

PRELIMINARY TREATISE
Of the Sacrifice and the preparations prescribed for its offering

FIRST ARTICLE

The necessity of sacrifice at all times, the cessation of those of the ancient Law and the excellence of the unique Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross and on our altars, which contains all the others and will never cease

I. Necessity of interior and exterior sacrifice

Religion is a cult that joins us to God by a perfect subjection of ourselves to the supreme Being and causes us to render all that we are and all that we do to his glory. It makes us fulfill this duty particularly through sacrifice, which is an oblation made to God to recognize his sovereign dominion over all creation.

This oblation must be made interiorly, because *God is a Spirit, and those who adore him must do it in spirit and in truth.*¹ Yet because men are composed of body and spirit, they must also make this Oblation exteriorly, because they must give visible and public signs of the disposition of their heart toward the sovereign Majesty. To interior sacrifice, therefore, they must join exterior sacrifice,² which is nothing other than a sensible sign of the interior Oblation of ourselves, which we must make to God as our Creator and Preserver.

Religion cannot exist without interior and exterior sacrifice, because it consists in nothing less than uniting men by means of exterior signs of the dependence and of the love which they owe to God.

II. Sacrifices offered since the beginning of the world.

Their own natural lights have always inspired men men to sacrifice as the first of all the essential acts of religion. Sacred history teaches us what they have offered since the beginning of the world,³ and we see that they understood that sacrifice was necessary and that it could only be offered to the Divinity.

The written Law confirmed that which nature had inspired and declared that to turn men away from sacrifice or to sacrifice to anyone other than God alone were two enormous crimes.⁴ *The sin of the sons of Heli was very great before the Lord, the Sacred text says, because they turned men away from sacrifice.* And when men blinded by their passions have feared and revered creatures, Angels or demons to the point of offering them sacrifices, the Law says, to give them the proper horror of this sacrilege: *“Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the Lord alone, shall be devoted to destruction.”*⁵

¹ John 4:24

² Aug. Civ. Dei. bk. 10, c. 19

³ Cain and Abel offered to God the fruits of the earth and the animals. Gen 4:3 and 4. Noah on leaving the Ark built an altar, took from all the pure animals and offered them to the Lord in a holocaust on this altar (Gen. 8:20).

⁴ *Erat ergo peccatum puerorum grande nimis coram Domine, quia retrahebant homines a Sacrificio Domini* (1 Kings 2:17).

⁵ *Qui immolat Diis occidetur praeter quam Domino soli* (Ex. 22:20; Aug. de Civit. l. 29, c. 23).

III. The four ends of sacrifice

Exterior sacrifice consists in offering to God a sensible and exterior thing to be destroyed or to suffer some change, and this is done for four reasons which are the four ends of sacrifice. Firstly, to recognize the sovereign domain of God over all created beings. Secondly, to thank him for his benefits. Thirdly, to obtain pardon for sins and indicate what we owe to the divine Justice. Fourthly, to ask for whatever help we need.

The destruction or change of the thing offered perfectly expresses two of the principle ends of sacrifice, which are to honor the sovereign dominion of God and to recognize what we merit for our sins. For by this destruction and by this change, men dictate that God is the absolute master of all things, that he has no need of any creature because they are destroyed in being offered to him. Secondly, by this destruction they indicate that as sinners they have merited death by their offenses, and that the victim is substituted in their place. This is why those who offer the sacrifice placed their hands on the head of the victim.

Men must also thank God for all his benefits and ask for new graces. Now to fulfill all these obligations, the Law established many sacrifices: the holocaust, the sin offering, and the peace offerings.⁶

IV. Why different sacrifices: the holocaust, the sin offering, and the peace offerings?

The holocaust consisted in burning the whole victim without anyone being able to eat of it, in order to render by this entire consumption a full and unreserved homage to the sovereign dominion of God.

The sin offering was often joined to the holocaust,⁷ and was divided into three parts, one of which was consumed at the altar of holocausts, the other was burned outside the camp, and the third was eaten by the priests.⁸ Those who offered victims for their sins could not eat of it; and when the priests offered for themselves, no one ate of it. Everything that was not burned on the altar of holocausts was burned outside the camp.

The peace offerings, either to thank God for benefits received, or to obtain new ones from him, were not distinguished from sin offerings except that that the people as well as the priests had to participate by eating a part of the victim.

