

QUESTION 82

The Minister of This Sacrament

Next we have to consider the minister of this sacrament. And on this topic there are ten questions: (1) Does it properly belong to a priest to consecrate this sacrament? (2) Can more than one priest simultaneously consecrate the same host? (3) Does the distribution of this sacrament belong to a priest alone? (4) Is it permissible for a consecrating priest to abstain from Communion? (5) Is it possible for a priest who is a sinner to confect this sacrament? (6) Is the Mass of a bad priest of less value (*minus valeat*) than the Mass of a good priest? (7) Is it possible for heretical, schismatic, or excommunicated priests to confect this sacrament? (8) Can a degraded priest confect this sacrament? (9) Do those who receive Communion from such priests commit a sin? (10) Is it permissible for a priest to abstain altogether from celebrating this sacrament?

Article 1

Does it properly belong to a priest to consecrate this sacrament?

It seems that it does not properly belong to a priest to consecrate this sacrament (*consecratio huius sacramenti non proprie sit sacerdotis*):

Objection 1: It was explained above (q. 78, a. 4) that this sacrament is consecrated by the power of the words that are the form of this sacrament. But these words do not change, regardless of whether they are said by a priest or by anyone else. Therefore, it seems that not only a priest, but anyone else as well, can consecrate this sacrament.

Objection 2: A priest confects this sacrament in the person of Christ. But a holy layman is united to Christ through charity. Therefore, it seems that a layman can also confect this sacrament. Hence, in *Super Matthaëum* Chrysostom likewise says, “Every holy person is a priest.”

Objection 3: As is clear from what was said above (q. 74, a. 1 and q. 79, a. 2), just as baptism is ordered toward human salvation, so, too, is this sacrament. But as was established above (q. 67, a. 3), even a layman can baptize. Therefore, it does not properly belong to a priest to confect this sacrament.

Objection 4: This sacrament is brought to completion in the consecration of the matter. But to consecrate other types of matter, viz., chrism, holy oil, and the oil of blessing, belongs to the bishop alone, and yet consecrating these things does not have as great a dignity as consecrating the Eucharist, in which the whole Christ exists. Therefore, confecting this sacrament belongs properly to the bishop and not to a priest.

But contrary to this: In a certain letter Isidore says, and this is contained in *Decretals*, dist. 25, “It belongs to a priest (*presbyterum*) to confect the sacrament of our Lord’s body and blood at the altar.”

I respond: As was explained above (q. 78, aa. 1 and 4), this sacrament has such great dignity that it is confected only in the person of Christ. But if anyone does something in the person of another, this has to be by a power granted by the latter. And just as one who has been baptized is granted by Christ the power to consume this sacrament, so when a priest is ordained, he receives the power to consecrate this sacrament in the person of Christ. For he is thereby placed in the rank of those to whom our Lord said, “Do this in commemoration of me.” And so one should reply that it properly belongs to priests to confect this sacrament.

Reply to objection 1: A sacramental power lies in several things and not just one thing; for instance, the power of baptism lies in the words and in the water. Hence, the power to consecrate lies not only in the words themselves, but also in the power handed down to a priest in his consecration or ordination, when the bishop says to him, “Receive the power of offering sacrifice in the Church for the

living as well as for the dead.” For an instrumental power lies within the many instruments through which the principal agent acts.

Reply to objection 2: A righteous layman is united to Christ by a spiritual union through faith and charity, but not through a sacramental power. And so he has a spiritual priesthood to offer the spiritual sacrifices about which Psalm 50:19 says, “A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit,” and about which Romans 12:1 says, “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice.” Hence, 1 Peter 2:5 says, “... a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices.”

Reply to objection 3: As is clear from what was said above (q. 65, aa. 2-3 and q. 80, a. 11, ad 2), the reception of this sacrament is not of such great necessity as is the reception of baptism. And that is why a layman is able to baptize in an emergency, but is not able to confect this sacrament.

Reply to objection 4: The bishop receives the power to act in the person of Christ over His mystical body, i.e., over the Church—a power that a priest does not receive in his own consecration, even though he is able to have this power upon being commissioned by the bishop. And that is why those things, such as consecrating this sacrament, which do not involve overseeing the mystical body are not reserved to the bishop.

By contrast, what does belong to the bishop is to hand down not only to the people, but also to the priests, those things by which they are able to carry out their own roles. And because blessing the chrism, the holy oil, the oil of the sick, and other consecrated things, e.g., altars, churches, vestments, and sacred vessels, makes those things fit for carrying out the sacraments that belong to the role of the priests, such consecrations are reserved to the bishop as the head of the whole ecclesiastical order.

