

Sacrificate sacrificium iustitiae:

The Transformation Wrought by the Cross of Christ

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Prefatory remarks

Limits of time have meant that the case that I make in the following presentation is expressed in an economical manner. I have therefore not been able to fill out the argument as fully or as clearly as I would have wished.

The reader ought to bear in mind that my observations and arguments concerning the homosexualization of the Catholic priesthood are not intended to engage the wider homosexual question. (Naturally, I subscribe to the Church's position as stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and in various other documents.)¹ The confines of this article are strictly theological and ultimately concern the issue of homosexuality in the context of the Catholic priesthood alone. My use of the word 'homosexualization' ought not moreover be taken to mean that I believe a majority of priests are homosexual. That idea is manifestly false. In the sense intended here, even if only 0.01% of priests were homosexual, one could speak of the 'homosexualization' of the priesthood. My reflections in this article simply unfold in the context of an awakening realization that there is a

¹ See, for example, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357-2359. At CCC 2358 we read: "The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition" (accessed at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a6.htm). See also Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 10: "It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard for others which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law" (accessed at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html).

problem that needs to be confronted.² Pope Emeritus Benedict recently pointed out that the seeds of this problem were sown in the “unprecedented radicalism”³ of 1960s. He writes that “In various seminaries homosexual cliques were established, which acted more or less openly and significantly changed the climate in the seminaries.”⁴ While I certainly do not wish to exaggerate the extent of the problem, clearly something is amiss. This article is intended simply as a speculative engagement with that ‘something’.

² For a scholarly indication of the contours of the problem, see Gerard J.M. van den Aardweg, “Abuse by Priests, Homosexuality, *Humanae vitae*, and a Crisis of Masculinity in the Church,” *The Linacre Quarterly* 78 (2001): 274-93 (accessed 26/04/2019 at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6026966/>). The author states the following, for example: “The prevalence of homosexual tendencies among seminarians and priests is considerably higher than the national average. Thomas Plante, a psychologist screening American seminarians, estimated 20–40 percent. Some ex-residents of seminaries and theological institutes believed up to half of the students and several faculty members had same-sex tendencies. These may seem impressionistic over-estimations, but the reality in some institutes and communities helps substantiate these impressions. For example, two percent of the clergy of the city of São Paulo (27 out of 1,500) died of AIDS between 1987 and 1993. At that time, homosexual and bisexual exposure in Brazil accounted for over half of AIDS cases (where the route of exposure was known); and there were over four hundred cases of “men who have sex with other men” for every case of AIDS. Thus, the number of homosexually *active* priests must have been considerably higher than the 2 percent incidence of homosexuality. After thorough examination of the scandals at the Austrian Sankt Pölten seminary in 2004, only ten of forty seminarians were allowed to continue their studies. Though it was not about homosexual misbehavior alone, “a considerable number of persons were homosexual,” as the visitor declared afterwards. Typically, the misconduct started in a homosexual ring. The same year, the novice master of the Jesuits in Nuremberg openly affirmed the existence in German seminaries and religious communities of “homosexual hierarchies” that created “power structures and dependencies.” ... Similar situations existed in the Netherlands, also in orthodox, “conservative” seminaries. Because of the phenomenon of homosexuals “flocking together,” a high prevalence of men with SSA in certain institutes or dioceses is not indicative of the average prevalence. These observations are probably especially valid for countries in the sphere of influence of Western culture. Many men with SSA do not abuse minors, but either seek partners among adult young men within or without Church circles, or seldom or never act out their feeling – the latter is probably a small minority. Overall, a prevalence estimation of 10–15 percent is on the conservative side. In the last decade, the trend seems slowly downward.”

³ For the full text of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s letter on the Church and the scandal of sexual abuse, see <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2019/04/10/full-text-of-benedict-xvi-the-church-and-the-scandal-of-sexual-abuse/>

⁴ Ibid.

Introduction

St. Thomas Aquinas argues that sacrifice pertains to the natural law.⁵ As such it an expression of the natural inclinations which furnish the basis of the natural law, most particularly the third inclination – namely the inclination to the good in accord with the nature of reason.⁶ Sacrifice – an external act of the virtue of religion, which “excels among the moral virtues”⁷ – is offered to God alone.⁸ It is a sign of recognition of man’s utter dependence on God as his Creator.⁹ It is because of the darkening of the intellect entailed by sin that man’s appreciation of the natural law fell into abeyance after the Fall.¹⁰ Hence the need for God to reveal the Old Law, with the Ten Commandments. Christ fulfills the Old Law with His sacrifice on the Cross, thereby putting an end

⁵ *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

⁶ See *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2. Thomas’s full statement of these inclinations is as follows: “[I]n man there is first of all an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances: inasmuch as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature: and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals: and in virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law, *which nature has taught to all animals* [*Pandect. Just.* I, tit. i], such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth. Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society: and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law; for instance, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination” (ibid.).

⁷ *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 6.