V. Sacrifice displeasing without the Redeemer.

Although these sacrifices had been ordained by the Divine Law, they were still nothing but signs, incapable in themselves of pleasing God. They had neither efficacy nor power except through the faith of those who offered them having in their minds the Divine Victim,⁹ *the unblemished Lamb who takes away sins* who was immolated before the beginning of the world.

⁶ See the fifth treatise of Maimonides, *de ratione sacrificiorum faciendorum*, translated from Hebrew into Latin by Compiegne de Veil.

⁷ Levit. 14 and 15.

⁸ Levit. 6 and 7.

⁹ Apoc 13:8

When these sacrifices were offered by the saints, such as Abel,¹⁰ Abraham, Job, and all the men of faith who lived in expectation of the Messiah, then those sacrifices were agreeable to God who received them as a sweet perfume, according to the expression of Scripture.¹¹

But when the priests went no further than the external ceremony, and when all the sacrificers and the people separated from the sacrifice the spirit in which its whole merit consisted, the holocausts were no longer pleasing to God.¹²

No matter the care with which the priests chose the animals without spot or blemish, these were nothing more than simple figures entirely empty and inanimate, for they did not pay attention to the fact that the only reason it was necessary to choose animals without spot or blemish, as St. Augustine observes,¹³ was to announce and await the immolation of he who alone was free of all spot of sin.

VI. The wickedness of the Pharisees and Sadducees caused the sacrifices to be rejected

The spirit that ought to have animated all the ceremonies of religion diminished day by day when there were no more prophets, and irreligion and stupidity reached their acme immediately before the advent of the Messiah. For what could be expected of the Pharisees who stopped outside the Law, and especially the Sadducees,¹⁴ who held sway in the Temple, who presided at the sacrifices, and who did not believe in the resurrection? Thus it was at that time that the figures were to cease, and that, according to the prediction of the Prophet-King,¹⁵ God would reject the sacrifices that had been offered until then in the only Temple of Jerusalem.

VII. Jesus Christ announces a new sacrifice

A new sacrifice was necessary that would be offered in spirit and in truth. This is what Jesus Christ announced to the Samaritan woman when she asked him about the place where one must worship,¹⁶ i.e. sacrifice. For the Jews and Samaritans only differed about the place of exterior cult, of Oblations and Sacrifices, and not about the place of interior prayer and sacrifice, for all were convinced that prayer could be offered to God in any place. Jesus Christ responds saying *that the time would come when people would not adore, that is to say, sacrifice, either on the mountain of Garizim, nor in Jerusalem, but that there would be true worshippers who worshipped in spirit and truth*, and who would no longer be constrained to a particular place. The response of Jesus Christ confirmed the necessity of sacrifice and announced the truth of the New law, which would be offered throughout all the world and would be offered in spirit and truth by he who is the truth itself.

¹⁰ Fide plurimam Hostiam Abel, etc (Hebr. 11).

¹¹ Gen. 8:21

¹² Holocaustomata pro peccato non tibi placuerunt (Hebr. 10:6).

¹³ Ut speraretur immolandus esse pro nobis qui solus immaculatus fuerat a peccatis (Contr. adversar. Leg. et Proph. bk. 2, ch. 13).

¹⁴ We see in the *History* of Josephus that before and after Herod, i.e. in the time of the advent of Jesus Christ, the High Priests were Sadducees. Certainly Caiphaz, Annas his predecessor and father-in-law, and the second Annas or Ananus the successor of Caiphaz were. This is no less clear in the Acts of the Apostles, where we see that the High Priest and all those who caused the Apostles to be imprisoned were Sadducees. “*Then the high priest took action; he and all who were with him (that is, the sect of the Sadducees), being filled with jealousy*” (Acts 5:17).

¹⁵ Psalm 39:9

¹⁶ John 4:20 et seqq.

VIII. Accomplishment of the prophecy of Malachi

What Jesus Christ announced was the accomplishment of the well-known prophecy of Malachi addressed to the Jewish people: “I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.”¹⁷

One must agree with the most ancient doctors of the Church, St. Justine,¹⁸ St. Irenaeus,¹⁹ Tertullian,²⁰ St. Cyprian,²¹ etc. who applied this prophecy to the Eucharist, and who said that the Church had learned to offer this new sacrifice throughout the whole world from Jesus Christ and the Apostles. And indeed how could one not see in this prophecy that God rejects the sacrifices of the Jews and substitutes in their place, in the whole world, the Sacrifice of a pure and holy Oblation? Here it is not a matter of the interior sacrifice of our heart; such is not a new sacrifice, because it was the sacrifice of all just souls since the beginning of the world. Now what other sacrifice was substituted except that of Jesus Christ on the Cross and on our altars? But the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross was accomplished on Calvary. It is thus the unbloody sacrifice of our altars which is offered in every place, and which is substituted for the ancient victims.

