

*Take thou the garment of the priesthood, which signifies charity;
for God is able to advance thy charity to perfection.*

— Ordination Rite, *The Roman Pontifical*, 1644 —

The New Ordination Rite:

Purging the Priesthood in the Conciliar Church

by Rev. William Jenkins

The most noticeable change in the sacraments after Vatican II was the introduction of the New Mass. Few Catholics realize what the modernists did to the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Fr. Jenkins analyzes the shocking consequences of their "reform."

"The union desired by these Liberal Catholics, a union between the Church and the Revolution and subversion is, for the Church, an adulterous union, adulterous. And that adulterous union can only produce bastards. And who are those bastards? They are our rites: the rite of the Mass is a bastard rite, the sacraments are bastard sacraments—we no longer know if they are sacraments which give grace or which do not give grace. We no longer know if this Mass gives the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ or if it does not give them. The priests coming out of the seminaries do not themselves know what they are."

—Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre
Lille, August 29, 1976

During his sermon at Lille, Archbishop Lefebvre went to the heart of the matter: we do not know whether the new sacraments give grace or not. We do not know if they are valid. We do not know if they are real sacraments. Every single sacrament of the Church has undergone drastic "reform" since Vatican II. The very first sacrament to be singled out for "renewal" was the Sacrament of Holy Orders, by which men are constituted deacons, priests and bishops for the Church. The question of validity of this new rite takes on a special note of urgency, since upon it depends the validity of most of the other sacraments, notably that Sacrament to which all other are directed and for which all others exist—the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

Paul VI began the program of completely

revising the sacramental order of the Catholic Church with his Apostolic Constitution *Pontificalis Romani recognitio* of June 18, 1968. He sought with this document to impose upon the Church a new rite of ordination. Due to its overwhelming importance, any sweeping change in the rite of conferring Holy Orders demands the closest attention and scrutiny. Yet it was not until a decade later that an extensive study of the new Ordinal appeared in English. The book, *The Order of Melchisedech* by the well-know lay writer Michael Davies, provides a great deal of useful information, and is on that account a work of merit and lasting value. Yet, a careful examination of his work reveals some grave defects.

This essay proposes: (1) to identify and assess what appears to be Mr. Davies' main point about the new ordination rite, (2) to show that the validity of the new rite is doubtful, and (3) to explain the practical consequences of this doubt.

© Copyright, 1981, William Jenkins. Reprint available for \$1.00. *The Roman Catholic*, Box 217, Oyster Bay NY 11771. Father Jenkins did his philosophical and theological studies at the University of Innsbruck (Austria) and the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas *In Urbe* (the Angelicum, Rome) and completed his studies for the priesthood at Ecône, Switzerland. He is now Professor of Philosophy and Dogmatic Theology at Saint Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

Mr. Davies Says: The Form Is The Same

Throughout his book, Mr. Davies contends that the new form of priestly ordination is exactly the same as the traditional form. Speaking of the new rite, he says:

Where the rite for ordaining a priest is concerned, the first point to make is that the matter and the essential form designated by Pius XII in *Sacramentum Ordinis* remain unchanged. This is a point in favor of the new rite. It is the only point in its favor.¹

Mr. Davies repeats this assertion three more times in the course of *The Order of Melchisedech*.² His final mention of this occurs on page 126 of the book, where he comments on it using the words of Father Francis Clark, S.J., who wrote in his study *Anglican Orders and Defect of Intention* that:

... since the Constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis* of Pius XII, it would seem that no priestly ordination in which the minister uses exactly the words prescribed in that document (Da quaesumus, Omnipotens Pater, in hunc famulum tuum presbyterii dignitatem... etc.), could be impugned on the grounds of defective form, whatever defect there might be in the other elements of the rite.³

Because he believes that the form of the Sacrament has not been changed, Mr. Davies implies that the new rite of priestly ordination must be valid, regardless of its defects.⁴

Although later in the book, Mr. Davies admits some reasonable reservations regarding the validity of the new rite,⁵ he nonetheless makes his point ex-

ceedingly clear in his writings which have followed the book. For example, in a recent article entitled *The Archbishop and the Sacraments*, Mr. Davies again cites Father Clark's work and concludes:

There is thus no basis for questioning the validity of the new ordination rite, even in the English version. I have no qualms in attending Tridentine Masses celebrated by priests ordained in the new rite, and I know that Archbishop Lefebvre has accepted the services of at least one such priest to work with the Society of Saint Pius X.⁶

In light of the above statement, we venture to say that the eminent scholar Dr. J.P.M. van der Ploeg, O.P., in his foreword to the book has accurately described the central thrust of *The Order of Melchisedech*: "There can be no doubt of the validity of the new rite, but there are certain features which the author [Mr. Davies] deplures."⁷

The New Form: Is It The Same?

However, there is a grave error at the root of Mr. Davies' reasoning. While he does give the text for the *traditional* Latin form of ordination, nowhere in *The Order of Melchisedech* does he give the Latin form for the *new* rite of ordination. Had he compared the traditional and new liturgical books, he could have easily seen that the two forms are *not the same*. In the new rite, the form for ordaining a priest has suffered a change which—however insignificant it may appear at first glance—has very grave implications. Compare the Latin and English texts of the traditional form of the Sacrament with those of the new Ordinal:

The Traditional Form in Latin

Da, quaesumus, omnipotens Pater,
in hos famulos tuos
Presbyterii dignitatem.
Innova in visceribus eorum
Spiritus sanctitatis,
UT acceptum a te, Deus,
secundi meriti munus obtineant;
censuramque morum
exemplo suae conversationis insinuent.

The New Form in Latin

Da, quaesumus, omnipotens Pater,
in hos famulos tuos
Presbyterii dignitatem;
innova in visceribus eorum
Spiritus sanctitatis;
acceptum a te, Deus,
secundi meriti munus obtineant,
censuramque morum
exemplo suae conversationis insinuent.

