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The Laity and the Liturgical Homily

Beyond Theological and Canonical Restrictions to a New Theological Framework for Participation

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Shane Daly

Summary

Can laypeople preach the liturgical homily? This is the question this thesis set out to explore in light of the canonical and theological norms that restrict the practice. At present, laypeople can preach homilies in non-eucharistic liturgies as a supply for absent clerics and on occasions of particular advantage. In the case of the Eucharist, the 1983 Code of Canon Law “reserves” the homily to priests and deacons.

In advance of exploring the question of lay participation in this ministry, the importance of preaching in the life of the Church was explored through the lens of three theologians, Karl Barth, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Otto Semmelroth. While each theologian offers a different perspective on preaching, all three, through the resources of their respected theological traditions, speak to the depths of its importance in the life of the Church and, in particular, its importance in the Church’s liturgical life. The insights of Schillebeeckx and Semmelroth would be essential to the Second Vatican Council’s recovery of the importance of the liturgical homily to the celebration of the Eucharist.

Four key assumptions, which are analysed in detail through the course of Chapters Three and Four, are shown to underpin and shape the Magisterium’s and Curia’s pronouncements on the laity’s participation in the ministry of the liturgical preaching: 1) the “intimate connection” between preaching and holy orders; 2) the fear that to allow lay participation in the liturgical preaching office “blurs” the distinction between the hierarchical priesthood and the common priesthood; 3) the laity’s secularity; and 4) ordination as empowering the priest or deacon to act in the person of Christ the Head. As a consequence of these, the postconciliar Roman authorities did not encourage the development of lay liturgical preaching. If acting in the person of Christ the Head is the basis on which priests and deacons can preach liturgical homilies, what is the

implication for deacons when they are no longer considered to act in such a manner as resulted from Pope Benedict XVI's *Omnium in Mentem* (2009). Examining the implications of this change concluded Chapter Four and provided the springboard for an alternative theological framework, explored in Chapter Five, that moved away from the theology of ministry based on acting in the person of Christ the Head, to propose an installed permanent ministry of liturgical preaching built upon two alternative theological principles. These principles are rooted in the Church's sacramental structure: 1) all ministry is a participation in the priesthood of the bishop, whose office is of divine institution and represents the fullness of the sacrament of order (*Lumen Gentium* 20, 21); and 2) the Church has the authority to reorder the sacrament of order and ecclesial ministerial structures in light of theological development and pastoral need. Building on these foundational principles, six criteria, namely, baptismal consecration, personal call, charismatic gift, discernment by the community, theological formation, and ritual installation, are proposed as the basis for determining who could be admitted into a permanently instituted ministry of liturgical preaching.

Any theology of ministry or laity that empowers laypersons to a greater role in the Church's liturgical and pastoral ministry upends the status quo. What is proposed in this thesis, and the arguments presented to support the contention that laypeople can preach liturgical homily, would, if realized, impact on the ministerial authority and identity of priests and deacons by repositioning the laity vis-à-vis both priestly and diaconal ministry. The General Conclusion spoke briefly to the consequence of such a repositioning.

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Table of Contents

Summary	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
General Introduction.....	1
I. Introduction.....	1
II. The Thesis Question	4
III. Thesis Structure	9
IV. Conclusion.....	20
Chapter One.....	22
A Theology of Preaching Through the Lens of Karl Barth	22
1.2 Introduction	22
1.2 From Liberal Protestantism to <i>Homiletics</i>	23
1.3 The Centrality of Revelation to Preaching	27
1.4 Preaching as a Form of the Word of God.....	34
1.5 Preaching and Sacrament as Proclamation of the Word.....	39
1.6 Commissioned to Preach	43
1.7 Conclusion.....	46
Chapter Two	48
The Theological Recovery of Word and its Impact on Preaching in the Second Vatican Council’s <i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>	48
2.1 Introduction	48
2.2 Liturgical Preaching in the Preconciliar Eucharistic Liturgy.....	50
2.3. The Theological Reflection of Edward Schillebeeckx	52
2.4 Preaching and Sacraments in Mutual Relationship: The Theology of Otto Semmelroth	66
2.5 Vatican II and the Liturgical Homily.....	71
2.7 Conclusion.....	75
Chapter Three.....	77
Lay Liturgical Preaching in the Postconciliar Era: A Case Study of Decree 2 of the Synod of Würzburg and Related Documents.....	77
3.1 Introduction	77
3.2 A Note on Hermeneutics	78
3.3 The Synod of Würzburg, the Congregation for Clergy, and the West German Bishops on Lay Participation in the Preaching Office.....	82
3.4 Reflection on these documents in Light of Karl Rahner’s <i>The Shape of the Church to Come</i>	91
3.5 Analysing the Congregation for Clergy’s Rescript – “Presuppositions and Horizons of Understanding from the Past”	95
3.6 Conclusion.....	108