IX. God demands the body of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice

Saint Augustine explains this truth wonderfully where he explains this verse of the the Psalm: “Sacrifice and offering you do not desire.”²²

This is what he writes: “What then? Are we left at this present time without a sacrifice? God forbid! Here the words of the Prophet: ‘But a Body have You perfected for me.’ Behold a new victim. What has God rejected then? The figures.”²³ Then what will God accept, and what will he prescribe to fulfill the figures? The body which fulfills all the figures, the adorable body of Jesus Christ on our altars: this body which the faithful know, which the Catechumens do not know. Augustine continues: “What is that which has been given as its fulfilment? That Body; which you know; which you do not all of you know; which, of you who do know it, I pray God all may not know it unto condemnation.”²⁴

There you have it: the Body of Jesus Christ is offered and eaten on our altars throughout the whole world, as the sacrifice of the New Law. Now we have to explain when this adorable sacrifice began, its perfection, and great things it contains, and how it fulfills all the figures and all the conditions that accompanied the ancient sacrifices.

¹⁷ Malach. 1:10

¹⁸ Dialog. cum Triphon

¹⁹ Bk. 4 ch. 32

²⁰ Adversus Marcion book 3, ch. 21

²¹ Adversus Jud. book 4, n. 16

²² Psalm 39:6.

²³ Quid ergo nos iam hoc tempore sine sacrificio dimissi sumus? Absit. Corpus autem perfecisti mihi (Aug. in Psal. 39)

²⁴ Quid est quod datum es, completivum? Corpus quod nostis, quod non omnes nostis [Ibid.] Huius corporis participes summus, quod accepimus, novimus, et qui (Catechumeni) non nostis, noveritis; et cum didiceritis, utinam non ad iudicium accipiatis: qui enim manducat et bibit indigne, iudicium sibi manducat et bibit [Ibid.]

X. Jesus Christ's offering puts an end to the figures

In the unhappy times of irreligion that we have just spoken about, Jesus Christ, who was the truth of all the figures, offers himself and fill out the imperfection of all the ancient sacrifices. He says to his Father: “²⁵ Finding nothing in the world, says St. Augustine, so pure to offer to God, he offered himself.²⁶ And it is by this Oblation, which is to be permanent and eternal, that mankind has been sanctified.²⁷ For he offers himself once for all time.²⁸ His life was one unceasing sacrifice, up to the moment when he poured out all his blood upon the cross. At that time the figure of the bloody sacrifices of Aaron were fulfilled; and all the sacrifices that had to be multiplied due to their imperfection²⁹ had to disappear so that the faithful would have recourse only to the true and unique sacrifice of our divine Mediator which alone can satisfy for sin.³⁰

XI. As a Priest and Victim on the cross Jesus Christ contains everything we find in the sacrifices

It is here that we find truly present in one Sacrificer everything that we see and desire in all sacrifices, God to whom they are offered, the priest who offers, the gift that must be offered; because the divine Mediator, Priest and Victim, is one with God to whom he offers; and because he is united, or rather made one with all the faithful whom he reconciles to God, their common Father.³¹ It is certain that he was at the same time Priest and Victim on the cross.³² The Jews and Gentiles who put him to death were his executioners and not his sacrificers, it is thus he who is offered and he who has offered us in sacrifice with himself on the cross.³³

XII. Reasons for the Institution of the Eucharist

But because he is an eternal priest according to the order of Melchisedech, who offered bread and wine and gave them to Abraham and the members of his family who would win a great victory, the bread and the wine must always be the matter of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and become his body and blood,³⁴ to be a true food and a true drink for the true children of Abraham, so that they may be intimately united to their Savior and be offered with him in sacrifice.

This is the wonder of the Eucharist, which Jesus Christ instituted just before he went to offer himself on the cross. He instituted it *because of the love he had for his own, knowing that all*

²⁵ Heb. 10:5 et seq. et Ps. 39:7.