The Traditional Form in English

We pray Thee, Almighty Father,
confer the dignity of the Priesthood
on these Thy servants;
renew in their hearts
the Spirit of holiness,
SO THAT they may obtain
the office of the second rank
received from Thee, O God,
and may, by the example of their lives,
inculcate the pattern of holy living.

The New Form, Provisional ICEL English Version

We ask you, all-powerful Father,
give these servants of yours
the dignity of the presbyterate.
Renew the Spirit of holiness
within them.
By your divine gift
may they obtain^s
the second order in the hierarchy
and exemplify right conduct
in their lives.

The New Form, Current ICEL English Version

Almighty Father,
grant to these servants of yours
the dignity of the priesthood.
Renew within them
the Spirit of holiness.
As co-workers with the Order of bishops
may they be faithful to the ministry
that they have received from you, Lord God,
and be to others a model of right conduct.

A Small Word Makes A Big Difference

Close examination of the two Latin formulae reveals that the traditional form contains the word “**ut**”, which the new form deletes. Despite its small size, the Latin word “**ut**” carries a weight of significance—which significance the Church wished to convey by placing it in the traditional formula of ordination. The word “**ut**” establishes a relationship between that which precedes it in the sentence and that which follows it in the sentence. When it is used with a verb in the subjunctive mood (the verb “*obtineant*” is used in the formula in the subjunctive mood), then it shows that what comes before it somehow “causes” or is done “for the sake of” what follows it.

For example, the Latin sentence *Veniunt ut te videant* means “they are coming **for the purpose** of seeing you” or “**for the sake** of seeing you,” and shows that their seeing you is the purpose and result of their coming. When one removes the “**ut**” (as in the new form), then the Latin reads *Veniunt; te videant*. The English sense is “they are coming; may they see you!” The “**ut**” in the first example shows purpose. Its omission in the second example replaces the idea of purpose with a mere exhortation.

With this in mind, we look at the two Latin ordination forms, the traditional and the new. Both forms call upon God the Father to renew in the hearts of the candidates the Spirit of sanctity, Who is the Holy Ghost. Both forms ask that they obtain the “office of second rank” (*secundi meriti munus*).

However, the traditional form clearly conveys the understanding that the new infusion of the Holy Ghost is the *cause* of their obtaining the office of second rank in becoming priests, and that their elevation to the office of the second rank is *the purpose and the result* of this renewal of the Holy Ghost within them. By the deletion of the one word “**ut**” the new Latin form has destroyed any such causal relationship between the two supernatural events.

ICEL Translations: Fantasy With The Forms

The sacramental form is further corrupted in the English translation devised by the International Commission for English in the Liturgy (ICEL). The first English rendition of the new Ordinal contained a “provisional” form which is shown above. Notice that, true to the new Latin formula,

the provisional English version has deleted the causal relationship between the new infusion of the Holy Ghost and the elevation of men to the "office of the second rank."

Note as well the use of the word *presbyterate* to replace the word *priesthood*. As Mr. Davies keenly observes: "...it is worth pointing out that the Latin word *presbyter*, used to denote priest in the Latin text of both the traditional and new ordinals, is translated as 'presbyter' in numerous places in the ICEL translation. At no time in any English-speaking country have Catholic priests been referred to as 'presbyters'. The term 'presbyter' is also used in the proposed Anglican-Methodist Ordinal."⁹ Although these two English words—priest and presbyter—come from the same Latin root, nonetheless, they are not simply equivalent in their English meaning and usage. The Church had always employed the word "priest" in English-speaking countries to convey the Catholic concept of the mediator between God and man who offers in an unbloody manner the Sacrifice of Calvary.

The definitive ICEL ordination form of 1975 was adopted by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1976, thus replacing the provisional version. In continuous use since then, this current text re-instates the word "priesthood" to the exclusion of the word "presbyterate", thus becoming truer to the customary English translation of the traditional form and to the common usage of the Church in English-speaking lands. But this recent English version not only deletes the expression of causality between the new infusion of the Holy Ghost and elevation to the "office of the second rank", but it suppresses all mention of this office, and replaces it with a reference to the priests as "co-workers with the Order of bishops".

Now, the word "co-worker" is rendered in Latin as *cooperator*, and the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church does in fact consider priests to be *cooperatores* with the bishops. The problem with the word *cooperator* is not what it says, but what it does not say. The expression *secundi meriti munus* (office of second rank) definitely connotes the idea of subordination, which idea specifies the priest's place in the Church. The word "co-worker" does not of itself signify subordination, and the phrase "co-workers with the Order of bishops" does not necessarily mean that the Order of priests is intrinsically subordinate to the Order of bishops. One laborer could refer to another laborer as a "co-worker", although they are both equal in the dignity and performance of their task. In my opinion, this substitution constitutes a substantial change in the form of the 1975 English

version, thus making the new Ordinal invalid. But even in the case of the new Latin formula, where the case for invalidity may not be so obvious, there still arise some other formidable problems.

New Forms Must Be Judged In Context

It is not my purpose here to decide whether or not the suppression of the word "ut" constitutes a substantial change in the ordination formula. It is sufficient to recall here what the Catholic bishops of England noted in *A Vindication of the Bull "Apostolicae Curae"*: that whereas the Church has embellished the beauties of the ordination ceremony by adding worthy prayers in the course of time, still she has guarded the prayers and ceremonies which have come down to her from the earliest ages, careful *not to omit* anything, for "in adhering rigidly to the rite handed down to us, we can always feel secure; whereas if we omit or change anything, we may perhaps be abandoning just that element which is essential."¹⁰

Now, one might insist that despite the change, the new Latin form is still capable of expressing the essential meaning necessary to confer the priesthood. But even the form given in the later Anglican Ordinal ("Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest") could express the essential meaning of conferring Holy Orders. Yet, it was pronounced invalid by Pope Leo XIII.¹¹ The question is why.