Chapter Four.....	111
Lay Liturgical Preaching in the Postconciliar Era: Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Contexts	111
4.1 Introduction	111
4.2 The Ministry of Preaching in the 1983 Code of Canon Law	112
4.3 Lay Liturgical Preaching in the Context of Canons 766 and 767 §1.....	115
4.4 John Paul II on Lay Participation in the Priestly Ministry.....	129
4.5 The Experience of Lay Liturgical Preaching in the Postconciliar Era.....	138
4.6 An Analysis of the Reservation of the Eucharistic Homily to Deacons	144
4.7 Conclusion.....	154
Chapter Five	157
Beyond “Presuppositions and Horizons of Understanding from the Past” to a New Theological Framework for Lay Participation in the Office of Liturgical Preaching.....	157
5.1 Introduction	157
5.2 The Office of <i>Episkopos</i> as a part of Revelation and the Fullness of the Sacrament of Order	158
5.3 Reimagining Liturgical Ministry: Paul VI’s <i>Ministeria Quaedam</i>	168
5.4 The Criteria for a Ministry of Lay Liturgical Preaching.....	174
5.5 Conclusion.....	182
General Conclusion	184
Bibliography.....	189

General Introduction

I. Introduction

Saint Paul, writing to the Romans, declares: “how then are they to call on him if they have not come to believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is a preacher for them? And how will there be preachers if they are not sent? As scripture says: How beautiful are the feet of the messenger of good news” (Rom. 10:14-15).¹ O.C. Edwards notes, “there is no activity more characteristic of the church than preaching. Along with the sacraments, most Christian bodies consider the proclamation of the Word of God to be the constitutive act of the Church.”² The Second Vatican Council noted that the primary duty of bishops and priests is to proclaim the gospel to all (*Christus Dominus* 12; *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 12).³ Preaching is not an optional activity of the Church but at its very heart, whether that preaching is to non-believers or the community of faith gathered to celebrate the Eucharist. Given this fact, the question of who can preach is clearly of great importance.

Before looking at the question of who can preach it is important to acknowledge the necessity of the human element in the preaching endeavour. As a human act, preaching requires a structure to realise its purpose. Saint Paul’s declaration to the Romans, quoted above, recognises three components: a preacher, a sending, and a content. Paul notes the preacher is sent. Preachers carry a commission from the Church (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Jn. 21:16-17; Rom. 10:15). Preaching is a restricted ministry. Jonathan I.

¹ All Scripture quotations are taken from *The New Jerusalem Bible*, std. ed., gen. ed. Henry Wansbrough (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1984).

² O.C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, Volume 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 3.

³ All English language quotations from conciliar texts are taken from https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm. Latin quotations are taken from https://www.vatican.va/latin/latin_council.html.

Griffiths writes, “preaching is not a generalized activity undertaken by all Christian people or on the basis of the preacher’s own initiative.”⁴ Scripture attests to this: Jesus is sent (Jn. 20:21) and in turn sends others (Mt. 10:5; Mk. 6:7; Lk. 9:2, 10:1-8; see also Matt. 3:1-3; Mk. 1:2-7, 3:14; Lk. 1:19, 4:18-19, 9:2; Acts 10:42; 16:10; 1 Cor. 1:17; Gal. 1:16; Eph. 3:8; 2 Tim. 4:2; cf. 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). Griffiths notes that the verbs *euangelizomai* (to bring good news), *katangellō* (to proclaim/to announce), and *kēryssō* (to announce/ to make known) are never used in the New Testament to commission all believers to preach but only in relation to those who are sent.⁵ In addition he notes that where there is a general instruction to all believers to communicate God’s word other vocabulary is used.⁶ The tradition of the Church has also always required preachers to be commissioned before being sent.⁷

In addition to the requirement to be sent, preaching involves a content and a context, with the context shaping the content of what is said. J. Frank Henderson identifies four different types of preaching.⁸ Pre-evangelistic preaching focuses on human values and aims at disposing the hearer towards the person of Jesus and the gospel. Evangelistic preaching is preaching the specific content of the gospel to non-believers. This preaching is what C.H. Dodd calls, “the saving facts,”⁹ the Good News: “and you are saved by it, if you keep to the message I preached to you...Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried; and that on the third day, he was raised to life, in accordance with the scriptures; and that he appeared to

⁴ Jonathan I. Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament: An Exegetical and Biblical-Theological Study* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 129.

⁵ Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 20-32.

⁶ Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 36, 45-49.

⁷ See James McVann, *The Canon Law of Sermon Preaching* (New York: The Paulist Press, 1940), 10-12.

⁸ J. Frank Henderson, “The Ministry of Liturgical Preaching,” *Worship* 56, no. 3 (May 1982), 216.

⁹ See C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Limited, 1936), 55.

Cephas...this is what we preach and what you believed.” (1 Cor. 15: 2-4, 11; see also Acts 2:14-36; 2:38-39; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:17-40; 8: 26-35; 10: 34-43; 1 Cor. 1: 23).