⁸ See *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 2.

⁹ See *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

¹⁰ See *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 6, ad 1.

to the need to offer bloody sacrifice.¹¹ His sacrifice on the Cross, I argue, manifests the ultimate expression of the natural inclinations rightly ordered by grace. The natural inclinations when rightly ordered are therefore necessarily sacrificial or cruciform in character. Indeed, they are ecstatically cruciform since they transport the one who participates by grace in the life of Christ out of himself in love towards the other. Catholic marriage and priesthood offer two examples of this ecstatic cruciformity. Like any Christian vocation, they entail acts of sacrificial love if they are true to their nature. The sacrificial theology that underpins both of these vocations has one of its sources in Eph. 5:21-33.

Our times however have witnessed a withdrawal from the Cross of Christ. They suffer the phenomena of the culture of death, which phenomena are fueled by a subversion of the natural inclinations. Contraception, abortion, the homosexual culture, and so on, can be described as entstatic phenomena:¹² instead of going out in love towards the other, the subverted inclinations are locked within a body that is ruled by an egotistical and arbitrary will. The anthropology that undergirds these entstatic phenomena is dualistic. This anthropology separates human personhood from the conditions of human embodiment and allows reason to manipulate the corporeal conditions of human being according to its [reason's] own designs. All too often this manipulation runs contrary to the indications inscribed the conditions of our embodiment.¹³ Dualistic

¹¹ See *STh* I-II, q. 107, a. 2: “[T]he New Law is compared to the Old as the perfect to the imperfect. Now everything perfect fulfils that which is lacking in the imperfect. And accordingly the New Law fulfils the Old by supplying that which was lacking in the Old Law.

Now two things of every law is to make men righteous and virtuous, ... and consequently the end of the Old Law was the justification of men. The Law, however, could not accomplish this: but foreshadowed it by certain ceremonial actions, and promised it in words. And in this respect, the New Law fulfils the Old by justifying men through the power of Christ's Passion. This is what the Apostle says (Rom. viii. 3, 4): *What the Law could not do . . . God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . hath condemned sin in the flesh, that the justification of the Law might be fulfilled in us.* And in this respect, the New Law gives what the Old Law promised, according to 2 Cor. i. 20: *Whatever are the promises of God, in Him, i.e. in Christ, they are “Yea”.* [*The Douay version reads thus: *All the promises of God are in Him, 'It is'.*] Again, in this respect, it also fulfils what the Old Law foreshadowed. Hence it is written (Col. ii. 17) concerning the ceremonial precepts that they were *a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ*; in other words, the reality is found in Christ. Wherefore the New Law is called the law of reality; whereas the Old Law is called the law of shadow or of figure.”

¹² The term ‘entstatic’ is borrowed from G.J. McAleer, *Ecstatic Morality and Sexual Politics: A Catholic and Antitotalitarian Theory of the Body* (NY: Fordham University Press, 2005).

¹³ On this point, see Kevin E. O'Reilly, OP, “The Church as the Defender of Conscience in our Age,” *Nova et Vetera* 12 (2013), 210-11.

anthropology when instantiated in the body politic manifests itself in tyrannical government. While the Church of course is not a political body, it is nevertheless the Body of Christ. Priests, “made in the likeness of Christ the Priest by the Sacrament of Orders,”¹⁴ are entrusted with the task of caring for this Body, “acting as ministers of him who is the Head.”¹⁵ What, one might wonder, are the ecclesial implications of the homosexualization of the clergy as well as its implications for the culture of life, the proclamation of which has been entrusted to the Church?¹⁶

Sacrifice as pertaining to the natural law

In the *Summa Theologiae*, at the very outset of his reflections on sacrifice, St. Thomas Aquinas writes: “At all times and among all nations there has always been the offering of sacrifices. Now that which is observed by all is seemingly natural. Therefore the offering of sacrifices is of the natural law.”¹⁷ In arguing in support of this contention, he begins by pointing out the defects or limitations (*defectus*) of the human condition on account of which we stand in need of help and direction from a superior being who is “known to all under the name of God.”¹⁸ When we search elsewhere in the *Summa*, we learn that these *defectus* are twofold, pertaining both to the body and to the soul. Bodily *defectus* include death¹⁹ as well as hunger and thirst.²⁰ With regard to the *defectus* of the soul, these include such things as sin;²¹ the *fomes* of sin, that is to say, “an inclination of the

¹⁴ *PO* 12 (accessed 26/04/2019 at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ See *Evangelium Vitae* 1 (hereafter *EV*): “The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message. Lovingly received day after day by the Church, it is to be preached with dauntless fidelity as “good news” to the people of every age and culture” (accessed 01/05/2019 at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html).

¹⁷ *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1, *sed contra*.

¹⁸ *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

¹⁹ See *STh* II-II, q. 164, a. 1; II-II, q. 164, a.1, ad. 1; II-II, q. 164, a. 1, ad. 4; II-II, q. 164, a. 1, ad. 5; III, q. 14, a. 1; III, q. 14, a. 2; III, q. 14.3; III, q. 14, a. 3, ad. 2.