The answer lies in the fact that the word "priest" lost its significance in the context in which it was used. "Since," as Father Clark observes, "the meaning of words can be changed by human usage and convention, and the efficacy of sacramental words depends upon their meaning, it may happen that liturgical words which convey the sacramental symbolism in one context, do not do so in another."¹² Thus, in *Apostolicae curae* Pope Leo XIII declares that the Anglican form is invalid even with the added words "...for the office and work of a priest," since these words became, in the Anglican usage, "mere names, voided of the reality which Christ instituted."¹³

Further, Father Clark himself holds that the only *guarantee* of validity rests on using "the exact words prescribed" by Pope Pius XII's Apostolic Constitution, *Sacramentum Ordinis*.¹⁴ Perhaps the exact words of the traditional Latin form guarantee validity, and cannot be nullified in any context, no matter how heterodox; but this new form of ordination, precisely because it does not use "the exact words prescribed", must be inter-



preted according to the same standards as the Anglican formula: in the context of the rite which surrounds it.

Nor did this fact escape Mr. Davies. He sagely explains in *The Order of Melchisedech* that:

... the use of the word "priest" in itself in no way denotes an acceptance of the Catholic concept of the priesthood (sacerdotium), as this word is used frequently throughout Cranmer's Ordinal. Reference to the *sacerdotium* must be looked for in specific references to the powers of a priest ordained to consecrate and offer sacrifice.¹⁵

The last statement leads Mr. Davies to conclude that, with regard to the new ceremony of priestly ordination, "this is a case where the intention of the rite must be deduced from other prayers and ceremonies surrounding the matter and form, which is referred to by theologians as *significatio ex adjunctis*."¹⁶ For this reason, the prayers and ceremonies which surround the form are of considerable importance, and demand close examination.

New Ceremonies Purged Of The Priesthood

Mr. Davies devotes the seventh chapter of his book to discerning "the native character and spirit" of the new Ordinal. The implications of what he discovers are profoundly disturbing. (For a fuller treatment, see *The Order of Melchisedech*.) He shows that, in every case, any definite references to a priesthood dedicated to offering the propitiatory Sacrifice of the Mass and endowed with true priestly powers as Catholics know them have been either entirely purged from the new rite or made optional:

... The traditional rite of ordination has been remodelled "in the most drastic manner," and, following Cranmer's example, has been achieved principally by the subtraction of "prayers and ceremonies in previous use," prayers and ceremonies which gave explicit sacerdotal signification to the indeterminate formula specified by Pius XII as the essential form. This formula does indeed state that the candidates for ordination are to be elevated to the priesthood—but so does the Anglican. Within the context of the traditional Roman

Pontifical there was not the least suspicion of ambiguity—within the new rite there most certainly is.¹⁷

For an example of an optional passage, we can examine the *Bishop's Charge* which follows "a lengthy exhortation on the duty of preaching and instructing":

... It is your ministry which will make the spiritual sacrifices of the faithful perfect by uniting them to the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ. That sacrifice will be offered in an unbloody way through your hands.¹⁸

Mr. Davies emphasizes that this *Bishop's Charge* is strictly optional and that "in the introduction to the ICEL version of the new rite stress is laid upon the fact that it is only an optional model."¹⁹ The ordaining bishop is thus encouraged to adapt his remarks according to the choice of Scripture readings for the ceremony, rather than reading the *Charge* word for word.

Among the required prayers and admonitions of the new Ordinal, only two even approach a reference to the power of offering the Sacrifice of Calvary. Yet, neither of these makes any explicit mention of the propitiatory Sacrifice of the Cross. The very fact that the new rite of priestly ordination is directed to the offering of the New Mass, which is styled only a "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving", makes the matter of these deletions all the more critical.

With A Little Help From My (Protestant) Friends...

Not only the intrinsic character of the new Ordinal, but even the external circumstances of its origin, parallel those of the invalid Anglican Ordinal. Just as the Anglican authors enlisted the aid of heretical "reformers" in producing their new ritual, so also the Conciliar liturgists called upon Protestant representatives to advise them in the composition of their ecumenical service called the New Mass. Mr. Davies sees this as indicative of the climate in which the new sacramental rites were conceived:

Every informed Catholic knows of the six heterodox [Protestant] consultants whose help was invoked by Archbishop Bugnini in his "reform" of the Catholic liturgy. Every informed Catholic is aware of the historical climate during which the new rites originated and were publicly instituted—a climate which, as *Pope John's Council* shows, was

permeated by a spirit of false ecumenism ready to minimise any Catholic belief or tradition in order to placate the Protestants.²⁰

Pope Leo XIII attached considerable importance to the historical circumstances which generated the Anglican ceremony. He mentions specifically the role of heretics from non-Catholic sects who were called upon by their English counterparts to help invent a new Ordinal. Such was their influence that they "corrupted the liturgical order in many ways to suit the errors of the reformers." The fruits of their labors bore the manifest stamp of heterodoxy—so manifest in fact, that the Pope could summarize briefly the whole affair with the words:

... let this argument suffice for all. From them [the prayers of the Anglican ordinal] has been deliberately removed all which sets forth the dignity and office of the priesthood in the Catholic rite. That "form" consequently cannot be considered apt or sufficient for the Sacrament which omits essentially that which it ought to signify.²¹

The above statement concerns the inability of a rite to effect the sacramental grace which it fails to signify clearly. The use of such a ritual also indicates the intention of the man performing it. As the Pope explained, the Church does not judge concerning an intention which remains purely internal, but the Church can and must judge of an intention as it is externally manifested. Now, the intention of a man administering a sacrament is manifested first and foremost in the sacramental rite which he uses, so that the intention which is expressed by the ceremony is taken to be the minister's own intention. For this reason, Pope Leo says in *Apostolicae curae* that such a rite is not only inadequate in itself, but discredits the intention of the minister:

But if, on the contrary, the rite is changed with the manifest purpose of introducing another rite which is not accepted by the Church, and of repudiating that which the Church does, and which is something that by Christ's institution belongs to the nature of the sacrament, then it is evident not merely that the intention necessary for a sacrament is lacking, but rather that an intention is present which is adverse to and incompatible with the sacrament.