Catechetical preaching, in contrast to evangelistic preaching, is preaching addressed to believers. The content of this preaching are the doctrinal, moral, and social implications of the gospel. This preaching was the mainstay of preconciliar Catholic liturgical preaching.¹⁰ The final context and content noted by Henderson is the liturgical homily. The Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Liturgy defined the liturgical homily as, “the proclamation of God’s wonderful works in salvation history, the mystery of Christ, ever made present and active within us” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35; see also *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 52). Joshua J. Whitfield notes that a homily is not an intellectual exegesis but a prayerful unfolding.¹¹ However, this does not mean it is devoid of catechetical content. Josef Jungmann notes three qualities of a liturgical homily. Firstly, it vivifies the mystery; secondly, it contains instruction for the religious and moral life but less systematically than a catechetical sermon; and thirdly, it is mystagogical, that is, it leads the congregation more deeply into the Eucharist.¹² Such preaching Jungmann argues represents a return to the earliest practice of the Church.¹³

However, for the efficaciousness of the human endeavour something more is required, namely, the divine element so that what is heard in human words is heard as a graced word. Without God’s Spirit moving the heart of the listener to faith, the words of

¹⁰ See Michael Connors, “Preaching as Worship: Progress and Ongoing Issues in Roman Catholicism,” *Church Life Journal*, July 11, 2016, accessed July 05, 2021, <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/preaching-as-worship-progress-and-ongoing-issues-in-roman-catholicism/>. Some scholars such as Craig A. Evans argue that preaching to believers is better described as teaching and that preaching as an ongoing activity of the Church is solely directed toward non-believers. See Craig A. Evans, “‘Preacher’ and ‘Preaching:’ Some Lexical Observations,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 24, no. 4 (December 1981), 315-322. For an argument rejecting such a clear-cut distinction see Griffiths, *Preaching in the New Testament*, 34. See also Klaas Runia, “What is Preaching According to the New Testament?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978), 3-48.

¹¹ Joshua J. Whitfield, *The Crisis of Bad Preaching: Redeeming the Heart and Way of the Catholic Preacher* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2019), 32.

¹² Josef Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” trans. Lalit Adolphus in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Volume 1, gen. ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 35-36.

¹³ Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” 24, 37.

the preacher are nonsense – “we are preaching a crucified Christ: to the Jews an obstacle they cannot get over, to the gentiles, foolishness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23-24). The preacher’s words cannot bring about belief; only the Spirit of God, acting in and through the proclamation of the preacher, can create faith in what is proclaimed.

What of the preacher? As noted above, preachers must be commissioned by the community of faith to preach in the name of the community. Anyone who believes themselves called to the Church’s preaching ministry must submit to the discernment of the community. If ratified they are commissioned and sent, assuming in addition, theological and scriptural competence. In the Catholic tradition, call, discernment, knowledge, and commissioning are not sufficient. In addition, preachers must be in holy orders if they are to be considered ordinary ministers of the preaching office. An ordinary minister is entitled and obliged to do something because of the office that person holds in the Church.¹⁴ Presently, ordinary ministry is identified with holy orders. The office of preaching is regarded as part of the ordinary ministerial activity of the ordained and so not something the laity are ordinarily identified with. What is true of preaching in general is particularly true when speaking of preaching in the liturgy, especially the homily in the Mass. It is with lay participation in such preaching that the following is concerned.

II. The Thesis Question

The seeds of this thesis question were two courses undertaken at the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto in the academic year 2014-2015. The

¹⁴ See James H. Provost, “Lay Preaching and Canon Law in a Time of Transition,” in *Preaching and the Non-Ordained: An Interdisciplinary Study*, ed. Nadine Foley (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 143.

first course on the documents of the Second Vatican Council resulted in a licentiate thesis critiquing John Paul II's theology of the laity and a continuing theological and pastoral interest in developing lay ecclesial ministry. The second course was on preaching. Reflecting on the "why" of preaching rather than the "how" resulted in a new understanding of preaching, its importance, and its power. Preaching was not talk about God, but a moment of encounter between God and the listener. This was not how preaching had been explained before and the task of preaching took on a depth of meaning it had previously lacked. Thus, the importance of proper preparation and the right of the community of faith to good preachers, even if God is the primary actor in the endeavour, became increasingly stark. The thesis question brings together both these areas of theological concern, namely the Church's lay ecclesial ministry and the Church's preaching ministry to ask if there is a theological framework that would allow for laypeople to participate in a ministry of liturgical preaching? The reservation of the liturgical homily to priests and deacons is set down in can. 767 §1 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law.¹⁵ While can. 767 §1 speaks of the reservation of the "liturgical homily," most canonists, though not all, as will be shown in Chapter Four, hold that this reservation is restricted to the homily in the eucharistic liturgy and does not apply to non-eucharistic liturgies. However, in liturgies where lay people can preach homilies, can. 766 imposes restrictions, namely that of necessity and occasional advantage. Despite the clarity with which the question of lay participation in liturgical preaching is addressed in canon law, there are questions of theological concern regarding the theological coherence and consistency of cans. 766 and 767 §1.