Article 2

Can more than one priest consecrate one and the same host?

It seems not to be the case that more than one priest can consecrate one and the same host (*plures sacerdotes non possunt unam et eandem hostiam consecrare*):

Objection 1: It was explained above (q. 67, a. 6) that it is impossible for more than one individual to baptize a single individual. But a consecrating priest has no less power than an individual who is baptizing a man. Therefore, it is likewise impossible for more than one individual to consecrate a single host.

Objection 2: It is superfluous to do through many what can be done through one. But there should be nothing superfluous in Christ’s sacraments. Therefore, since one individual is sufficient for consecrating, it seems that it is impossible for more than one individual to consecrate a single host.

Objection 3: As Augustine explains in *Super Ioannem*, this sacrament is “the sacrament of unity or oneness (*sacramentum unitatis*).” But a multitude seems to be contrary to oneness. Therefore, it does not seem to befit this sacrament for more than one priest to consecrate the same host.

But contrary to this: According to the custom of certain churches, when priests are newly ordained, they concelebrate with the ordaining bishop.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1), when a priest is ordained, he is established in the rank of those who receive from our Lord the power to consecrate at the supper. And so according to the custom of certain churches, just as the apostles had supper together with Christ who was having supper, so the newly ordained priests concelebrate with the ordaining bishop. Nor is the consecration repeated over the same host, since, as Innocent III says, “The intention of everyone should be directed toward the same instant of consecration.”

Reply to objection 1: We do not read that Christ baptized together with the apostles when He

enjoined upon them the office of baptizing. And so the two lines of reasoning are not similar.

Reply to objection 2: If each of the priests were operating by his own power, then the others would be superfluous, given that one is sufficient to celebrate. But because a priest consecrates only in the person of Christ, whereas the many are “one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28), it does not matter whether this sacrament is consecrated by one or by many—except that it is necessary for the Church’s rite to be observed.

Reply to objection 3: The Eucharist is the sacrament of *ecclesiastical* unity or oneness, and this is taken care of insofar as the many are “one in Christ.”

Article 3

Does the distribution of this sacrament belong solely to a priest?

It seems that the distribution of this sacrament does not belong solely to a priest (*non pertineat solum ad sacerdotem dispensatio huius sacramenti*):

Objection 1: Christ’s blood does not belong to this sacrament any less than His body does. But Christ’s blood is distributed by deacons; hence, St. Lawrence said to St. Sixtus, “Test whether you have chosen a fit minister to whom to commission the distribution of our Lord’s blood.” Therefore, by parity of reasoning, the distribution of our Lord’s body does not belong to priests alone.

Objection 2: Priests are established as ministers of the sacraments. But this sacrament is brought to completion in the *consecration* of the matter and *not in its being consumed* (*non in usu*), which involves its being distributed. Therefore, it seems that it does not belong to a priest to distribute our Lord’s body.

Objection 3: In *Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* Dionysius explains that this sacrament has “perfective power” in the way that chrism does. But it belongs to the bishop, and not the priest, to sign with chrism those who have been baptized. Therefore, to distribute this sacrament likewise belongs to the bishop and not to a priest.

But contrary to this: *De Consecratione*, dist. 2, chap. 29 says, “It has come to our attention that some priests (*presbyteri*) hand our Lord’s body over to a layman or to a woman to take it to the sick. The synod therefore forbids such presumption to continue; instead, let the priest himself give Communion to the sick.”

I respond: There are three reasons why the distribution of Christ’s body belongs to the priest:

First of all, because, as has been explained (a. 1), he himself consecrates in the person of Christ. But just as Christ Himself consecrated His body at the supper, so, too, He gave it to the others. Hence, just as the consecration of Christ’s body belongs to a priest, so the distribution belongs to him.

Second, because the priest is established in the middle between God and the people. Hence, just as it belongs to him to offer the people’s gifts to God, so it belongs to him to hand down to the people the divinely sanctified gifts.

Third, because, out of reverence for this sacrament, it is touched by nothing that is not consecrated; hence, both the corporal and the chalice are consecrated and, similarly, the hands of the priest, for touching this sacrament. Hence, nothing else is permitted to touch it, except when it is necessary, e.g., if it falls on the ground or in some other case of necessity.