²⁰ *STh* III, q. 14, a. 1.

²¹ *STh* III, q. 15, a. 1

sensual appetite to what is contrary to reason”;²² ignorance,²³ passibility,²⁴ sensible pain,²⁵ sorrow,²⁶ fear,²⁷ wonder,²⁸ and anger.²⁹

Man’s experience of his *defectus* awakens him to his limitations and to his mortality. They force him to recognize his need for help and direction “from someone above him.”³⁰ On analogy with the domain of natural things, in which “the lower are naturally subject to the higher,”³¹ Thomas contends that “it is a dictate of natural reason in accordance with man’s natural inclination that he should tender submission and honor, according to his mode, to that which is above man.”³² By “man’s natural inclination” he clearly means the inclination to the good in accord with the nature of reason since human beings alone among corporeally constituted substances can recognize the existence of angelic beings and of God. While lower things are naturally subject to higher in the material universe, the relationship of human beings to the angels and to God is not subject to this natural necessity. Humans must first recognize their dependency on the angels and, ultimately, on God and are then free to translate the demands of the ontological constitution of reality into action in the form of tendering honor and submission to that which is above them.³³ This point is based on Thomas’s understanding of the intimate relationship that obtains between the speculative intellect and practical intellect – which, it must be emphasized, are two modes of operation of one and the

²² *STh* III, q. 15, a. 2.

²³ *STh* III, q. 15, a. 3.

²⁴ *STh* III, q. 15, a. 4.

²⁵ *STh* III, q. 15, a. 5.

²⁶ *STh* III, q. 15, a. 6.

²⁷ *STh* III, q. 15, a. 7.

²⁸ *STh* III, q. 15, a. 8.

²⁹ *STh* III, q. 15, a. 9.

³⁰ *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ For a very lucid treatment of this point, see Josef Pieper, *Living the Truth*, trans. Lothar Krauth and Lange, Stella (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 141-44.

same intellect.³⁴ For Thomas practical reason is in fact an extension of the theoretical.³⁵ The practical reason presupposes the theoretical and is rooted in it. In effect, therefore, the reality which is perceived by speculative reason is translated into action by practical reason. At the same time therefore this reality constitutes the measure of human action. For reality is the measure of reason in its speculative mode of activity, while practical reason is grounded in and is an extension of speculative reason.³⁶

At this point considerations of the natural law properly speaking enter Thomas's train of thought. In this regard the fundamental role of reason in the constitution of law ought to be borne in mind since law is an *opus rationis*, that is to say, it is a work of reason. Thomas defines law as "nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated."³⁷ This reason is not the autonomous creative force of subjectivity as construed by modernity but is rather itself measured by reality. It is in terms of this understanding that Thomas unfolds his argument as to why it pertains to the natural law to offer sacrifice to God. He writes in this regard, as we have already seen, that "it is a dictate of natural reason in accordance with man's natural inclination that he should tender submission and honor, according to his mode, to that which is above man."³⁸ The inclination in question is the inclination to the good in accord with the nature of reason, which is proper to human beings. This inclination cashes out in terms of seeking the truth about God and living in society.³⁹ As will become evident, however, this inclination cannot be divorced in its concrete operation from the other two inclinations listed by Thomas at *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2, namely the inclination to self-preservation and to the procreation and education offspring. Their interaction is demanded by the psychosomatic constitution of human nature. Our psychosomatic nature demands moreover that we employ certain sensible things (*quibusdam sensibilibus rebus*), "by offering them to God in sign of the subjection and honor due to Him."⁴⁰ One encounters a similar phenomenon in human affairs, for men often signify their

³⁴ See *STh* I, q. 79, a. 11.

³⁵ *STh* I, q. 79, a. 11, *sed contra*.

³⁶ For a more extended and a very lucid treatment of this point, see Pieper, *Living the Truth*, 141-44.

³⁷ *STh* I-II, q. 90, q. 4.

³⁸ *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

³⁹ See *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

⁴⁰ *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

recognition of authority through offering gifts.⁴¹ When directed to God this kind of offering assumes the nature of a sacrifice. The offering of sacrifice, concludes Thomas, therefore pertains to the natural law as an *opus rationis*.⁴² This conclusion is to be understood in a generic manner, that is to say, the determination of sacrifices by God or by man is still required.⁴³

Israel's worship fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice on the Cross

Thus far we have followed Thomas in establishing that sacrifice, which ought to be offered to God alone,⁴⁴ pertains to the natural law. With the passage of time after the Fall of Adam, however, "the natural law began to be obscured on account of the exuberance of sin,"⁴⁵ even in the case of good men. On the one hand, the Old Law in effect constituted a restatement of the precepts of the natural law while adding certain precepts of its own.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the Old Law was given in order to ordain men to Christ. It in effect ordered men to Christ in two ways: firstly, by

⁴¹ See *ibid*.