This thesis will explore the theological reasoning underpinning the present canonical norms, which reserves the eucharistic homily to priests and deacons and, in

¹⁵ *Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition*, trans. Canon Law Society of America (Washington DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983).

the case of non-eucharistic liturgies, restricts lay preaching to necessity or occasional advantage. The thesis seeks to establish that these reasons are neither theologically coherent nor pastorally helpful in the present context. Following on from that, a theological framework that would allow for lay participation in the liturgical preaching office will be outlined. The question of the laity's participation in the liturgical preaching office is part of the broader theological question regarding the role of the laity in the Church's mission and ministry, which is impacting all Christian denominations.¹⁶ However, those issues will only be addressed in as much as they impact upon the question of the laity's participation in the Church's liturgical preaching ministry, though much of what is said specifically in relation to lay participation in the liturgical preaching ministry, applies more generally to lay participation in ecclesial ministry.

How does the thesis question fit into the overall discussion on the laity and lay ecclesial ministry? Theologies of lay ecclesial ministry often focus on the sacraments of initiation and pneumatology. What is emphasised is baptism as consecration for mission, the universal call to holiness through mission, and charismatic gifts given to build up the community – motifs present in the texts of the Second Vatican Council. Such an emphasis can be seen in the writings and speeches of such theologians as Richard R. Gaillardetz, Kenan Osborne, Thomas F. O'Meara, Michael Himes, Elissa Rinere, Zeni Fox, Susan K. Wood, and Paul Lakeland.¹⁷ However, these theologians do

¹⁶ See Alastair Redfern, *Ministry and Priesthood* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1999), viii.

¹⁷ See Richard R. Gaillardetz, "Shifting Meanings in the Lay-Clergy Distinction," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 64 (summer, 1999): 115-139; Richard R. Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making: Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006); Kenan Osborne, *Priesthood A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988); Kenan Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993); Thomas F. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); Elissa Rinere, "Conciliar and Canonical Applications of 'Ministry' to the Laity" in *The Jurist* 47 (1987): 204-227; Zeni Foz, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Sheed and Ward, 2002); Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, (New York: Continuum, 2003); Susan K. Wood, ed, *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood: Theologies of Lay and Ordained Ministry* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003); Richard W. Miller II, ed., *Lay Ministry in the*

not promote lay ecclesial ministry in opposition to ordained ministry. These theologians recognise both as essential. Their fidelity to the Church is not slavish obedience to the teaching of the magisterium, but an historical and theological engagement with that teaching in light of conciliar teaching, pastoral need, and pastoral experience. These writings are a reflective engagement with the past, and with the texts and spirit of the Council, for the sake of the present. Conciliar teaching is approached as “guiding and facilitative teaching” and not “rigid, fixed, and determined dogma.”¹⁸ However, in their engagement with the teaching of the magisterium, they encounter an official set of teachings on ministry and the laity that is more fixed, rigid, and in an era of uncertainty and transition, happier to seek refuge in preconciliar forms and structures. In the teachings of the magisterium, ministry, especially *ad intra*, focuses on the Church’s hierarchical structure, the sacrament of order, and is heavily Christological. Postconciliar official teaching shows little account of dialoguing with the work of theologians on the question of ministerial structures and in particular lay ecclesial ministry; prayer for vocations is prayer for vocations to the ordained ministry.¹⁹ Gerard

Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry through the Wisdom of the Past (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Press, 2005); Zeni Fox, ed., *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathways Towards the Future* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010); William J. Cahoy, ed., *In the Name of the Church: Vocation and Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012).

¹⁸ Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), 50.

¹⁹ See Congregation for Clergy, “Letter of Cardinal J. Wright to Cardinal J. Döpfner” (1973), in *Documents on the Liturgy 1963-1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts*, trans. and ed., Thomas C. O’Brien (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1982), 914-916; John Paul II, “Address to the Meeting with the Representatives of the Catholic Lay People of America,” The Holy See, September 18, 1987, accessed August 14, 2021. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987/september/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19870918_laicato-cattolico.html; John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the church and in the World], The Holy See, December 30, 1988, accessed June 09, 2020. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html; John Paul, “Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry,” The Holy See, April 22, 1994, accessed January 01, 2024, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/address-to-the-participants-of-the-symposium-8273>; Congregation for Clergy et al, “Instruction on Certain Question Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest,” The Holy See, August 15, 1997, accessed June 27, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc_con_interdic_doc_15081997_en.html. Henceforth *Instruction on Collaboration*.