Reply to objection 1: A deacon, as someone close to the priestly order, has some participation in the priest’s office, so that he might distribute the blood—but *not* the body, except in a case of necessity, when the bishop or a priest tells him to. This is so, first of all, because Christ’s blood is contained in a vessel, and so it does not have to be touched by the one distributing it, in the way that Christ’s body is

touched. Second, because the blood signifies redemption as flowing from Christ to the people; this is why the blood is mixed with water, which signifies the people. And because the deacons lie between the priest and the people, it is more fitting for deacons to distribute the blood than to distribute the body.

Reply to objection 2: For the reason already explained, distributing this sacrament and consecrating it belong to the same individual.

Reply to objection 3: Just as a deacon participates to some degree in “the illuminative power” of the priest (*Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, chap. 5) insofar as he distributes the blood, so a priest participates in “the perfective distribution” of the bishop (*Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, chap. 5) insofar as he distributes this sacrament, by which a man is perfected in his own right by being conjoined to Christ. However, other perfections, by which a man is perfected in comparison with others, are reserved to the bishop.

Article 4

Is the consecrating priest obligated to consume this sacrament?

It seems that the consecrating priest is not obligated to consume this sacrament (*sacerdos consecrans non teneatur sumere hoc sacramentum*):

Objection 1: In the case of other consecrations, the individual who consecrates the matter does not make use of it; for instance, the bishop who consecrates the chrism is not smeared with the same chrism. But this sacrament consists in the consecration of the matter. Therefore, the priest who brings this sacrament to completion does not necessarily have to make use of the same sacrament, but can licitly abstain from consuming it.

Objection 2: In the case of the other sacraments, the minister does not offer the sacrament to himself; for instance, as was established above (q. 66, a. 4, ad 5), no one can baptize himself. But just as baptism is dispensed with due order, so, too, this sacrament. Therefore, the priest who brings this sacrament to completion should not receive it from himself.

Objection 3: Sometimes the body of Christ miraculously shows up on the altar under the appearance of flesh, and the blood under the appearance of blood—which are not fit to be food or drink. Hence, as was explained above (q. 75, a. 5), it is because of this that [Christ’s body and blood] are given out under different appearances, lest they be abhorrent to those receiving them. Therefore, the consecrating priest is not always obligated to consume this sacrament.

But contrary to this: In the Council of Toledo we read, and this is contained in *De Consecratione*, dist. 2, chap. *Relatum*, “It must be held to in every way that as often as the sacrificing [priest] offers the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the altar, he should on each occasion present himself as a participant by his reception of the body and blood.”

I respond: As was explained above (q. 79, aa. 5 and 7), the Eucharist is not only a sacrament, but also a sacrifice. Now if anyone offers a sacrifice, he ought to become a participant in the sacrifice. For as Augustine explains in *De Civitate Dei* 10, the exterior sacrifice that an individual offers is a sign of the interior sacrifice by which he offers himself to God. Hence, by the fact that he participates in the sacrifice, he shows that the sacrifice belongs to himself interiorly.

Similarly, by the fact that he distributes the sacrifice to the people, he shows that he is a dispenser of divine gifts to the people. And as Dionysius explains in *Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, he should be a participant in these gifts first of all. And so he ought to eat of these gifts before he distributes them to the people. Hence, in the chapter mentioned above, [viz., *Relatum*], we read, “What kind of sacrifice is it in which not even the one who offers the sacrifice is known to be a participant?” But it is by eating of the sacrifice that one becomes a participant—this according to the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 10:18 (“Are not

they who eat the sacrifices partakers of the altar?"). And so it is necessary for a priest, as often as he consecrates, to consume this sacrament under both sets of appearances (*sumat hoc sacramentum integre*).

Reply to objection 1: The consecration of the chrism, or of any other matter, is not a sacrifice in the way that the consecration of the Eucharist is. And so the lines of reasoning are not similar to one another.

Reply to objection 2: The sacrament of baptism is brought to completion in the very use of the matter. And the reason why no one can baptize himself is that the agent and the one acted upon cannot be identical in a sacrament. Hence, neither does the priest consecrate himself in this sacrament; instead, he consecrates the bread and wine, and it is in that consecration that this sacrament is confected. And so the two cases are not similar.

Reply to objection 3: If the body of Christ turns up miraculously under the appearances of flesh on the altar, or the blood under the appearances of blood, it is not to be consumed. For in *Super Leviticum* Jerome says, "It is lawful to eat of this sacrifice which is wonderfully confected in commemoration of Christ, but it is not lawful for anyone to eat of that sacrifice which Christ offered in its own right on the altar of the cross." Nor does the priest thereby become a transgressor, since things that are effected miraculously are not subject to laws. Still, the priest should be advised to consecrate our Lord's body and blood again and consume them.

Article 5

Can a bad priest consecrate the Eucharist?