⁴² *Ibid*. Here Thomas actually writes that the offering of sacrifice pertains to natural right (*oblatio sacrificii pertinet ad ius naturale*). Right (*ius*) properly understood however is the object of justice (see *STh* II-II, q. 57, a. 1), while law as an *opus rationis* gives expression to right. On this point see *STh* II-II, q. 57, a. 1, ad 3: "Just as there pre-exists in the mind of the craftsman an expression of the things to be made externally by his craft, which expression is called the rule of his craft, so too there pre-exists in the mind an expression of the particular just work which the reason determines, and which is a kind of rule of prudence. If this rule be expressed in writing it is called a *law*, which according to Isidore (*Etym.* v, 1) is a *written decree*: and so law is not the same as right, but an expression of right (*lex non est ipsum ius, proprie loquendo, sed aliqualis ratio iuris*)."

⁴³ On this point see *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 4: "Sacrifice is twofold, as stated above (A. 2). The first and principal is the inward sacrifice, which all are bound to offer, since all are obliged to offer to God a devout mind. The other is the outward sacrifice, and this again is twofold. There is a sacrifice which is deserving of praise merely through being offered to God in protestation of our subjection to God: and the obligation of offering this sacrifice was not the same for those under the New or the Old Law, as for those who were not under the Law. For those who are under the Law are bound to offer certain definite sacrifices according to the precepts of the Law, whereas those who were not under the Law were bound to perform certain outward actions in God's honor, as became those among whom they dwelt, but not definitely to this or that action. The other outward sacrifice is when the outward actions of the other virtues are performed out of reverence for God; some of which are a matter of precept; and to these all are bound, while others are works of supererogation, and to these all are not bound."

⁴⁴ See *STh* II-II, q. 85, a.2.

⁴⁵ *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 6.

⁴⁶ See *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 5.

bearing witness to Christ;⁴⁷ and, secondly, by withdrawing men from idolatrous worship “it enclosed them (*concludebat*) in the worship of the one true God, by Whom the human race was to be saved through Christ.”⁴⁸ While the Old Law was good, however, it was imperfectly so since it was incapable of making man fit to partake in everlasting happiness. The Old Law was good because it was “in accordance with reason.”⁴⁹ Thus it “repressed concupiscence which is in conflict with reason”⁵⁰ and it forbade all kinds of sin which are also contrary to reason. Only the grace of the Holy Spirit however, which the Old Law could not confer since it was reserved to Christ, can render man “altogether fit to partake of everlasting happiness.⁵¹ As Thomas writes, “although the Old Law contained precepts of charity, nevertheless it did not confer the Holy Ghost by Whom *charity ... is spread abroad in our hearts* (Rom. v. 5).”⁵² Expressed otherwise, charity fulfills the law⁵³ since charity which elevates the will in effect refracts grace which has the essence of the soul as its subject.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ See *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 2: “[T]he Old Law ordained men to Christ in two ways. First by bearing witness to Christ; wherefore He Himself says (Luke xxiv. 44): *All things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law . . . and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me:* and (Jo. v. 46): *If you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe Me also; for he wrote of Me.*”

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*: “Secondly, as a kind of disposition, since by withdrawing men from idolatrous worship, it enclosed [concludebat] them in the worship of one God, by Whom the human race was to be saved through Christ. Wherefore the Apostle says (Gal. iii. 23): *Before the faith came, we were kept under the law shut up [conclusi], unto that faith which was to be revealed.* Now it is evident that the same thing it is, which gives a disposition to the end, and which brings to the end; and when I say *the same*, I mean that it does so either by itself or through its subjects. For the devil would not make a law whereby men would be led to Christ, Who was to cast him out, according to Mt. 12:26: *If Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom is divided* [Vulg., – *he is divided against himself*]. Therefore the Old Law was given by the same God, from Whom came salvation to man, through the grace of Christ.”

⁴⁹ *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *STh* I-II, q. 107, a. 1, ad 2. See also *STh* I, q. 43, a. 3, ad 2: “Sanctifying grace disposes the soul to possess the divine person; and this is signified when it is said that the Holy Ghost is given according to the gift of grace. Nevertheless the gift itself of grace is from the Holy Ghost; which is meant by the words, *the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*”

⁵³ See *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 1.

⁵⁴ See *STh* I-II, q. 110, aa. 3 and 4.