Mannion notes: “too many Catholics share a sense that many of those in positions of ecclesial authority, and particularly in Rome, do not appear to be listening very much to any voices other than those that are in agreement with themselves and their own ecclesiological ‘blueprint’ and structural principles.”²⁰ Consequently, the question of lay ecclesial ministry proceeds along two parallel tracks, that of theologians and that of the magisterium, with one track, which has the authority to reshape ministerial structures, showing little regard for the insights of theology or the pastoral reality in many countries represented by the parallel track.

To bridge this gap and resolve this impasse, the thesis proposes a theological approach that places a structured and instituted lay ecclesial ministry within the priesthood of the bishop. Vatican II’s insights into episcopal office makes this approach possible. With much of the magisterium’s pronouncements expressing the concern that encouraging lay ecclesial ministry diminishes the sacrament of order and the Church’s hierarchical structure, this approach affirms the necessity and importance of both. Lay ecclesial ministry becomes grounded in the Church’s sacramental order and is dependent on the bearer of the Church’s sacramental office of bishop. The tradition of “minor orders” is then explored as a means of expressing the lay ecclesial ministers relationship to, and dependence on, the priesthood of the bishop. The bishop is the sacramental priest *par excellence* and all ministry, which in the life of the initiated Christian is received as specific charismatic gift, becomes a participation in a particular aspect of the bishop’s priestly, prophetic, or kingly office. What makes this approach different, and where it moves the issue forward, is that the starting point is not baptism as consecration for mission, charisms, or the common priesthood – though these will play a part – but episcopal office and the conciliar insight that the episcopacy is the

²⁰ Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 105-106.

fullness of the sacrament of order, which can be restructured according to pastoral need and theological development. The common priesthood is then less the basis of ministry but the basic state of life in the Church, namely, that of being an initiated Christian.

From this identification with Christ through baptism, each mature Christian will discern his or her specific mission and, following the confirming discernment of the community and formation, be instituted into that ministerial office to serve the Church's mission.

III. Thesis Structure

The thesis question is explored over five chapters with a general conclusion and involves an analytical approach, which explores the issue from historical, theological, and pastoral perspectives. The historic context is explored so as to understand the context out of which ministerial structures and their theological rationale arose. This approach helps determine if these theological principles remain valid and pastorally useful for the present context.²¹ The deep historical conditioning of theological principles must be understood. When the historical conditioning of structures is understood, the question as to the continued value of that structure can be asked. Thomas O'Meara notes that all theologies have "a limited shelf life" and that what was "once their truth can in different times be half-truth."²² Consequently, the past is approached, as a valid development, within a particular historical and cultural context, and not simply dismissed, even when critiqued and found wanting in the present. Given the reality that structures are historically conditioned, the task of theological enquiry into ministry is to reimagine and rethink those structures for a new ecclesial and pastoral

²¹ See Sandra Schneiders, "New Testament Foundations for Preaching by the Non-Ordained," in *Preaching and the Non-Ordained: An Interdisciplinary Study*, ed. Nadine Foley (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 63.

²² Thomas O'Meara, "Lay Ecclesial Ministry –What It Is and What It Isn't," in *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry through the Wisdom of the Ages*, ed. Richard W. Miller (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Press, 2005), 72.

context. This is the approach taken through the five chapters that develop and answer the thesis question.

The thesis begins with a study of preaching and its importance in the life of the faith community. If the question is to be explored and its implications for the Church understood then it is appropriate to begin with a theologian within the Christian Church who has taken the question seriously. Karl Barth is such a theologian. Barth understood his work as a theologian as an aid to pastors in their ministry of preaching.²³ Chapter One outlines the importance of preaching by charting what is happening theologically in the act. Barth is concerned to understand what God is doing in and through the act of preaching and how the human word relates to the divine word. Barth's theology of preaching places God, not only as the object of preaching, but also as its subject. Preaching is an action of God through the human words of the preacher who expounds a scriptural text for the life situation of the congregation. Through the action of the Holy Spirit these words are heard as God's word. Though God is the primary actor in the act of preaching, the secondary actor, the preacher, remains important, and thus Barth lays out criteria for determining who should be called and commissioned by the congregation to preach to them. As the chapter unfolds the reader will note that Barth's journey from liberal Protestant to dialectical theologian represents a recovery of a deeper, older, and a more profound theological understanding of preaching that was central to the Reformed tradition and the early Reformed theologians. That recovery was to understand preaching as a moment in which the community of faith is confronted with the living Christ who takes up the scriptural word and speaks anew to the listener. Preaching was not catechetical instruction but encounter with God. This encounter is not simply in word but equally in sacrament and so the Church's liturgy must celebrate

²³ See Karl Barth, *Final Testimonies*, ed. Eberhard Busch, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 45-46.

both.²⁴ Barth's affirmation of both in the liturgy was also a return to earliest practice of the reformed tradition. To start reflecting on preaching using Barth's theology is to start from a position of strength represented by a different tradition that offers an ecumenical illumination for what follows in Chapter Two. The reader will note parallels as the Catholic recovery of preaching is explored in Chapter Two – the broader Christian tradition was returning to deeper theological roots, namely God's active presence in the act of preaching and authentic liturgy as celebration of both word and sacrament. Vatican II's teaching on the liturgical homily in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, as well as the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, resonates with Barth's theology.²⁵ To say Barth's theology resonated with the Council's teaching is not say the Council was dependent. He, no doubt, influenced the Council Fathers and their theological advisors, but the conciliar texts can claim thoroughly Catholic foundations in the work of Catholic theologians whose recovery of preaching, as encounter with the living Christ, had deeply Catholic sacramental roots.

