), then, through concomitance, we have the presence of everything that normally attends the being or the givenness, the presence of Christ. Distinguished more exactly, through consecration and transubstantiation, we have the presence of Christ's body and blood; but, through concomitance, the whole Christ is present to us although this concomitance is given to us through or from the sacramental kind of existence which exists when we refer to how the Eucharist exists as a sacrament and how we should distinguish a sacramental kind of presence (strictly speaking) from the kind of presence that is derivatively concomitant. Always, to avoid confusion, these two kinds of presence need to be distinguished from each other while, at the same time, we attend to how they are related to each other, one leading to the other or one implying the other.

To employ analogies that can be useful to us, when we are with our friends, yes, their presence is given to us. They are present to us and we are present to them. But, through a human form of concomitance, the experiences of these same persons, the persons that our friends have known, all that they had done –

all these things are somehow present to us and they are given to us. We can think too of family that we have known, the experiences of older persons who are no longer with us. Not too many years ago, I met a woman in Austria in her 90s. As a young girl, she remembers having once seen the Austrian emperor, Franz Joseph. And so, because I have known this woman, this world which has now disappeared is now not so far away. I knew somebody who was there, a participant. The famous historian, Hilaire Belloc, once had a theory about history and time in terms of a span of three generations. In our own time and day, we have known our parents and we have known our grandparents. We know persons who have lived through a certain space of time and, through our parents and grandparents, through their concrete experiences of life, we live and participate in these experiences. Through the stories of our grandparents, we are immediately related to persons and events that occurred some years before we came into being. Belloc, for instance, was born in 1870. He was still living when I was born (in 1951). When he was young, an elderly French woman gave to him her personal eye witness account of the storming of the Bastille in 1789. She was there. She saw it. And so, there lived in my lifetime someone who knew someone who was there, participating in an event which occurred late in the 18th Century. The events of the past are not so far away as we would think or imagine. I prolong the analogy but I use it to try and bring out more fully what is meant by concomitance. We distinguish between that which exists as a sacramental reality and that which exists as a concomitant reality. By a kind of inference which moves from that which we know to that which we can come to know, we move from that which exists and which is known to exist as a sacramental reality to that which exists and which is known to exist as a concomitant reality. It is not without a sense of this concomitance that, traditionally, in Catholic churches, surrounding the tabernacle, angels are depicted to reflect the adoration that Christ is receiving in Heaven. The adoration that Our Lord receives on earth reflects the glory and adoration that he receives in Heaven and, conversely, the glory and adoration that Christ receives on earth participates in the glory and adoration that he receives in Heaven.

Chapter 20 on “Man's Share in the Eucharistic Sacrifice” moves from the condition of our human passivity (Christ's sacrifice is something that is done on our behalf) to how we can exist as participants since, by means of Christ's gift, we can exercise a kind of efficient causality which belongs to us as contingent secondary causes, a kind of efficient causality that exists within the practice of religion and an order of sacramental being that has been set up by God as our Redeemer (supposing that which already exists and which has been brought into being initially by God as our Creator). If we can distinguish two orders of causality within the order of secondary causes, we can say that, as contingent active beings, we exist as efficient causes in a natural way (a way that is suited to the kind of beings which we happen to be, the kind of being that we happen to have) and, as contingent active beings, we also exist as efficient causes in a sacramental or supernatural way because of an order of being (an order of causes) that has been brought into being within our spatial temporal world. Working with the things of this world, in an incarnate way, through the work of Christ, we have this second order of secondary causes. Hence, as secondary causes that are linked to divine things and which are linked to things that exist within space and time, certain traits or characteristics that belong to secondary natural causes also belong to causes that are supernatural, secondary, and sacramental (the supernatural as sacramental or the supernatural as communicated to us in a sacramental way). In the kind of language which Vonier uses (a language which is borrowed from magisterial teaching), the sacrificing that we do as secondary causes in a sacramental context is a sacrificing that belongs to the Church. It has been given to the Church to do and present for needs that the Church recognizes and she can do this sacrificing as often as she decides to do it through the ministry of her sacrificial priesthood. In the sacrifice of the Church, it is done in a manner that recalls the priesthood and the sacrifices of

Melchizedek and, in another way, although in an unbloody way, it recalls or it perfects the priesthood and sacrifices that were administered under the Old Law. That which is universal in Christ's saving death (something which is intended for all persons) is mediated in a way which exists for the benefit of individual believers, the Church's faithful. Loosely speaking, we best understand the eucharistic sacrifice of the Church if we reject a Platonist understanding which would understand how Christ functions as Priest and Victim in a manner which thinks of him or which imagines him to engage in these acts at the right hand of his Father in Heaven. Instead, as a consequence of Christ's incarnation and his life and work on earth, Christ functions as Priest and Victim as every Mass which is said through the sacramental, sacrificial priesthood which Christ instituted at the Last Supper when, at this last meal, the eucharistic sacrifice was first instituted by Christ for our benefit although as a foreshadowing of what happened when Christ offered himself in a bloody way on Good Friday. Obviously, the Church's understanding of the Eucharist cannot be understood if we do not with Christ's incarnation as a fundamental first principle. While Christ's saving death on Good Friday is a species of first principle, its primacy is conditioned by the greater first principle which exists when we refer to the event and the factuality of Christ's incarnation.