In his treatment of Christ's Passion, Thomas once again broaches Christ's fulfilment of the Law. In brief, by His suffering Christ fulfilled all the precepts of the Old Law – moral, ceremonial (which pertain to worship), and judicial (i.e., ordering the state of the people according to justice and equity).⁵⁵ In this regard it ought to be borne in mind that “the ceremonial precepts are determinations of the moral precepts whereby man is directed to God, just as the judicial precepts are determinations of the moral precepts whereby he is directed to his neighbor.”⁵⁶ Since the precepts of the moral order are founded on the precepts of charity which direct us to love of God and love of neighbour, the ceremonial and judicial precepts as fulfilled by Christ ought necessarily to be understood as expressions of charity. As “a certain perfection of love” (*perfectionem quandam amoris*),⁵⁷ charity is ecstatic: it “goes out from itself simply,”⁵⁸ inasmuch as the one who is animated by charity “wishes and does good to his friend, by caring and providing for him, for his sake.”⁵⁹ The charity by which we love our neighbor is of course an expression of our love of God. As Thomas writes, “the aspect under which our neighbor is to be loved, is God, since what we ought to love in our neighbor is that he may be in God.”⁶⁰ These two dimensions are displayed in Christ's death on the Cross.

In effect Thomas establishes that Christ in His Passion fulfils in the order of grace what he [Thomas] has written elsewhere concerning sacrifice as pertaining to the natural law.⁶¹ In fulfilling the demands of the natural law, Christ fulfils all that is virtually contained in the three natural inclinations that ground the precepts of the natural law, albeit in a way that transcends the capacity of ungraced reason to grasp – albeit Thomas does not explicitly state this point. Thus, the inclination to self-preservation is fulfilled by the fact that Christ's death “is said to have destroyed in us both the death of the soul, caused by sin, according to Rom. iv. 25: *He was delivered up (namely unto death) for our sins*: and the death of the body, consisting in the separation of the soul,

⁵⁵ See *STh* III, q. 47, a. 2, ad 1.

⁵⁶ *STh* I-II, q. 101, a. 1.

⁵⁷ *STh* I-II, q. 26, a. 3.

⁵⁸ *STh* I-II, q. 28, a. 3.

⁵⁹ *STh* III, q. 48, a. 3. See also III, q. 46, a. 10, ad 1; III, q. 73, a. 4; and, III, q. 75, a. 1

⁶⁰ *STh* II-II, q. 25, a. 1.

⁶¹ See *STh* II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

according to 1 Cor. xv. 54: *Death is swallowed up in victory.*⁶² The inclination to the procreation is fulfilled by Christ's crucifixion inasmuch as in this event Christ gives Himself up for His spouse, the Church, thereby also raising marriage to a sacramental level since husband and wife now participate in Christ's relationship to His Church, which relationship is sacrificial in character.⁶³ The inclination to the good according to the nature of reason is fulfilled by charity in both its vertical and horizontal aspects, as already intimated.

Christ in His Passion reveals that human nature is so constituted that its optimal flourishing is predicated upon ecstatic self-sacrifice. To be more precise, human flourishing is a function of the degree to which we participate in Christ's sacrifice on the Cross in which, in his human nature, He fulfills the exigencies of the natural law as restated in the Old Law. Given that the natural inclinations are ecstatic in character as instantiations of the basic ontological law *bonum est diffusivum sui*,⁶⁴ it can be said that genuine human flourishing is grounded in a cruciform ecstasy. It is this cruciform ecstasy that clearly distinguishes genuine Catholic culture from all other cultures. The next section turns to a brief account of the concrete realization of this Catholic culture, that is to say, a civilization informed by the power and wisdom of the Cross, which is foolishness to those who are perishing but the power of God for those who are being saved.⁶⁵

Cruciform ecstasy: Catholic marriage and priesthood

Conjugal love, John Paul II teaches, "reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained, conjugal charity, which is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ who gave Himself on the Cross."⁶⁶ These words distill and communicate the essence of St. Paul's teaching on marriage at Eph. 5:21-33. At vv. 25-27 we read that "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."

⁶² *STh* III, q. 50, a. 1.

⁶³ See Eph. 5:21-33.

⁶⁴ See, for example, *STh* I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 2; and, *Super Sent.*, IV d. 46, q. 2, a. 1, qc. 2.

⁶⁵ 1 Cor 1:18.

⁶⁶ *Familiaris Consortio* (hereafter *FC*) 13 (accessed 17/04/19 at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html).

This teaching is stated in striking terms by Brant Pitre. According to Pitre, Paul describes Christ “as a bridegroom, the Church as his bride, and the crucifixion of Jesus as the kind of ancient Jewish wedding day on which he “loved” her and “gave himself” for her.”⁶⁷ Pitre adds that “From Paul’s point of view, the torture and crucifixion of Jesus on Calvary was nothing less than an expression of *spousal love*.”⁶⁸ The sacrificial dynamics of sacramental marriage are however not alien to the natural law but rather constitute its fulfilment. After all the natural law is not only restated in the Old Law, it is contained in the New Law since grace perfects nature, it does not annul it. God, in creating man and woman, has imprinted on their humanity the inclination to matrimonial sacrifice.⁶⁹