Chapter Two focuses on the recovery of liturgical preaching in the Catholic tradition. The Second Vatican Council's liturgical reforms were an unambiguous affirmation of the intimate connection between word and sacrament, the importance of the homily in the liturgy, and the homily as a moment of encounter with the living Christ. The conciliar achievement is made manifest when contrasted with what went before and so the chapter begins with a reflection on eucharistic preaching in the preconciliar liturgy. What the Council proposes contrasts radically with the preconciliar

²⁴ Barth's 1950s sermons in Basel prison conclude with a movement toward the altar to celebrate the sacrament. See Karl Barth, *Deliverance to the Captives*, trans. Marguerite Wieser (London: SCM Press, 1961). Originally published as *Den Gefangenen Befreiung* (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1959).

²⁵ See Leonardo De Chirico, "121. Karl Barth and Vatican II," Vatican Files: Evangelical Theological Perspectives on Roman Catholicism, March 08, 2016, accessed December 21, 2024, <https://vaticanfiles.org/en/2016/03/121-karl-barth-and-vatican-ii/#:~:text=In%20reading%20Vatican%20II%2C%20Barth,his%20theology%20of%20the%20Word.>

era's law and practice. In the preconciliar era, the moment for the homily, was taken as a moment for catechetical instruction. If there was a sermon, and often there would not have been, something was said about God, rather than the moment being taken as a moment of encounter, through an unfolding of the biblical text. The movement from the preconciliar practice to the conciliar norms can only be explained within the context of the development of a Catholic theology of the word, which provided a language to explain theologically what was happening within the act of preaching and its relationship to the Church's sacramental theology. The work of Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) and Otto Semmelroth (1912-1979) will be explored, as they laboured to create such a theology of the Word within the Catholic sacramental tradition and addressed the question of preaching within that framework.²⁶

Readers will note parallels with Barth. Like Barth, Schillebeeckx and Semmelroth, moved beyond an inherited theology of preaching to create a new understanding of preaching by looking back into the history of their respective theological traditions. Their diverse sources recalled their ecclesial traditions to an appreciation of the deeper significance of preaching in God's plan of salvation and in the celebration of the liturgy. That deeper significance is preaching as encounter with the living Christ, preaching as a prayerful unfolding of the mystery of God, and the Spirit active in and through the words of the preacher. Their writings remind those called to preach today that preaching is an indispensable part of God's plan of salvation and the liturgy, which unfolds that plan through word and sacrament. Appreciating the significance of that may result in a greater commitment on the part of the Church's preachers, be they ordained ministers or permanently installed and instituted lay preachers, to the endeavour.

²⁶ See Paul Janowiak, *The Holy Preaching: The Sacramentality of the Word in the Liturgical Assembly* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 19.

The preconciliar theological recovery of a theology of word and drawing out the implications of that for preaching, the sacramental economy, and especially the celebration of the Eucharist were the concerns of Schillebeeckx and Semmelroth. The question of who can confront the community of faith with the living Christ was not one of primary theological concern in the preconciliar era. The answer was too obvious – such preaching would be the duty of the priest. How Schillebeeckx understands the respective role of priest and layperson is briefly analysed. Schillebeeckx's insights into the laity must be understood within the context of a time that was only *beginning* to reflect theologically upon their role and mission of the laity in the life of the Church and he moved beyond some of the presuppositions underpinning the ecclesiastical understanding of the laity. Very importantly, he embeds the laity's mission in their baptism and confirmation and not in a canonical mandate received from the hierarchy. For Schillebeeckx, to be baptized is by its nature, for the mature Christian, to be apostolic; this is one example of his moving beyond the inherited presuppositions about the laity.

Beginning with Chapter Three, attention now shifts directly to the thesis question. If preaching is an ordinary means God uses to encounter men and women then the Church must call forth preachers to confront the community, gathered in worship, with the preached word? Can laypeople be empowered to preach liturgical homilies to the community gathered in worship? Chapters Three and Four follow and analyse the debate through the course of the postconciliar era until 2004.