It seems that a bad priest cannot consecrate the Eucharist (*malus sacerdos Eucharistiam consecrare non possit*):

Objection 1: In *Super Sophoniam* Jerome says, "The priests who confect the Eucharist and distribute our Lord's blood to the people act wickedly against Christ's law if they think that it is the *words* of the one praying that effect the Eucharist and not his *life*, and that it is the *solemn prayer* that is necessary and not the *merits of the priest*. Of the priest it is said: 'A priest who has any sort of blemish may not approach to offer oblations to the Lord' (Leviticus 21:21)." But since a priest who is a sinner is blemished, he has neither the life nor the merits that are fitting for this sacrament. Therefore, a priest who is a sinner cannot consecrate the Eucharist.

Objection 2: In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 4 Damascene says, "By the coming of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine supernaturally turn into (*transit ad*) the body and blood of our Lord." But Pope Gelasius says, and this is contained in *Decretals* 1, q. 1, chap. *Sacrosancta*, "How will the Holy Spirit come down when invoked for the consecration of the divine mystery, if the priest who prays for His presence is shown to be full of sinful actions?" Therefore, the Eucharist cannot be consecrated by a bad priest.

Objection 3: This sacrament is consecrated by the priest's blessing. But the blessing of a priest who is a sinner does not effect the consecration of this sacrament; for it is written, "I will curse your blessings" (Malachi 2:2). And in *Epistola ad Demophilum Monachum* Dionysius says, "He who has not been illumined has completely fallen away from the priestly order; and such an individual seems to me presumptuous if he sets his hand to priestly actions and dares to pronounce, in the person of Christ, unclean words of ill repute—for I will not call them prayers—over the divine symbols."

But contrary to this: In *De Corpore Domini* Augustine says, "Within the Catholic Church, in the mystery of the body and blood of our Lord, nothing more is done by a good priest, nothing less by an evil priest; for [the sacrament] is brought to completion not by the merit of the one who consecrates, but by the word of the creator and by the power of the Holy Spirit."

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1, a. 2 ad 2, and a. 3), the priest consecrates this sacrament not by his own power, but as the minister of Christ, in whose person he consecrates this sacrament. But an individual does not cease to be a minister of Christ by the fact that he is bad; for our Lord has good and bad ministers, i.e., servants. Hence, in Matthew 24:45 our Lord says, “Who do you think is the good and prudent servant ...?” And afterwards He adds, “But if that wicked servant says to himself ...” Again, in 1 Corinthians 4:1 the Apostle says, “Let a man so account us as ministers of Christ ...,” and afterwards he adds, “I have nothing on my conscience, yet I am not thereby justified.” Therefore, he was certain that he was a minister of Christ, and yet he was not certain that he was righteous.

Therefore, an individual can be a minister of Christ even if he is not righteous. And this pertains to the excellence of Christ, who, as the true God, is served not only by good things but also by bad things, which are ordered by His providence toward His own glory. Hence, it is manifest that even if priests are not righteous but are instead sinners, they can consecrate the Eucharist.

Reply to objection 1: With these words Jerome disproves the error of priests who believed that they could *worthily* consecrate the Eucharist by the sole fact that they were priests, even if they were sinners. Jerome disproves this by the fact that those who are blemished are forbidden to approach the altar. Yet this is not to deny that if they do in fact approach the altar, what they offer is a true sacrifice.

Reply to objection 2: Pope Gelasius prefaces the words in question with this: “That most holy rite, which contains the Catholic discipline, claims for itself such reverence that no one may dare to approach it except with a clean conscience.” From this it is manifestly apparent that his meaning is that a priest who is a sinner ought not to approach this sacrament. Hence, by what he adds—viz., “How will the Holy Spirit come when invoked?”—he must mean that the Holy Spirit comes not because of the priest’s merits, but because of the power of Christ, whose words the priest pronounces.

Reply to objection 3: Just as the very same action can be (a) bad insofar as it proceeds from the wicked intention of the minister, but (b) good insofar as it proceeds from the good intention of our Lord, so the blessing of a priest who is a sinner is (a) fittingly cursed insofar as it proceeds unworthily from him and is fittingly thought of as not a prayer, but as something unclean or blasphemous, whereas (b) it is holy and efficacious insofar as it is pronounced in the person of Christ. Hence, it is significant that what is said [in Malachi] is, “I will curse *your* blessings.”

Article 6

Is the Mass of a bad priest of less value than the Mass of a good priest?