Openness to new life as the fruit of sexual union instantiates one important aspect of marital cruciformity. As John Paul II puts it in his pre-papal treatment of married love in *Love and Responsibility*, “willing acceptance of parenthood serves to break down reciprocal egoism – (or the egoism of one party at which the other connives) – behind which lurks the will to exploit the person.”⁷⁰ Heterosexual marriage is, as G.J. McAleer expresses the point, “inescapably a call to participate in creation, to render the service of being deposed to the beginning of another person’s existence.”⁷¹ The law of cruciform ecstasy is operative in the sexual act itself when ordered to procreation since virtually contained in this act is in a sense all of the parental sacrifices that will ensue in the case of the successful realization of the act’s teleology. Heterosexual marital love is sacrificial in a way that is *sui generis*: man and wife are drawn away from their egocentric concerns in order to care for the helpless other, the fruit of their union. This helpless other – who begins perhaps to cause some headaches when he/she becomes not so helpless – is according to the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes* the supreme gift of marriage and contributes immensely to the good of the parents themselves since their fulfilment in Christ is cultivated and perfected by sacrifice. “[T]rusting in divine Providence and refining the spirit of sacrifice,” the document teaches,

⁶⁷ Brant Pitre, *Jesus the Bridegroom: The Greatest Story Ever Told* (New York: Image, 2014), 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ FC 13.

⁷⁰ Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T.Willetts (London: Collins, 1981), 230.

⁷¹ McAleer, *Ecstatic Morality*, 130.

“married Christians glorify the Creator and strive toward fulfillment in Christ when with a generous human and Christian sense of responsibility they acquit themselves of the duty to procreate.”⁷²

While Eph. 5:21-33 provides the basis for understanding sacramental marriage as what Michael Schmaus describes as “a re-enactment of the mutual relationship of Christ and the church,”⁷³ it also throws some light on the true nature and the virtuous fulfilment of the ministerial priesthood, which is “a participation in the one priesthood of Christ.”⁷⁴ As Paul VI states in his encyclical on priestly celibacy, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*,⁷⁵ however, an intrinsic aspect of Christ’s priesthood is also His celibacy. There exists an intimate bond between His celibacy and His priesthood. The fact that the ministerial priesthood participates in Christ’s priesthood means that Christ constitutes the supreme model and ideal for all priests. Imitation of the example of His Priesthood, understood properly, is not something extrinsic to the nature of priesthood but rather constitutes an intrinsic perfection of it since celibacy itself is an element intrinsic to the form of Christ’s charity and sacrifice. Paul VI writes: “[T]he total and exclusive dedication of Christ to His mission of salvation provides reason and example for our assimilation to the form of charity and sacrifice proper to Christ our Savior.”⁷⁶ This charity and sacrifice is spousal in character, as

⁷² See *GS* 50 (accessed on 17/04/19 at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

⁷³ Michael Schmaus, *Dogma*, vol. 5: *The Church as Sacrament* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 269.

⁷⁴ *LG* 10 (accessed 17/04/19 at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html). See also *STh* III, q. 22, a. 4: “Christ is the fountain-head of the entire priesthood (*fons totius sacerdotii*): for the priest of the Old Law was a figure of Him; while the priest of the New Law works in His person” By virtue of the hypostatic union Christ is constituted as the perfect High Priest. By virtue of the sacrament of Orders priests are conformed to the image of Christ the eternal High Priest and participate in His function as the sole Mediator. See *LG* 28. See also *Mediator Dei* 42. St. Thomas writes that the priest as mediator “bestows Divine things on the people, wherefore *sacerdos* (priest) means a giver of sacred things (*sacra dans*), according to Mal. ii. 7: *They shall seek the law at his*, i.e. the priest’s, *mouth*; and again, forasmuch as he offers up the people’s prayers to God, and, in a manner, makes satisfaction to God for their sins” (*STh* III, q. 22, a. 1).

⁷⁵ Hereafter referred to as *SC* (accessed 18/04/2019 at http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_24061967_sacerdotalis.html).

⁷⁶ See *SC* 25. Celibacy in the case of the ministerial priesthood, I argue, thus entails a greater degree of participation in Christ’s priesthood.

indicated at Eph. 5: 21-33.⁷⁷ As Pitre writes, “the priest is called to make a complete gift of himself, body and soul, to the Church, the bride of Christ, similar to the way that a husband gives of himself for his wife.”⁷⁸ He adds that “in some ways, the priest’s gift of himself to the Church is even *more* like Christ’s gift of himself to his bride, because it is virginal, supernatural, and fulfilled above all in the sacrificial wedding banquet of the Eucharist.”⁷⁹

Sexual symbolism is intrinsic to Holy Orders. At this point we reach one of the central crises which afflicts the Church today, a crisis that has arguably contributed to the culture of death. The crisis in question is of course that of the homosexualization of the Catholic priesthood.⁸⁰ There is perhaps a reason as to why a nuptial theology of priesthood is not particularly well developed in our time. On the basis of the analysis that I have offered it is clear that although one cannot doubt that homosexual priests are validly ordained, the fact that they do not experience a natural attraction to members of the opposite sex cannot but obscure the symbolism intrinsic to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Christ, the Bridegroom, offers his whole being in sacrifice for His Spouse, the Church. The heterosexual ordinand foregoes a wife and children in order to sacrifice His life for the sake of Christ’s Bride. That nuptial relationship is especially pronounced when the priest acts *in persona Christi* in confecting the Eucharist. The sacramental character proper to Holy Orders is impressed on the soul of the homosexual priest and he validly confects the Eucharist. Yet the nuptial dimension of his priestly being is somewhat lacking and this lack penetrates to the heart of the Church’s worship.