The case of *Apostolicae curae* against the



validity of Anglican orders applies equally well to the new Ordinal of the Conciliar Church. Mr. Davies states his case well saying: "If the new Catholic rite, shorn of any mandatory prayer signifying the essential powers of the priesthood, is valid, then there seems to be no reason why the 1662 Anglican rite should not be valid too, and still less can there be any objection to the 1977 Anglican series 3 Ordinal."²² He appears to conclude that if *Apostolicae curae* is correct, then the new ordination ritual must be invalid; and if the new ordination rite is valid, then *Apostolicae curae*—a professedly definitive papal decision—is wrong.

Decreeing Sows' Ears Into Silk Purses?

Despite all the problems mentioned above, Mr. Davies does find two extrinsic arguments urging the validity of the new ceremony. The first argument "is based on the contention that the Holy Ghost would not permit the supreme authority in the Church to promulgate an invalid sacramental rite."²³ The second argument is counterpart to the first: "The acceptance of a sacramental rite by virtually the entire Church also constitutes an ir-

refutable proof of its validity."²⁴ Mr. Davies does not appear to put much stock in either of these arguments, since he follows them immediately by saying that "it does not seem unreasonable" to have reservations concerning the validity of the new rite, hence implying (in his book, at least) that an argument can be made for a reasonable doubt.

In answer to the first argument, bear in mind that the Holy Ghost permitted Vatican II to occur and to wreak havoc in the Church. So it seems hard to predict exactly what the Holy Ghost will or will not permit. Besides, if the Holy Ghost Himself guarantees the validity of the new Ordinal, did He permit Leo XIII to err in deciding a parallel case, and thus to delude millions of Anglican laity and clergy—and the whole Catholic world as well?

Regarding the second argument, Mr. Davies himself makes the excellent point that the text of the new ordination ritual has not been made generally available to the Catholic faithful. He remarks, "...it is hard to see how it can be claimed that a rite has been accepted by the entire Church when it is deliberately withheld from 99.9 percent of the faithful."²⁵ One might add the further comment that "acceptance" is a positive act, and that, far from having positively accepted the new rites,

many of the Catholic faithful seem to be bewildered by them and in a state of confusion, following along for want of any other obvious alternative. This certainly does not constitute an acceptance of the new rituals, but rather a hesitation over them—a suspension of judgment which is properly called a “doubt.”

Although these two arguments fail, perhaps some will claim that papal authority makes the otherwise defective form to be valid, as though such authority could impose extrinsic validity. This idea seems to contradict the whole complex of Catholic sacramental theology. While it is true that a defective intention can invalidate a form sufficient in itself, nevertheless, neither a sufficient intention nor any external authority can make valid a form and a rite which is of itself defective. Can that same authority guarantee the validity of a rite when that authority was applied to purge from the sacramental ritual all that clearly signified the nature of the sacrament? Evidently not.

As a result of his examination of the Anglican Ordinal, Leo XIII concluded that Anglican ordinations were from the very beginning null and void. By applying the same criteria he used to the new ordination rite, we do not necessarily *prove* that it is invalid, but the application does show grounds for a prudent doubt concerning the validity of the new Ordinal. Hence, we are obliged to consider next the implications of this “prudent doubt.”

No (Practical) Doubt About It

According to the respected Dominican theologian, Dominic Prümmer, “doubt” is a *suspension of assent* or a *suspension of judgment*. He follows Billuart in explaining that “to doubt is not to judge, but rather to suspend all judgment of assent, and to remain fluctuating between either side of a contradiction.”²⁶ The Jesuit moralist Augustine Lehmkuhl says that doubt is “a state of mind in which a man gives no assent to either side, but remains suspended, embracing neither side definitely.”²⁷

A doubt can rest on solid, well-founded reasons or only on weak and insignificant grounds. A doubt which has good, prudent reasons supporting it is called a “positive doubt”, whereas a doubt founded on foolish grounds is termed a “negative doubt”. Furthermore, a doubt can involve a matter which is merely speculative or it can concern something practical. Speculative doubt affects the intelligence and pertains to the truthfulness of a fact (such as whether or not it is 6 o’clock in the morning); practical doubt affects the will and in-

volves the goodness of an action—that is, not only what must be thought, but what must be *done* (such as whether or not to get out of bed at 6 o’clock in the morning).