It seems that the Mass of a bad priest is not of less value than the Mass of a good priest (*Missa sacerdotis mali non minus valeat quam Missa sacerdotis boni*):

Objection 1: In *Register* Gregory says, “Alas, into what a great snare they fall who believe that the divine and hidden mysteries can be sanctified more by some than by others; for it is one and the same Holy Spirit who sanctifies those mysteries in a hidden and invisible manner.” But these hidden mysteries are celebrated in the Mass. Therefore, the Mass of a bad priest is of no less value than the Mass of a good priest.

Objection 2: Just as baptism is bestowed in the power of Christ, who does the baptizing, so, too, this sacrament is consecrated in the person of Christ. But as was established above (q. 64, a. 1, ad 2), it is not the case that a better baptism is bestowed by a better minister. Therefore, neither is it the case that a Mass is better which is celebrated by a better priest.

Objection 3: Just as the merits of priests differ with respect to *good* and *better*, so they likewise differ with respect to *good* and *bad*. Therefore, if the Mass of a better priest is better, it follows that the

Mass of a bad priest is bad. But this is just wrong, since, as Augustine explains in *De Baptismo*, the badness of the minister cannot redound upon the mysteries of Christ. Therefore, neither is it the case that the Mass of a better minister is itself better.

But contrary to this: *Decretals* 1, q. 1 says, “To the extent that priests are more worthy, the more easily they are heard in the needs for the sake of which they cry out.”

I respond: In the case of the Mass there are two things to consider, viz., (a) the sacrament itself, which is the main thing, and (b) the prayers which are made in the Mass for the living and the dead.

As for the *sacrament itself*, the Mass of a bad priest is of no less value than the Mass of a good priest, since in both cases the same sacrament is confected.

Again, there are two possible ways to think of a *prayer that is made in the Mass*:

In one way, insofar as it has efficacy because of the devotion of the priest who is praying. And on this score there is no doubt that the Mass of the better priest is more fruitful.

In the other way, insofar as a prayer in the Mass is offered by the priest in the person of the whole Church, of which the priest is a minister. This ministry indeed remains even in the case of sinners, as was explained above (a. 5) concerning Christ’s ministry. Hence, in this regard, what is fruitful is not only the prayer of the priest-sinner in the Mass, but all the other prayers that he makes in carrying out the ecclesiastical duties in which he bears the person of the Church. On the other hand, his private prayers are not fruitful—this according to Proverbs 28:9 (“He who turns his ear away from hearing the law, his prayer will be accursed”).

Reply to objection 1: Gregory is speaking here of the holiness of the divine sacrament.

Reply to objection 2: In the sacrament of baptism it is not the case that solemn prayers are made on behalf of all the faithful, as happens in the Mass. And so in this respect there is no comparison. However, there is a similarity as regards the effect of the sacrament.

Reply to objection 3: Because of the power of the Holy Spirit, who communicates the goods of Christ’s members to one other through the bond of charity, it happens that the private good that exists in the Mass of a good priest is fruitful for the others. By contrast, as Augustine explains in *Contra Parmenianum*, the private evil of one man cannot hurt another except through some sort of consent.

Article 7

Is it possible for heretics, schismatics, or those who have been excommunicated to consecrate?

It seems that it is impossible for heretics, schismatics, or those who have been excommunicated to consecrate (*haeretici et schismatici et excommunicati consecrare non possunt*):

Objection 1: Augustine says, “Outside of the Catholic Church there is no place of true sacrifice.” In addition, Pope Leo says (and this is contained in *Decretals* 1, q. 1), “Anywhere else”—viz., other than in the Church, which is the body of Christ—“there are neither valid priesthoods nor true sacrifices (*nec rata sacerdotia nec vera sacrificia*).” But heretics, schismatics, and those who have been excommunicated are separated from the Church. Therefore, they cannot confect a true sacrifice.

Objection 2: As we read in the same place, Pope Innocent says, “Even though we receive lay Arians and other pests of this sort who appear to be repentant, it does not seem that their clergy, whose baptisms alone we recognize as valid, have the dignity of receiving the priesthood or any ministerial office at all.” But it is impossible for any individual to consecrate the Eucharist unless he has the dignity of the priesthood. Therefore, it is impossible for heretics and others of this sort to confect the Eucharist.

Objection 3: It seems to be impossible for an individual outside the Church to do anything in the person of the whole Church. But a priest who consecrates the Eucharist does this in the person of the

whole Church—something that is clear from the fact that he offers all the prayers in the person of the Church. Therefore, it seems that those who are outside the Church, viz., heretics, schismatics, and those who have been excommunicated, cannot consecrate the Eucharist.