⁷⁷ See *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 22: “The priest is called to be the living image of Jesus Christ, the spouse of the Church. (49) Of course, he will always remain a member of the community as a believer alongside his other brothers and sisters who have been called by the Spirit, but in virtue of his configuration to Christ, the head and shepherd, the priest stands in this spousal relationship with regard to the community. “Inasmuch as he represents Christ, the head, shepherd and spouse of the Church, the priest is placed not only in the Church but also in the forefront of the Church.”(50) In his spiritual life, therefore, he is called to live out Christ’s spousal love toward the Church, his bride. Therefore, the priest’s life ought to radiate this spousal character, which demands that he be a witness to Christ’s spousal love and thus be capable of loving people with a heart which is new, generous and pure - with genuine self - detachment, with full, constant and faithful dedication and at the same time with a kind of “divine jealousy” (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2) and even with a kind of maternal tenderness, capable of bearing “the pangs of birth” until “Christ be formed” in the faithful (cf. Gal. 4:19).”

⁷⁸ Pitre, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 164.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ There is also the related but nevertheless distinct issue concerning the feminization of the priesthood. This issue must be set aside for the purposes of the present discussion.

I will suggest in my concluding comments, that the homosexualization of the priesthood has probably contributed to the advance of the culture of death in the Western world. Much attention has been afforded to the various phenomena of the culture of death, including homosexual relationships and gender ideology, as well as to their impact on heterosexual marriage and family. Many of those involved in waging battle against these phenomena have been priests and their efforts have been both well-directed and necessary. The time has come however to point out that the homosexualization of the priesthood has not only been a part of the wider problem but has also arguably been at the heart of the malaise that has enveloped Western civilization. Those called to marriage and to priesthood are called to lives of ecstatic cruciformity but this other-directed sacrificial existence is the vocation of the priest in particular. The failure of society in general to offer due sacrifice to God has entailed the development of secular sacrifices offered at the altar of consumerism and hedonism – contraception, abortion,⁸¹ euthanasia, children of single parents and divorced and remarried parents, children being raised by homosexual couples, and so on, – as well as causing “a profound change in the way in which life and relationships between people are considered.”⁸² In a like manner, the demise of the understanding that the whole of a priest’s life ought to be sacrificial in tenor, a demise that has attended the homosexualization of the priesthood, has wrought its own destruction, even destroying the faith of those entrusted to their care.

⁸¹ Contraception and abortion, often closely connected “as fruits of the same tree” (*EV* 13), are in many instances “rooted in a hedonistic mentality” (*ibid.*), which refuses “to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality” (*ibid.*). Procreation effectively comes to be regarded as “an obstacle to personal fulfilment” (*ibid.*), and so any possible new life is regarded as “an enemy to be avoided at all costs” (*ibid.*). As a result abortion becomes normalized as a response to failed contraception. Public opinion broadly deems these crimes against life as legitimate while they are authorized by many states. These heinous acts can thus be perpetrated “with total freedom and indeed with the free assistance of health-care systems” (*EV* 4).

⁸² *EV* 4. John Paul II actually writes that “All this is causing a profound change in the way in which life and relationships between people are considered.” Almost twenty years later this profound change has arguably been effected. In this regard John Paul II writes that “a life which would require greater acceptance, love and care is considered useless, or held to be an intolerable burden, and is therefore rejected in one way or another” (*EV* 12). He observes that a person “who, because of illness, handicap or, more simply, just by existing, compromises the well-being or life-style of those who are more favoured tends to be looked upon as an enemy to be resisted or eliminated” (*ibid.*). The absolutist view of freedom that undergirds the culture of death leads to a society which in effect is a mass of entstatic individuals “placed side side, but without any mutual bonds” (*EV* 20). The helpless other is no longer seen affording the possibility of ecstatic sacrifice in terms of acts of charity and mercy; he rather threatens my material fulfilment and thereby becomes a legitimate object to be sacrificed on the altar of hedonism.