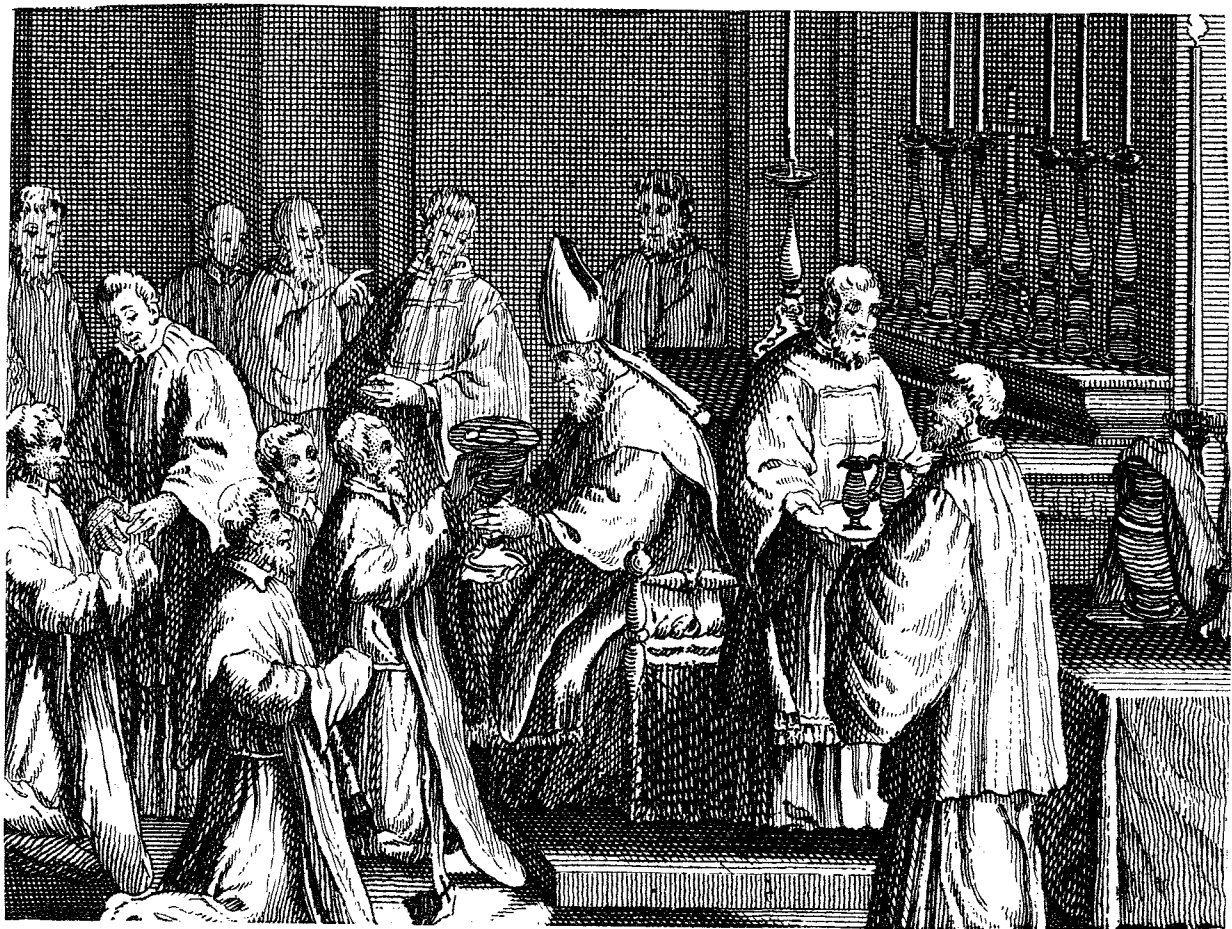
When questioning the validity of the new ordination rite, we are faced with a positive doubt which is both speculative and practical. We are in doubt as to whether or not *in fact* the new rite is valid, and consequently we are in doubt as to what must *be done* about it. As mentioned before, I shall not try to resolve the speculative doubt now, both because it is not possible in this short essay, and because it is not necessary in order to resolve the practical doubt of *what is to be done*.

In fact, according to the constant and common teaching of Catholic moral theologians, whenever there is a speculative doubt concerning the validity of a sacramental rite, then there is *no* practical doubt about what must be done. The doubt of a sacrament’s validity gives one the practical certitude that he must neither attempt to confer it nor attempt to receive it. In the matter of the form of the new rite of Holy Orders, since it is at the very least doubtful, it is therefore illicit. For when it comes to the sacraments, one must use not only certainly valid matter, but also a certainly valid form, i.e., the words.

The Dominican moralist, Benedictus Merkelbach, instructs in his *Summa theologiae moralis* that with regard to what one must not do “the practical judgment becomes certain, even though there remains a speculative doubt”. He insists that, in the administration of the sacraments, it is a grave sin against the natural law to use deliberately a rite which has doubtful validity. Fr. Merkelbach explains that, even though there are many good reasons in favor of validity, by one probable reason against validity, the rite becomes doubtfully valid and its use is certainly mortally sinful.

And so a doubt or opinion—no matter how probable it seems—cannot make what is not a sacrament to become a sacrament, nor transform into medicine what is actually poison. In this case, the certain natural law forbids one to expose himself to a danger of not obtaining the end or of bringing about evil, or to apply means which are utterly inadequate or even harmful. To expose oneself to a danger of this kind “when in doubt concerning means necessary to salvation” is gravely illicit. In such matters, the safest and most certain course must be followed.²⁸

The above statement of Father Merkelbach



can be applied to the question of the new Ordinal. Put simply, if there is a prudent doubt about the validity of the new rite of priestly ordination, then it would be gravely sinful to use that rite either to confer or to receive Holy Orders.

It is a serious sin to expose oneself unnecessarily to grave danger, whether physical or spiritual danger. When a man agrees to confer or receive such an important Sacrament as Holy Orders—with all that depends upon it for one's own salvation and the salvation of others—by means of a doubtful ritual, then he gambles with his own salvation, the salvation of countless others and risks dishonoring God by invalidly administering the sacraments of Penance, the Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction and (if he presumes he is a bishop) Confirmation and Holy Orders as well.