²⁶ Cum in mundo non inveniret mundum quod offeret, seipsum obtulit (Aug in Ps. 132:7)

²⁷ In qua voluntate sanctificati sumus per oblationem Corporis Jesu-Christi semel (Heb. 10:10)

²⁸ Una enim oblatione confirmavit in sempiternum sanctificatos (Hebr. 10:14)

²⁹ Pro quibus sacrificiis unum nos habemus (Aug in Psalm 74)

³⁰ Unde et in ipso verissimo et singulari sacrificio Domino Deo nostro agere gratias admonemus (Aug. de spir. et lit. c. 2).

³¹ Idem ipse unus verusque Mediator per sacrificium pacis reconcilians nos Deo, in unum cum illo maneret cui offerebat, unum in se faceret pro quibus offerebat (Aug. de Trin. bk. 4, c. 14)

³² Per hoc et Sacerdos est ipse offerens, ipse et oblatio (Aug. de Civit. bk. 10, c. 20)

³³ Hebr. 9:14.

³⁴ Nam quis magis Sacerdos Dei summi quam Dominus noster Jesus-Christus, qui sacrificium Deo Patri obtulit! Et obtulit hoc idem quod Melchisedech obtulerat, id est, panem et vinum, suum scilicet Corpus et Sanguinem (St. Cypr. Epist. 63 ad Cecilian.)

power had been given to him by his Father, as John says.³⁵ And indeed it required great power and infinite love to change the bread and wine into his body and blood, and to pour out his blood in anticipation of his death, according to the Greek text of the Bible “*This is my body which is given up for you....This chalice of the new covenant is my Blood which is poured out for you;*”³⁶ a real and mysterious pouring out in the body and in the heart of those who communicated, even before the blood issued visibly from his body on the cross.

XIII. An exercise of the supreme power and priesthood of Jesus Christ

When Jesus Christ using his supreme power to change bread into his body and wine into his blood, he exercised at the same time the priestly power that he did not give himself but received from his Father, to be the eternal priest according to the order of Melchisedech. As his priesthood is eternal, he will offer this sacrifice eternally and will have no successor. He will be on our altars forever, albeit invisibly, the priest and the gift, *the offerer and the thing offered*.³⁷ Yet in order to make this sacrifice visible, he established the Apostles and his successors as his ministers to whom he gives the power to do what he was about to do: *Do this in memory of me;*³⁸ they have done it and they will do it standing in his person throughout all the earth. *What Melchisedech offered is offered everywhere by the High Priest Jesus Christ.*³⁹ And to show that this sacrifice would never come to an end in the world, he commanded us to participate in it and thus to announce his death until his final coming.⁴⁰

These miracles of Christ’s omnipotence in the Eucharist are reported by the Evangelists with the same simplicity that Genesis says God created the world, that he made the firmament, saying: “Let it be done.” Jesus had said to his disciples at Capharnaum⁴¹ that they had to eat his flesh and drink his blood to have life within them, and to accomplish this great miracle, he simply says here: “*Take and eat, this is my Body; take and drink, this is my Blood.*”⁴² Behold the consummation of this divine Sacrifice and the fulfillment of all the mysteries. He renews his death, his resurrection, his glorious life, he nourishes his Church by his own flesh, to make of it one holy and ever-living body, and to give it the seed of undying glory.

XIV. The gathering of all the mysteries in the Eucharist.

The renewal and consummation of these great mysteries in the Eucharist must not be unknown to Christians. They must know that Jesus Christ, by changing the bread into his body, offers this adorable body just as he offered it on the cross. The Eucharist contains his Passion.⁴³ We only announce his death by eating it, as St. Paul says,⁴⁴ because he offers this precious death upon our

³⁵ Cum dilexisset suos qui erant in mundo, in finem dilexit eos. Sciens Jesus quia omnis dedit ei Pater in manus.

³⁶ Lk. 22:19-20.

³⁷ Offers et oblatio (Aug de civit. bk 10, c. 20).

³⁸ Hoc facite in meam commemorationem (Luk 22:19).

³⁹ Ubique offertur sub Sacerdote Christo, quod protulit Melchisedech (Aug l. de civit. 17:17).

⁴⁰ Quotiescumque manducabitis panem hunc et calicem bibetis, mortem Domini annuntiabitis donec veniat (I Cor 11:26).

⁴¹ Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis, et biberitis eius sanguinem, non habebitis vitam in vobis (John 6:54).

⁴² Matthew 26:26

⁴³ Coenam suam dedit, passionem suam dedit (Aug in Psal 21).

⁴⁴ I Cor 11:26

altars. And it is true to say with St. Cyprian,⁴⁵ that the Sacrifice that we offer is the very Passion of the Savior.