But contrary to this: In *Contra Parmenianum* 2 Augustine says, “Just as their baptism remained in them”—viz., in heretics, schismatics, and those who have been excommunicated—“so their ordination remained intact (*mansit integra*).” But it is by dint of his ordination that a priest is able to consecrate the Eucharist. Therefore, as long as their ordination remains intact in them, heretics and schismatics and those who have been excommunicated can consecrate the Eucharist.

I respond: Some have claimed that since heretics, schismatics, and those who have been excommunicated are outside the Church, they cannot confect this sacrament.

But in this they are deceived. For as Augustine says in *Contra Parmenianum* 2, “It is one thing not to have something at all and another thing not to have it in the right way,” and similarly, “Again, it is one thing not to give and another thing not to give in the right way.” Therefore, those who, while situated within the Church, received the power to consecrate in their ordination to the priesthood, have the power in the right way but do not exercise it in the right way if they are afterwards separated from the Church through heresy or schism or excommunication. On the other hand, those who, having been separated in this way, are then ordained, neither have the power in the right way nor exercise it in the right way.

Now the fact that in both cases they *have* the power is clear from the fact that, as Augustine points out in the same place, when they return to unity with the Church, they are not re-ordained, but are instead received with their orders. And since the consecration of the Eucharist is an act that follows upon the power of holy orders, those who are separated from the Church through heresy or schism or excommunication can indeed consecrate the Eucharist, which, having been consecrated by them, contains the true body and blood of Christ, and yet they do not do this *in the right way*, but instead commit a sin by doing it. And so they do not receive the fruit of the sacrifice, which is *spiritual sacrifice*.

Reply to objection 1: This passage and others like it should be understood to be making the point that sacrifice is not offered *in the right way* outside the Church. Hence, outside the Church there cannot be *spiritual sacrifice*, which is a true sacrifice by the truth of the *fruit*, even if there is [outside the Church] a true sacrifice by the truth of the *sacrament*—just as it was likewise explained above (q. 80, a. 3) that a sinner receives Christ’s body *sacramentally* but not *spiritually*.

Reply to objection 2: Baptism alone is recognized as valid in the case of heretics and schismatics because they can licitly baptize in a case of necessity. However, there is no case in which they can licitly consecrate the Eucharist or licitly confer the other sacraments.

Reply to objection 3: In the prayers during the Mass the priest speaks in the person of the Church, in unity with which he stands. By contrast, in the consecration of the sacrament he speaks in the name of Christ, in whose place he acts through the power of [the sacrament of] holy orders. And so if a priest who is cut off from unity with the Church celebrates Mass, then since he does not lose the power of holy orders, he consecrates the real body and blood of Christ, but because he is separated from unity with the Church, his prayers do not have efficacy.

Article 8

Is it possible for a degraded priest to confect this sacrament?

It seems that it is impossible for a degraded priest to confect this sacrament (*sacerdos degradatus non possit hoc sacramentum conficere*):

Objection 1: No one confects this sacrament except through the power of consecrating that he has.

But as the canon says, “a priest who has been degraded does not have the power to consecrate, even though he does have the power to baptize.” Therefore, it seems that is impossible for a degraded priest (*presbyter degradatus*) to consecrate the Eucharist.

Objection 2: He who gives something can also take it away. But it is the bishop who gives a priest the power to consecrate by ordaining him. Therefore, he can also take it away from him by degrading him.

Objection 3: Through degradation a priest loses either the power to consecrate or just the exercise of this power. But not just the exercise, because in that case a degraded priest would not lose more than does an excommunicated priest, who lacks exercise. Therefore, it seems that he loses the power to consecrate. And so it seems that it is impossible for him to confect this sacrament.

But contrary to this: In *Contra Parmenianum* 2 Augustine proves that “apostates from the Faith do not lack baptism” by the fact that “[baptism] is not restored to them when they return repentant, and in this way one judges that it cannot be lost.” But, similarly, if a degraded priest is reconciled, he does not have to be ordained again. Therefore, he has not lost the power to consecrate. And so it is possible for a degraded priest to confect this sacrament.

I respond: The power to consecrate the Eucharist belongs to the character of the priestly order. But as was explained above (q. 63, a. 5), since a character is given by a sort of consecration, it is indelible—just as the consecration of anything whatsoever is perpetual and can neither be lost nor repeated. Hence, it is clear that the power to consecrate is not lost by a priest’s being degraded. For in *Contra Parmenianum* 2 Augustine says, “Both of them”—viz., baptism and holy orders—“are sacraments, and both are conferred on a man by a sort of consecration, the one when he is baptized and the other when he is ordained. That is why in both cases it is impermissible for them to be repeated by Catholics.” And so it is clear that it is possible for a degraded priest to confect this sacrament.