Chapter 21 on "The Eucharistic Liturgy" emphasizes the fact that the Eucharist is a sacrament which, although divinely instituted, is to be also viewed as something which has been created by the Church. A human causality which is operative within the Church has taken something that appears to be rather simple and, by simply celebrating it, it has made it into something grand: a fully human participation in something which is essentially divine. We exist here not merely as witnesses but, through an incarnate kind of authority which exists within the life of the Church, we exist as co-creators. If, within the order of creation, if in our humanity we exist as co-creators, participants as co-creators, then, within the order of redemption, we also exist as co-creators (as co-redeemers) Hence, we live out a mandate that has been given to us by Christ Our Lord and, in living out this mandate, we are endowed with freedom of choice...to make decisions about how the representation of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is to be lived out and displayed, participated in. Vonier does not directly refer to the "liturgy" as "work." But, this work of the Church exists as a species of first principle. To the Church Our Lord has committed a task and it belongs to the work of the Church to actualize the tasks that Our Lord has committed to her. Hence, Vonier emphasizes how the sacraments properly belong to the work and life of the Church although he also notes that the status of the Eucharist is unique in liturgical terms since it serves to represent a celebration that was first known at the time of the Last Supper. The representation can be properly referred to as a re-enactment or a drama although Vonier does not use these terms. We can recall a story that is told by Sir Alec Guinness about Sir Ralph Richardson. Sir Ralph, a distinguished English actor, took Guinness for the first time to Mass and, with "great movement and feeling," he explained the Mass to Guinness as it was being said and celebrated. Richardson saw the Mass in dramatic terms, as "high theater," and the drama of the Mass was something that served as a summit or crown in his life in his work as an actor. When you participate in it and when you fully give yourself to it, you are changed. You are not entirely the person that you once were. Maybe, you are enlarged in some way...your humanity exists as a fuller thing.

Chapter 22 speaks about how the eucharistic banquet, the practice of going to Communion, normally accompanies the offering of Christ sacramentally at Mass. Through the sacrifice or by means of the sacrifice, we move toward communion. The two cannot be separated from each other and it would be irrational to try and introduce a separation: that one can have communion apart from participating and attending to Christ's sacrifice of self as this occurs during Mass. The one leads to the other, sacrifice to communion as we find this evidence in the wording of scripture and as we find this also with the events

of Christ's life. First, Christ offers himself up to the Father and then we are offered to him through participation in communion. Vonier distinguishes between sacramental communion with God in Christ and personal communion with God in Christ. Personal communion can exist and it does exist as a greater thing although sacramental communion can lead toward personal communion, preparing the ground for it through a form of incorporation that joins a communicant with the reality of Christ's Mystical Body, the Church. In going to communion, one is brought into a corporate form of union with everything that belongs to Christ's Kingdom and, if we attend to the nature of this corporate union, we discover how this union exists as a manifestation of charity. Where there is lack of charity, persons divide from each other and have nothing to do with each other. But, where there exists charity, persons are bonded to each other, the union between persons being itself a reality that exists in its own right as a concrete good. Through the frequent reception of the Eucharist through communion via sacrifice, a heaven is introduced into our human world in a way that can effect radically changes, saving the being of our human world.

Chapter 23 speaks about eucharistic consumation or, in other words, a real distinction is drawn between eucharistic sacrifice and eucharistic consumation. The earthly sacrifice, the sacrifice at Calvary and the sacrifices of bread and wine at Mass (the sacrifices of Christ's body and blood at Mass – these sacrifices are ordered to the consumation which we have when we should all dwell in Heaven and be with Christ as he is). It is not correct to speak about any heavenly sacrifices or of any sacrifices that occur in Heaven as prolongations of any form of eucharistic sacrifice. The Mass was instituted by Our Lord to function as an instrumental cause (as is the case with all the other sacraments) and so, as an instrumental cause, it serves to effect something greater, preparing us, conditioning us for life after death and the blessedness of life in God's Kingdom. Hence, once union with God is fully achieved in the context of life in Heaven, the sacraments cease to exist in the way that they have existed. A kind of transcendence occurs when we move from the sacraments to that which is achieved through the agency of the sacraments.