XV. The Sacrifice of the Eucharist is the same as that of the Cross

The exterior environment of Calvary that are not present at the altar had nothing in **common** with the action of the Sacrificer. The essential thing in the sacrifice of the Cross consisted in the oblation Jesus Christ made of his body. He continues to offer this same body on the altar and, bringing to its final perfection this divine sacrifice, which could not be eaten by the faithful on Calvary, *He truly nourishes us every day with the sacrament of his Passion*, as St. Ambrose says⁴⁶ the consumption of the victim was lacking on the altar of the Cross, and constitutes the perfection of the sacrifice of our altars. “We have an altar,” St. Paul says, “from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat.”⁴⁷ That is what was lacking on the altar of the cross, and it is on the altar of the Church that this consumption is accomplished through the communion. The same victim is offered on Calvary and on our altars, but on Calvary it was only offered; here it is offered and distributed, as Augustine says speaking about the dedication of his Mother to the Sacrifice of the Altar.⁴⁸ We assist at this divine Altar, *where we know that the holy Victim is dispensed, by which the stain of sin has been washed away*. Jesus Christ thus offers himself on the altar, just as he offered himself dying on the Cross, the only difference being in the manner of offering, as the Council of Trent says, following St. Augustine and the other Fathers.⁴⁹

XVI. The Sacrifice is one with the glorious mysteries

He offers himself here as he did at his Resurrection, offering his immortal and glorious body. He offers himself as he did at his Ascension, for he ascends again from the altar of the earth to the sublime altar of heaven, according to the expression of the Canon, to reside there and intercede for us, thus offering always one and the same Host.⁵⁰ That is why we saw at the Mass, that we offer this sacrifice for renew the memory of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus we can behold the union of all the mysteries who were the different parties or the continuation of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the truth of what we sing in the Psalms,⁵¹ that in giving us the true food, God has renewed the memory of all his wondrous works.

It remains to see how the divine Victim of this adorable Sacrifice fulfills all the conditions that belonged to the victims of the old Law in the the most perfect sacrifices.

XVII. All the conditions of sacrificial victims contained in the Eucharist

⁴⁵ Passio est enim Domini sacrificium quod offerimus (Cypr ep. 63 ad cecil.)

⁴⁶ Significans passionem Domini Jesu, cuius quotidie vescimur sacramento (Ambr. in Psal. 43).

⁴⁷ Habemus altare, de quo edere non habent potestatem qui Tabernaculo deserviunt (Hebr. 13:10).

⁴⁸ L. 9 Confess. c. 12. 13.

⁴⁹ Una enim eademque est hostia, idem nunc offerens Sacerdotum ministerio, qui seipsum tunc in cruce obtulit, sola offerendi ratione diversa (Conc. Trid. Sess. 22. cap. 2).

⁵⁰ Hic autem unam pro peccatis offerens hostiam in sempiternum, sedet in dextera Dei (Hebr. 10:12)

⁵¹ Memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum (Ps. 110:4).

Four conditions were required, forming the four parts of sacrifice. First, the reception of the victim by the priests. 2nd, the oblation to God. 3rd, the change or destruction of the victim. 4th, the consumption or communion of the victim.

1) *Reception*. A choice host was required, pleasing and acceptable to the Priests, following the command of God who had established what they must permit for the sacrifice and what they must reject. The priests of the New Testament accept bread and wine destined to become the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and they receive them following the choice of the Eternal Father who declared his Beloved Son a priest according to the order of Melchisedech. Thus they offer bread and wine: a bread that will be changed into the body that God has destined to be the true victim.⁵²

2) *The Oblation to God*. The Host was offered to God by the priests of the Law, and thus elevated above the common state. The priests of the New Testament representing Jesus Christ offer to God the bread and the wine, to become—as before—the body and blood of Our Lord for our salvation.

3) *Immolation and changing of the victim*. In the holocausts, sin offerings, and guilt offerings, the victim was immolated and eaten. It changed its state. In this case the bread and the wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ who is immolated and so to speak in a state of death on the altar, because there he is deprived of the functions of natural life that he had on the earth, and because he is represented with the signs of death in the mystical separation of his body and blood, just as St. John saw the living Lamb standing before the Throne of Heaven.⁵³ He is also as immolated and dead due to the scars of his wounds and the marks of his bloody immolation which he conserves even in the state of glory.