Reply to objection 1: This canon is spoken not as an assertion but as a question, as can be gathered from the surrounding text.

Reply to objection 2: A bishop gives the power of priestly orders not by his own power, but instrumentally as the minister of God, whose effect cannot be removed by man—this according to Matthew 19:6 (“What God has joined together, let no man put asunder”). And so the bishop cannot take away this power, just as the one who baptizes cannot take away the baptismal character.

Reply to objection 3: Excommunication is medicinal. And that is why the exercise of priestly power is taken away from excommunicated priests not, as it were, forever, but for their correction, up to a certain time. By contrast, this exercise is taken away from degraded priests as from those who have been, as it were, condemned forever.

Article 9

Can an individual licitly receive Communion from heretical or excommunicated priests, or even from priests who are sinners, and licitly hear Mass said by them?

It seems that an individual can licitly receive Communion from heretical or excommunicated priests, or even from priests who are sinners, and licitly hear Mass said by them (*aliquis licite possit communionem recipere a sacerdotibus haereticis vel excommunicatis, vel etiam peccatoribus, et ab eis Missam audire*):

Objection 1: As Augustine says in *Contra Petilianum*, “Let no one avoid God’s sacraments, either in a good man or in a bad man.” But even if priests are sinners or heretics or excommunicated, they confect the true sacrament. Therefore, it seems that one should not avoid receiving Communion from

them or hearing Mass said by them.

Objection 2: As was explained above (q. 67, a. 2 and q. 73, art. 3, obj. 2), the true body of Christ is a figure of the mystical body. But the true body of Christ is consecrated by the priests mentioned above. Therefore, it seems that those who belong to the mystical body can share in their sacrifices.

Objection 3: Many sins are more serious than fornication. But one is not prohibited from hearing Masses said by priests who sin in other ways. Therefore, one should likewise not be prohibited from hearing Masses said by priests who are fornicators.

But contrary to this: A canon in dist. 32 says, “Let no one listen to a Mass said by a priest whom he knows without doubt to have a concubine.” And in *Dialogi* 3 Gregory says, “A faithless father sent an Arian bishop to his son, in order that at that bishop’s hand his son might receive Communion from a sacrilegious consecration. But when the Arian bishop arrived, a man devoted to God reproved him, as he ought to have.”

I respond: As was explained above (a. 5, ad 1 and a. 7), if priests are heretics or schismatics or excommunicated, or even if they are sinners, then even though they have the power to consecrate the Eucharist, they nonetheless do not exercise that power in the right way, and they commit a sin when they do exercise it. But any individual who shares in a sin with another becomes himself a participant in the sin; hence, in the Second Canon of John we read, “Whoever greets him”—viz., a heretic—“shares in all his evil works.” And that is why it is impermissible to receive Communion from priests of the sort just mentioned or to hear Mass said by them.

However, there are differences among the aforementioned groups:

For heretics, schismatics, and those who have been excommunicated have been deprived by the Church’s sentence of carrying out a consecration. And that is why any individual who hears a Mass said by them, or who receives sacraments from them, commits a sin.

By contrast, not all priests who are sinners have been deprived by the Church’s sentence of exercising this power. And so even if they have been suspended as far as God’s sentence is concerned, they have not been suspended with regard to others by the Church’s sentence. And so, until there is a sentence on the part of the Church, it is permissible to receive Communion from them and to listen to a Mass said by them. Hence, in a Gloss on 1 Corinthians 5:11 (“... not even to take food with such a one”) Augustine says, “He did not, by saying this, want a man to be judged by a judgment based on suspicion, or, again, by an extraordinary usurped judgment; instead, he wanted him to be judged by God’s law according to the Church’s order, whether by a freewill confession or by an accusation and conviction.”

Reply to objection 1: We are not refusing God’s sacraments by the fact that we refuse to hear a Mass said by such priests or to receive Communion from them; instead, we are venerating the sacraments. Hence, a host consecrated by such priests is to be adored and, if it is reserved, it can be licitly consumed by a priest in good standing. Instead, what we are rejecting is the sin of those who minister unworthily.

Reply to objection 2: The unity of the mystical body is the fruit of the true body as received. But those who receive or minister unworthily are, as was noted above (a. 7 and q. 80, a. 4), deprived of this fruit.