Notice that Merkelbach insists that a doubtful form must not be used even though the arguments in favor of its validity are more probable than those against it. As long as there is a reasonable, prudent doubt concerning a rite's validity, a person may not administer it nor submit to it. Father Dominic Prümmer also makes this common teaching of theologians abundantly clear:

Since upon the matter and the form depends the validity of the sacraments, there is a grave obligation in conferring the sacraments to apply the matter and form which are *certain and prescribed*. Therefore, whenever there is question of the matter and the form, and thus of the validity of the sacraments, it is not licit to follow even a more probable opinion, or to apply a questionable form or matter. The reason is that the sacrament would be senselessly exposed to the danger of nullity, which would constitute a grave irreverence against God.²⁹

On this issue the moral theologians commonly cite the authority of Pope Innocent XI, and Prümmer is no exception. On March 2, 1679 the Holy Office under that Pope condemned as false the proposition claiming that "it is not illicit when conferring the sacraments to follow a probable opinion on the validity of the sacrament, the safer course being abandoned, unless the law, convention or the danger of incurring grave harm forbid it."³⁰

After recounting this decision of the Holy Of-

face, the Jesuit moralist Felix Cappello concludes that "a minister who follows a merely probable opinion concerning the validity of a sacrament, having abandoned the safer course, sins mortally, both because the danger of frustrating the sacrament constitutes by its very nature a grave irreverence, and also because charity and justice are violated in a very serious matter."³¹ Father Cappello adds that the same sin would be committed by a man who *receives* such a questionable sacrament.³²

A Doubtful Ordinal Makes Doubtful Priests

So far we have spoken only about the liceity of using a doubtful sacramental rite. But what of those who have already subjected themselves to the new rite of priestly ordination? Those questionably ordained priests by the new Ordinal—what of them? The mind of the Catholic Church is quite clear on this matter—clear in the common teaching of her theologians and the prescriptions of her laws.

Father Felix Cappello maintains in his work *De sacramentis* that:

If a sacrament whose validity is in doubt is necessary either absolutely or respectively, or upon it still other things depend, then it must be "repeated", as long as the validity of the sacrament is not morally certain.

In which case, it is necessary to "repeat" the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Orders, absolution of the dying, Extreme Unction for one dying without the use of his senses, and the consecration of the Sacred Offerings lest they present the danger of idolatry. In such cases the principle commonly admitted by theologians is this: "If it is licit to repeat, then it is necessary to repeat."³³

That this is indeed the common teaching of Catholic theologians is supported by the Jesuit Father Augustinus Lehmkühl, who expresses the same doctrine in almost identical words.³⁴

Both of these respected theologians speak of the need for the sacraments to be "morally certain." According to the Redemptorist moral theologian Joseph Aertnys, "moral certainty" arises from the common and customary practice and the general natural inclinations of men. Thus for example, one is morally certain that a mother will not deliberately poison her children.³⁵ But with the new rite of ordination, there is no common and customary practice of the Church in its favor; it is something new

which has purposely excluded all that was common and customary practice of the Church in the ordination of priests. One may try to parallel the example of the mother and her children, by arguing that the hierarchy of the Church would not deliberately give poisonous (invalid) sacramental rites to the faithful. Yet we have plenty of evidence to the contrary.

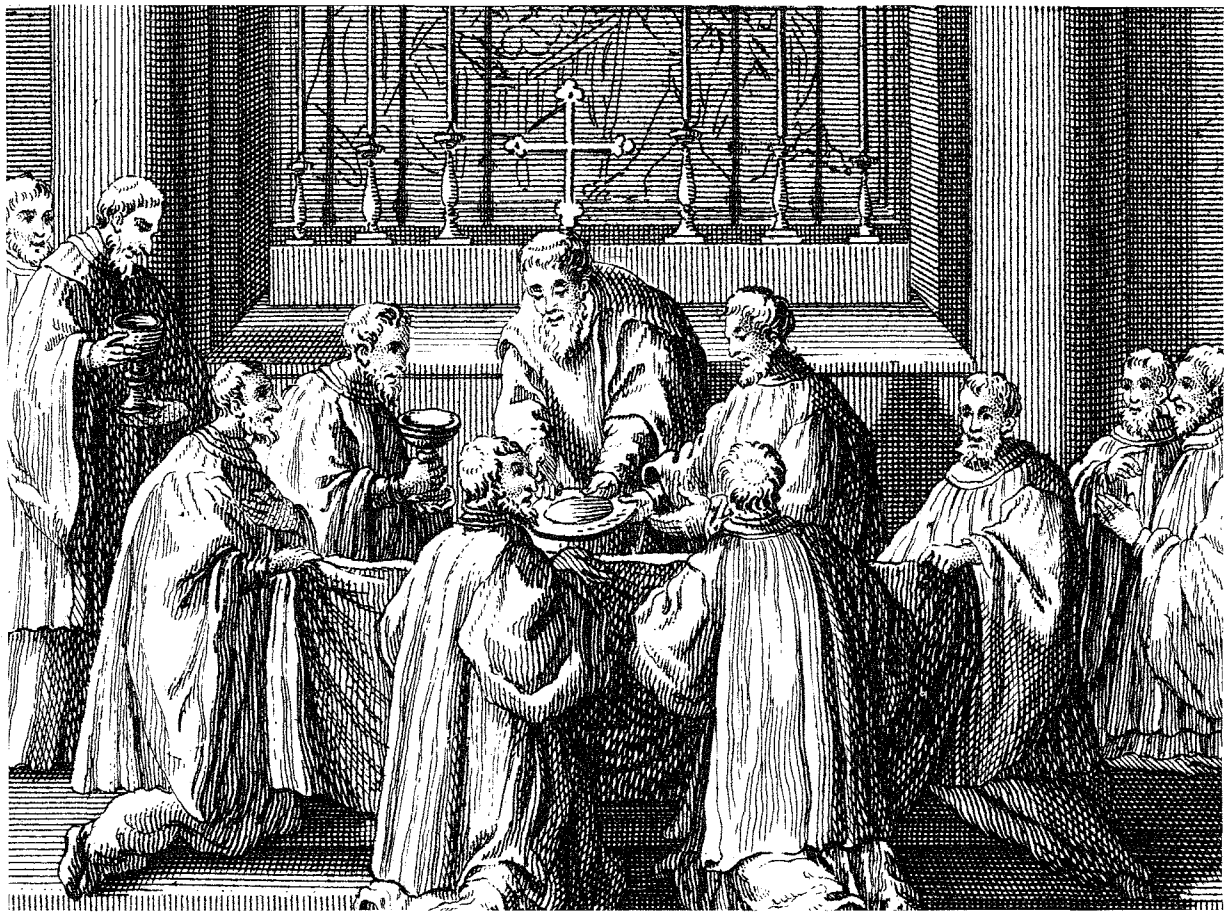
Finally, the re-iteration of a sacramental rite is to be done even though there are many more probable reasons favoring the validity of its first administration. This has already been made clear by the moralists cited, and is further attested by another Jesuit theologian, Aloysius Sabetti, who refers to the authority of Saint Alphonsus in saying:

But if there exists a prudent doubt as to whether the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders were truly and validly conferred, then they are to be conferred again conditionally. Indeed, the more necessary the sacraments are, then the more readily they are to be re-iterated, also those which are conferred but once, that is Baptism and Holy Orders, even though there is a much greater probability favoring the validity of the sacrament...³⁶

The need to "repeat" a sacramental ritual of doubtful validity is not only the common position of Catholic theologians. The law of the Church itself prescribes that such a sacramental ceremony be verified by repetition. Canon 732 of the *Code of Canon Law* reads as follows:

- (1) The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, which imprint a character, may not be repeated.
- (2) But if there exists a prudent doubt as to whether they were conferred truly and validly, they are to be conferred again conditionally.

The law of the Church thus provides that a priest whose ordination is doubtful must seek conditional ordination to render his orders certain. The doubtful character of the new Ordinal renders doubtful the priestly orders of a man who submits to it. The unavoidable consequence is that a man ordained according to the new ordination rite cannot be morally certain of his priesthood, and must verify them by seeking ordination according to the certain, traditional rite of the Church. This duty constitutes a grave obligation in conscience.



Truth In The Service Of Charity

We have seen the principles of Catholic theology as they apply to a doubtful rite of priestly ordination. Now it remains to summarize those principles:

- (1) It is objectively a mortal sin to perform a doubtful ordination rite.
- (2) It is objectively a mortal sin to submit to a doubtful ordination rite.
- (3) It is objectively a mortal sin to seek the sacraments from men ordained according to a doubtful rite, since their orders are not morally certain.
- (4) It is objectively a mortal sin for a man ordained with a doubtful ordinal to presume to administer the sacraments.
- (5) Men ordained according to a doubtful rite must seek conditional ordination according to a certainly valid rite of the Church, and from a man whose episcopal consecration is morally certain.

When it comes to applying these points, to the new post-Conciliar rite of ordination, it must be

remembered that I do not claim to have proven that the new rite is invalid. This question can only be definitively and authoritatively settled at some future time by the Church's magisterium. But I do maintain that there is sufficient evidence to establish a *prudent doubt* about its validity—a prudent doubt based on Pope Leo XIII's decision on Anglican orders pronounced in *Apostolicae Curae*.

Many men ordained with the new Ordinal will scoff at these conclusions. Many will dismiss them out of hand. Others will discount them with the thought: "But I *know* I am a priest, I *feel* certain I am a priest." Let them recall that a goodly number of Anglican ministers rejected Pope Leo's decision because deep down in their hearts they believed that they were priests. But they were not.

The Pope's decision was considered "un-charitable" by the Protestant divines of his day. Perhaps this present essay will provoke the same reaction. But charity is always served by truth, even when it hurts—perhaps especially when the truth hurts. Mr. Davies said well: "The cause of ecumenism is not helped by raising false hopes." And I might add "...nor is charity served by dissimulation." □

FOOTNOTES

1. Davies, Michael, *The Order of Melchisedech*, (Devon, England; Augustine Publishing Company: 1979), p.74.
2. *Ibid.*, pp.79, 88, 126.
3. Clark, Francis, S.J., *Anglican Orders and Defect of Intention*, (London, New York, Toronto; Longmans, Green and Company: 1956), p.183, quoted in Davies, *op. cit.*, p.126.
4. This argument favoring the validity of the new Ordinal is not conclusive because Father Clark's opinion is just that—an opinion—and is not theologically certain. The Jesuit priest appears to recognize this himself when he uses the words "it would seem that" to introduce his thesis. There are, in fact, equally noted theologians who would disagree with Father Clark, or at least qualify his statement. For example, another Jesuit theologian, Father Felix Cappello, maintains that the bare words of the form are not enough; the words of the formula must also be presented in a "consecratory manner". He says: "For validity, there is required, besides no substantial change, ...that the words of the formula be presented in a consecratory manner, and not just in an historical, instructional or promissory way." *Tractatus Canonico-Moralis de Sacramentis*, (Turin, Italy; Marietti Editori, Ltd.: 1962), Vol. I, lib. I, cap. I, art. II, "De materia et forma". C.f. also O'Connell, J.B., *The Celebration of Mass*, (London, Burns and Oates: 1956), 4th edition.
5. Davies, *op. cit.*, p.99.
6. Davies, Michael, "The Archbishop and the Sacraments," *The Angelus*, (November, 1980: p.27). In the same article, Mr. Davies misrepresents the position of Archbishop Lefebvre. He says that "he [the Archbishop] insists upon the validity of the New Mass... and will not allow any priest to remain within the Society" who disagrees with this position.
In fact, the Archbishop does *not* require priests of the Society of St. Pius X to believe that the New Mass is valid, but he does insist that they refrain from declaring it *definitely* invalid *ex se*. As well, Archbishop Lefebvre takes the prudent position that only the Magisterium of the Church can decide such a difficult question definitively at some future date.
7. Davies, *op. cit.*, p. xiv, Foreword.
8. The Liturgical Press edition (Collegeville, Minnesota) gives the text here as "...may they attain the second order in the hierarchy..." (emphasis added).
9. Davies, *op. cit.*, p.77.
10. *A Vindication of the Bull Apostolicae Curae: A Letter on Anglican Orders by the Cardinal Archbishop and Bishops of the Province of Westminster*, (London, New York and Bombay; Longmans Green and Company: 1898).
11. Pope Leo XIII, Apostolic Letter *Apostolicae curae*, Sept. 13, 1896.
12. Clark, *op. cit.*, pp.182-3.
13. *Apostolicae curae*, tr. Catholic Truth Society, London, ed. 1968, para. 31.
14. Clark, *op. cit.*, p.183.
15. Davies, *op. cit.*, p.77.
16. *Ibid.*, p.79.
17. *Ibid.*, p.74.
18. The new Ordinal published in English by the Liturgical Press (Collegeville, Minnesota) prefaces this "Bishop's Charge" with the instruction: "Then all sit and the bishop addresses the people and the candidates on the duties of a priest. He may use the following words." (Emphasis added).
The Latin text is as follows: "Deinde, omnibus sedentibus, Episcopus alloquitur populum et Electos de munere Presbyteri; quod facere potest his verbis." (Emphasis added).
19. Davies, *op. cit.*, p.85.
20. *Ibid.*, p.75.
21. *Apostolicae curae*, ed. *ut supra*, par.27.
22. Davies, *op. cit.*, p.97.
23. *Ibid.*, p.99.
24. *Ibid.*, loc. cit.
25. *Ibid.*, p.100.