Chapter Three begins with a brief note on hermeneutics. Theology, whether it is the teaching set down by the magisterium or the reflections of individual theologians involves an interpretative choice. In the postconciliar era, a position must be taken vis-à-vis, the texts and spirit of the Council. The position adopted and how conciliar and

postconciliar material is interpreted underpin positions taken on questions of ecclesiology, ministry, laity, and priesthood, all themes that impact on the thesis question. There follows on, from this note on hermeneutics, an analysis of two interpretations of the Council with regard to the question of lay participation in the preaching office including that of liturgical preaching.²⁷ These are Decree 2 of the Synod of Würzburg, and the Congregation for Clergy's rescript to the West German bishops on lay participation in the preaching office – both 1973.²⁸ These interpretations, and so the limits set on the practice of lay participation on the liturgical preaching office, are strongly influenced by the underlying presuppositions that inform Decree 2

²⁷ As the Church's official texts are key data for this study it is important to acknowledge that the genre of an ecclesiastical document speaks to the authority of the document, weight, the submission expected of the believer to that teaching. The authority of the ecclesiastical documents reviewed in the thesis carry varying degrees of authority. The most authoritative documents in this study are Vatican II's Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and Constitution on the Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*). The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the twentieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council noted that the four constitutions (on the liturgy, church, revelation, and church in the modern world) noted that they were the hermeneutical key to interpreting the other texts of the Council. See Synod of Bishops, "The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod," December 08, 1985, accessed November 26, 2024, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/final-report-of-the-1985-extraordinary-synod-2561>. What they propose has binding significance for the Church. They contain the authoritative solemnly promulgated teachings of an ecumenical council of the Church about its self-understanding, nature, and liturgical life. The other major text is the 1983 Code of Canon Law, which was promulgated through the apostolic constitution *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges* and likewise its canons are binding. While binding, they are not irreformable meaning they can change. Other genres include encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, apostolic letters, speeches, general audiences, and homilies. Encyclicals are pastoral letters addressed firstly to bishops and then the faithful. In an encyclical the pope speaks to the contemporary situation on a matter of faith, morals, or social concern in light of Scripture and tradition. Despite lacking the formal status of an apostolic constitution they have significant weight as a source of teaching. Because what is proposed in encyclicals is authoritative teaching, a religious submission of will and intellect is expected of the faithful. Some apostolic letters are issued "motu proprio" meaning "on his [the pope's] own impulse." Their significance is that this is the mechanism often used to announce changes to the Code of Canon Law. Two other genres that are referenced in the thesis are rescripts and instructions. A rescript answers a specific question or grants dispensations or privileges, though usually only to a particular group making the request. An instruction outlines how a more authoritative document is to be implemented or reminds those responsible for implementing the law what the law states. For further discussion see Elizabeth Huddleston, "A Very Short Guide to Understanding the scope, Purpose, and Doctrinal Weight of Papal Documents," Church Life Journal, March 24, 2024, accessed November 26, 2024, <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/a-very-short-guide-to-understanding-the-scope-purpose-and-doctrinal-weight-of-papal-documents/>; See also Francis A. Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium*, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996).

²⁸ In 2022 the term "Dicastery" (department) replaced that of Congregation to describe offices of the Roman Curia. For the purpose of this dissertation the term Congregation is retained. See Francis, Praedicate Evangelium [Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia and its Service to the Church and the World], The Holy See, March 19, 2022, accessed April 19, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/20220319-costituzione-ap-predicare-evangelium.html.

and the Congregation's rescript namely, the "intimate connection" between preaching and holy orders, the distinction between the hierarchical priesthood and the common priesthood, and the laity's secularity and mission in the world. These are presuppositions that inform how the conciliar material is handled and how far the laity can participate in the ministry. A third interpretation follows in an analysis of Karl Rahner's *The Shape of the Church to Come* (1972). This text offers a useful lens for critiquing the underlying assumptions informing what both the Synod and the Congregation believe permissible. Rahner speaks of these as "presuppositions and horizons of understanding from the past" and so cannot provide the framework for what will be needed.²⁹ This is so because for Rahner, the Church finds itself in an era of transition, which means the future will require very different structures so as to ensure the gospel continues to be proclaimed and the community of faith a place of life-giving vibrancy. For Rahner, what is required is prophetic awareness of the gospel, a charismatically creative imagination and a deep sense of history.³⁰ Rahner imagines a Church of base-communities under the "episcopal great Church."³¹ Rahner's Church of the future remains both sacramental and hierarchical. In practice, Rahner's approach resonates with Benedict XVI's (2005-2013) "hermeneutic of reform," which Benedict speaks of as a "combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels."³² A task for the theologian is to distinguishing the principle from the practical form conditioned by a given historical context so as to ensure the continued vitality of the principle.

²⁹ Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, trans. Edward Quinn (London: SPC, 1974), 13. Originally published as *Strukturwandel der Kirche als Aufgabe und Chance* in 1972.

³⁰ See Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 47.

³¹ See Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 109.