Reply to objection 3: Even though fornication is not a more serious sin than other sins, men are nonetheless more prone to it because of the disordered desire of the flesh (*propter carnis concupiscentiam*). And so this sin as committed by priests is specifically prohibited by the Church, lest any individual hear the Mass of a priest who has a concubine. However, this is to be understood of a priest who is notorious, either because of a sentence imposed on one who has been convicted, or because of a confession made in court, or when the sin cannot be concealed any sort of coverup.

Article 10

Is a priest permitted to abstain altogether from consecrating the Eucharist?

It seems that a priest is permitted to abstain altogether from consecrating the Eucharist (*liceat sacerdoti omnino a consecratione Eucharistiae abstinere*):

Objection 1: Just as it belongs to role of priest to consecrate the Eucharist, so, too, it belongs to his role to baptize and to be a minister in the other sacraments. But a priest is not obligated to minister in the case of the other sacraments, except because he has received the care of souls. Therefore, it seems that he is not obligated to consecrate the Eucharist, either, as long as he does not have the care of souls.

Objection 2: No one is obligated to do what he is not permitted to do. But as was explained above (a. 5, ad 1 and a. 7), a priest who is a sinner or who has even been excommunicated is not permitted to consecrate the Eucharist. Therefore, it seems that such priests are not obligated to celebrate the Eucharist. And so neither are any other priests; otherwise, the priests in question would gain an advantage from their sin.

Objection 3: A priest's dignity is not lost through a subsequent infirmity; for instance, Pope Galasius says, and this is found in *Decretals*, dist. 55, "Just as the canonical precepts do not allow those who are feeble in body to enter the priesthood, so if an individual has been established in the priesthood and later becomes disabled, he cannot lose what he received at the time when he was healthy." But it sometimes happens that individuals ordained as priests incur certain debilities by which they are prevented from celebrating the Eucharist, e.g., leprosy or epilepsy or something of that sort. Therefore, it seems not to be the case that priests are obligated to celebrate the Eucharist.

But contrary to this: In one of his orations Ambrose says, "It is a serious matter that we do not come to your table with a clean heart and innocent hands, but it is more serious if, fearful about our sins, we do not even offer our sacrifice."

I respond: Some have claimed that a priest can licitly abstain from consecrating unless he is obligated by the care committed to him to celebrate Mass for the people and to offer them the sacraments.

But it is not reasonable to make this claim. For each individual is obligated to make use of the grace given to him when it is opportune to do so—this according to 2 Corinthians 6:1 ("We entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain"). Now the opportunity of offering sacrifice is thought of not only in relation to *Christ's faithful ones*, to whom the sacraments have to administered, but principally in relation to *God*, to whom sacrifice is offered in the consecration of this sacrament. Hence, a priest, even if does not have the care of souls, is not permitted to abstain from the celebration of the Mass altogether, but it seems that he is obligated to celebrate Mass at least on the principal feast days, and especially on those days on which the faithful have been accustomed to receive Communion. And hence it is that 2 Maccabees 4:14 says against certain priests that "they were not longer intent upon their service at the altar ... despising the sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices."

Reply to objection 1: The other sacraments are brought to completion by the use of the faithful. And so priests are not obligated to administer these sacraments except for those priests who have care over the faithful. But this sacrament is brought to completion in the consecration of the Eucharist, in which sacrifice is offered to God and to which a priest is obligated by the holy orders which he has already received.

Reply to objection 2: A priest who is a sinner, if he has been deprived by an ecclesiastical sentence of the exercise of his holy orders, either absolutely speaking or temporarily, is rendered incapable of offering the sacrifice, and so the obligation is lifted. Now this results in a loss of spiritual fruit for him rather than in any sort of advantage.

On the other hand, if he has not been deprived of the power to celebrate the Eucharist, the obligation is not lifted. And yet he is not in a dilemma (*non tamen est perplexus*), since he is able to repent of his sin and celebrate the Eucharist.

Reply to objection 3: A weakness or illness that supervenes on the priestly order does not remove the order, but it impedes the exercise of the order with respect to the consecration of the Eucharist—(a) sometimes because of an *impossibility* of exercise, e.g., if he is deprived of his eyes or his fingers or of the use of his tongue, and (b) sometimes because of some *danger*, as is clear in the case an individual who suffers from epilepsy or, again, from some sort of mental ailment (*quamcumque alienationem mentis*), and (c) sometimes because of an *abomination*, as is clear in the case of a leper, who ought not to celebrate the Eucharist; yet he can say Mass in private, unless the leprosy has advanced to the point of rendering him incapable of this because of the wasting away of his limbs.