4) *Consumption of the Victim*. Finally, the consumption of the host was necessary. If a holocaust was being offered, everything was burned in honor of God. In the other sacrifices, a part was consumed for God, the rest was distributed to the priests and those who had presented the host. In the Eucharist, the victim is entirely for God, and entirely consumed by the men who offer it. It is entirely communicated to everyone without any division and it is consumed in all without ceasing to exist.

Once again, the Sacrifice of this divine Victim contains all the truths of the figurative sacrifices.

XVIII. How the Sacrifice of the Eucharist is a holocaust

Firstly, there is a holocaust constituted by the destruction of the bread and wine. As in the ancient holocausts the material fire devoured and consumed the host with the breads and liquids in order to render homage to the sovereign power of God, in the same way the flame of the Holy Spirit, which the Church invokes for this purpose,⁵⁴ in a sense consumes the bread and wine, changing them into the body and the blood of Jesus Christ which renders to God his Father the infinite homage that he is due.

XIX. How it fulfills the notion of all the other sacrifices

Secondly, it is a sacrifice of propitiation for sins, since it is the victim which expiates them.

⁵² Corpus autem aptasti mihi (Hebr 10:5).

⁵³ Et vidi, et ecce in medio Throni.... Agnum stantem tanquam occisum (Apoc. v. 6).

⁵⁴ Fulgent admonit. l. 2 c. 6. et seqq. Optat. Milev. l. 6 Isidor. Peus. epist. 109 et 313. Miss. Goth. Miss. 22.

Thirdly, it contains in a manner *par excellence* all the sacrifices of the peace offerings directed to obtain graces, since it contains the true peace offering, Jesus Christ, through whom we ask and obtain every gift.

Fourthly, it is a thanksgiving sacrifice because it was instituted by Jesus Christ to render thanks to his Father for all the gifts he had received for the Church, and further, because by this sacrifice we give a worthy sign of our gratitude by offering him on the altar his own Son who is the most excellent gift he has given us, one we may present to him in return for all the graces we have received. It is also a holy sacrifice of praise, as St. Augustine writes,⁵⁵ in addition to one of thanksgiving, and what greater thanksgiving than what is rendered to God for his grace in Jesus Christ Our Lord, as it is made in the Sacrifice of the Church known to all the faithful, and of which the ancient sacrifices were all only shadows?

XX. The whole Church is united to Jesus Christ in His Sacrifice

Behold how the adorable sacrifice of the Eucharist, though infinitely elevated above all the ancient sacrifices, fulfills all their ends and conditions. Little remains but for us to observe that this sacrifice of Jesus Christ is at the same time the Sacrifice of the entire Church, who is offered with Jesus Christ, and that it is the sacrifice of all the Fathers who offer it, and of all those who desire to participate in it. These must by consequence offer themselves in sacrifice as Jesus Christ and his Church offer themselves to God. Listen to St. Augustine who teaches us wondrously about this truth: “the whole redeemed city, that is to say, the congregation or community of the saints, is offered to God as our sacrifice through the great High Priest, who offered Himself to God in His passion for us, that we might be members of this glorious head, according to the form of a servant. For it was this form He offered, in this He was offered, because it is according to it He is Mediator, in this He is our Priest, in this the Sacrifice.” And to continue following St. Augustine, “this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, known to the faithful, in which she teaches that she herself is offered in the offering she makes to God.”⁵⁶

XXI: The Church offers and is offered

Jesus Christ is the one who offers, as Priest, and who is himself the gift that is offered, and in the same way the Church must offer herself when she offers. And as St. Augustine says,⁵⁷ God makes her see this mystery in the sacrifice she offers each day, for just as she is the body of such a Head, she learns to offer herself for Him. The Sacrifice of the Mass is thus that of Jesus Christ and of his Church, the only exterior sacrifice that must be offered to God, the true and unique sacrifice that contains the meanings of all the others, the only one that can satisfy for sins, that can merit graces for us, and that will continue until the end of the ages.

⁵⁵ Quod est autem sacratius laudis sacrificium quam in actione gratiarum, et unde maiores agenda sunt gratiae quam pro ipsius gratia per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum? Quod totum fideles in Ecclesiae sacrificio sciunt, cuius umbrae fuerunt omnia priorum genera sacrificiorum (Aug. contr. adversar. Leg. et Prophet. l. 1 c. 18).

⁵⁶ De civit. l. 10 c. 6.

⁵⁷ Cuius rei sacramentum quotidianum esse voluit Ecclesiae sacrificium, quae cum ipsius Capitis corpus sit, se ipsam per ipsum discit, offerre” (Ibid., bk. 10, c. 20).