26. Prümmer, Dominic, O.P., *Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, (Friburgi, Brisgoviae; Herder and Company: 1923), third edition, tomus I, pars I, tract. IV "De conscientia", cap. V, art. II "De conscientia dubia".
27. Lehmkuhl, Augustinus, S.J., *Theologia Moralis*, (Friburgi, Brisgoviae; B. Herder: 1914), tract. II, sect. I, cap. II, art. II "De conscientia certa et dubia".
28. Merkelbach, Benedictus, O.P., *Theologia Moralis Generalis*, (Paris, Typis Desclee de Brouwer et Soc.: 1930), tract. "De conscientia in generali", art. II "De certitudine conscientiae". Merkelbach prefaces his conclusion with a fuller explanation which reads in translation as follows: "The practical judgment becomes certain, even though there remains a speculative doubt, and the conscience becomes certain of a special obligation whenever there is a certain and absolute obligation of obtaining a definite end which otherwise could not be obtained at all—that is, as often as a good effect (such as salvation, a sacrament, health) must be absolutely obtained or an evil effect (such as injury, death, damnation) must be absolutely avoided, but one doubts not only about the permissibility but also about the necessity of effectiveness of the means to obtain this required thing and for the validity of this act.
"That is to say, a higher law intervenes which dictates that 'in doubt concerning the validity of performing an action, the safer course must be followed.' From this reflex judgment, an obligation which is objectively uncertain becomes subjectively certain. The reason for this is, while the legality of an action depends upon our reason and our conscience, the validity of an action or the avoidance of damage do not depend on our reason or conscience, since our doubt and our judgment do not alter the nature of things, nor can they make an invalid act into a valid one, nor cause that some due effect should follow from an act or prevent the harm that would follow from it." (Emphasis added).
29. Prümmer, *op. cit.*, tomus III, tract. I "De sacramentis in genere", cap. I, art. III, para. 4 "De certitudine materiae et formae".
30. *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, (Denzinger-Schoenmetzer, eds.), no. 2101 is a condemnation of the first proposition of the moral laxiorists.
31. Cappello, *op. cit.*, vol. I, lib. I, cap. I "De natura sacramentorum", art. IV "An in sacramentis ministrandis et suscipiendis liceat sequi opinionem probabilem."
32. *Ibid.*, loc. cit.
33. *Ibid.*, vol. I, lib. I, cap. I, art. III "De sacramentorum iteratione." The Latin word for re-performing a sacramental ceremony is "iteratio". It does not mean, of course, that the sacrament is given again, but only that the sacramental ritual is repeated correctly to insure validity.
34. Lehmkuhl, *op. cit.*, "De sacramentis generatim," "De sacramentis iterandis", Regula III.
35. Aertnys, J, et Damen, C.A., C.S.S.R., *Theologia Moralis*, (Turin, Italy; Domus Editorialis Marietti: 1947), 15th edition, lib. I, tract. III "De conscientia", cap. III, art. I "Conscientia certa".
36. Sabetti, Aloysius, S.J., *Compendium Theologiae Moralis*, (Ratisbonne, Rome and New York; Fr. Pustet and Company: 1898), 15th edition, tract. XI "De sacramentis in genere", cap. II "De materia et forma sacramentorum".

Next month: Extreme Unction

On Virginit

— The Conciliar Church Speaks —

“We believe that the serving love which is the core of the gospel message is truly learned *and best experienced* within the vocation of marriage.” [My emphasis.]

—“Renewal of Marriage Vows and Family Blessing,” *Monthly Missalette*
Chicago: J. S. Paluch Co., Inc., Christmas 1973, 1974, etc.

— The Catholic Church Teaches —

“His disciples say unto him: If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry.

Who said to them: All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs, who were born so from their mother’s womb: and there are eunuchs, who were made so by men: and there are eunuchs, who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. He that can take, let him take it.”

—Matt. 19:10ff.

“But I say to the unmarried, and to the widows: it is good for them if they so continue even as I. ...

. . . he that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well, and he that giveth her not, doth better.”

—1 Cor. 7:8, 38.

“If anyone saith that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity or in celibacy than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema.”

—Council of Trent, Session XXIV, 11 November 1563 Canon X.

“... since there are some who, straying from the right path in this matter, so exalt marriage as to rank it ahead of virginity and thus depreciate chastity consecrated to God and clerical celibacy, Our apostolic duty demands that We now in particular manner declare and uphold the Church’s teaching on the sublime state of virginity, and so defend Catholic truth against these errors.”

—Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas*, 25 March 1954.