The sacerdotal core of the contemporary crisis

Those who engage in homosexual relations furnish what is arguably the paradigmatic example of entstatic human being. The entstatic character of homosexual acts ranges them alongside contraception, abortion, and so on, as phenomena pertaining to the culture of death. As with these other phenomena, the underlying anthropology is dualistic. It is precisely the radical loss of a sense of the body as intrinsic to the person that results in the demotion of sexual difference – in other words, the mutual ordination of male and female bodies – to a merely material level of existence devoid of personal value. As a result sexual desire and freedom possess a fundamentally indifferent relationship to the body and its natural correlation and ordination to the opposite sex.⁸³ This externality and arbitrariness, however, is not limited to relations between same-sex partners who employ their bodies as sites of mutual pleasure. Bearing in mind that one's conception of the nature of the political body is a function of one's conception of the human person – society is man writ large, to quote Plato⁸⁴ – then a society that has fallen to the power of the homosexual agenda – which, as experience shows, entails the presence of the other phenomena of the culture of death – will tend towards some form or other of totalitarianism. Just as anthropological dualism in whatever form it might take involves the self inhabiting a body which it can manipulate according to its own whimsical designs regardless of the indications inscribed within the body itself, so too totalitarianism entails the head exercising arbitrary control over the body politic. In totalitarianism the members of the body politic are sacrificed whenever those who rule deem it necessary for the advancement of their own designs.

One can translate this point, *mutatis mutandis*, into ecclesial terms – without, it must be emphasized, implying that the Church is a political institution. She is rather the Body of Christ of which we are the members. In *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, we read: “Priests are made in the likeness of Christ the Priest by the Sacrament of Orders, so that they may, in collaboration with their bishops, work for the building up and care of the Church which is the whole Body of Christ, acting as ministers of him who is the Head.”⁸⁵ This

⁸³ As David S. Crawford states: “The relation between “orientation” and the sexual polarity inscribed in the body is therefore external and arbitrary” (David S. Crawford, “Liberal Androgyny: “Gay Marriage and the Meaning of Sexuality in Our Time,” *Communio* 33 (2006), 256).

⁸⁴ Plato, *Republic* 368cd.

⁸⁵ *PO* 12.

statement prefaces Vatican II's teaching concerning the call to priestly perfection or holiness, which perfection or holiness priests are especially bound to seek.⁸⁶ While the word 'sacrifice' is absent in this teaching, its reality is clearly present. Thus, for example, we read that "priests consecrated by the anointing of the Holy Spirit and sent by Christ must mortify the works of the flesh in themselves and give themselves entirely to the service of men."⁸⁷

In reality, however, following the trends of the attendant culture, seminary and religious formation in the West places less emphasis on mortification of the works of the flesh and on self-sacrifice than it used to do. The factors that lead a disproportionate number of homosexual men to sacral roles and functions are no doubt varied and complex. Dr. Gerard J.M. van den Aardweg, however, maintains that "The less demanding, softer ways of the post-war Church partly explain why relatively many homosexually inclined and otherwise-less-masculine personality types felt attracted to the priesthood and religious life."⁸⁸ Van den Aardweg speculates moreover that "What they interpret as a religious vocation is often in large part narcissistic emotionalism."⁸⁹ Narcissicism, it would seem, is a function of the subversion of the ecstatic orientation of the natural inclinations – in reverse order: to the good in accordance with the nature of reason; to the procreation and education of offspring; and to self-preservation. At any rate, it is not difficult to see how the practical working-out of a dualistic anthropology in the case of homosexual clergy results not only in the sexual abuse of (predominantly) young males⁹⁰ but also in a disregard for the well-

⁸⁶ See *ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Van den Aardweg, "Abuse by Priests."

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* The confines of this paper do not allow for a substantiation of this claim which, at any rate, does not fall into the realm of my expertise. Here I rely on the expertise of a representative of the discipline of psychology. At any rate, one could allow for a small percentage of homosexual priests to be narcissistic and the argument of this paper would remain intact.

⁹⁰ On this point see The John Jay College of Criminal Justice, *The Nature and Scope of the Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950-2002* (accessed 26/04/2019 at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/the-nature-and-scope-of-sexual-abuse-of-minors-by-catholic-priests-and-deacons-in-the-united-states-1950-2002.pdf>). For a commentary thereon, see van den Aardweg, "Abuse by Priests." As is well known, 81.7 percent of all incidents between 1950 and 2002 involved boys ranging from childing to late adolescence. According to van den Aardweg's analysis, "the major problem is homosexuality, the minor problem homosexual paedophilia. And the latter orientation is closely related to "ordinary" homosexuality. As it is, "homosexuality" consists of various more or less overlapping syndromes; and in particular some ephebophile (adolescent-directed) homosexuals may also be interested in same-sex children" (*ibid.*).

being of the members of the Body of Christ entrusted to their care. These members have all too often been sacrificed on the altar of clerical narcissism, particularly insofar as their right to be formed according to the Church's faith and moral teaching is concerned. It is reasonable to posit some kind of connection between the homosexualization of the priesthood and the failure with respect to the communication of the Church's teaching on a range of moral issues. The homosexual lifestyle belongs after all to the fabric of the culture of death and so is intimately bound up with the other phenomena that constitute that culture. On the basis of the failure to communicate effectively the Church's moral teaching in all of its distinctiveness, I would go so far as to say that the homosexualisation of the priesthood has in its own way made a significant contribution to the progress of the culture of death in Western society.