³² Benedict XVI, "Christmas Greeting to the Roman Curia 2005," The Holy See, December 22, 2005, accessed December 23, 2023, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia_en.html.

Because the Congregation's receipt is a source document for many subsequent pronouncements on lay liturgical preaching, its major presuppositions, namely the historic identification of preaching with holy orders and a concern that laypeople preaching regularly in the liturgy would blur the distinction between the hierarchical and common priesthoods, are critiqued in detail. This critique leads to two further necessary critiques, namely of ministry being based on the authority to act in the person of Christ the Head and the laity's secularity as an ontological characteristic of their identity. These presuppositions continue to appear through all subsequent documentation on lay liturgical preaching with the Christological strand and the secular strand being particularly prevalent in the documents analysed in Chapter Four. Noting the shift in how secularity is understood is important because it clarifies developments addressed in Chapter Four and the increasingly negative attitude toward lay ecclesial ministry that can be seen from the mid-1980s until 2004, a time that corresponds to the papacy of John Paul II (1978-2005).³³ Chapter Four analyses the major documents from this time along with the actual experience of lay liturgical preaching where it developed.

An assumption running through Chapter Four is that increasing circumspection of lay ecclesial ministry including lay liturgical preaching ministry is paralleled by an increasing prominence given to the role of deacons who are spoken of as empowered, by their ordination, to act in the person of Christ the Head. However, in 2009, Benedict XVI issued the apostolic letter *Omnium in Mentem*, which removed the reference to deacons acting in the person of Christ the Head.³⁴ This leaves the question: if deacons

³³ James Coriden's claim that can. 766 is "a broad warrant for lay preaching" and "a fully legitimate lay function" is analysed in light of the language used in the Code and subsequent documentation. See James A. Coriden, "Title I: The Ministry of the Divine Word [cc756-780]," in *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, ed. John P. Beal, James A. Coriden, and Thomas J. Green (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 927.

³⁴ Benedict XVI, *Omnium in Mentem* [Apostolic Letter "motu proprio" on Several Amendments to the Code of Canon Law], The Holy See, October 26, 2009, accessed October 25, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20091026_codex-iuris-canonici.html.

do not act in the person of Christ the Head then on what basis do they exercise the right to preach eucharistic homilies? On the basis of their baptismal priesthood, which they share with all initiated Christians.³⁵ The theological difference between deacon and lay Christian in the exercise of this ministry is no more than the deacon's pre-existing status in the Church's ministerial structures and Chapter Five will set out to create a framework to give the lay liturgical preacher that status.

If the magisterium's teaching on lay liturgical preaching in the postconciliar era, particularly from 1983 to 2004, is interpreted to be based on outdated theological presuppositions, ahistorical, uncreative, uninformed by dialogue with theologians, nor life giving for the community of faith, it is because of a number of presuppositions, that grow out of theological reading, and the insights of theologians, shape how the material is approached. These presuppositions impact on how the texts of the magisterium are critiqued and subsequently used to create the theological framework outlined in Chapter Five. Karl Rahner and Kenan Osborne's theological reflection were strongly influential in both regards.

The first presupposition is Christian initiation is not initiation into lay status in the Church. Lay status is a position in the Church, the taking on by a mature initiated Christian, of an "active and specific role in the Church as servant-leader."³⁶ This a rejection of the notion that a layperson *qua* layperson has a mission with a secular focus. Lay Christians are not simply the non-ordained. The second presupposition is when the theological understanding of one ministerial office changes then all other ministerial offices are impacted and modified by that changed theological understanding.³⁷ This

³⁵ See Marc Caron, "The Changing Liturgical Role of the Deacon: From Vatican II to the Present and Beyond," *The Jurist* 79 (2023), 131-165.

³⁶ Osborne, *Ministry*, 598.

³⁷ See Kenan Osborne, "Envisioning a Theology of Ordained and Lay Ministry: Lay/Ordained Ministry – Current Issues of Ambiguity," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, 215; See also Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 57-58.

presupposition is closely links to Rahner's notion of a "declericalized" Church.³⁸ Thus changing the status of the laity in the Church's ministerial life is a threat to the status quo, and to the position of priests in particular, and resistance can be less to do with theology, but rather with status. The third presupposition recognises the distinction between the hierarchical and common priesthood but not the degree of separation as found in the magisterium's pronouncements.³⁹ The fourth presupposition rejects the ahistorical way conciliar texts and magisterial texts are used directly or within subsequent texts. The fact that texts are conditioned by their original context is not acknowledged within the pronouncements of the magisterium. The magisterium's texts are approached as guide and facilitative teaching and not rigid and foxed dogma.⁴⁰ Understanding the text in the original context is essential if a judgment is to be made regarding continued value.⁴¹ Interwoven with these presuppositions are those presuppositions identified by Rahner as necessary for creating the structures of today and tomorrow, namely – a deep sense of history, prophetic awareness of the gospel, and a charismatically creative imagination. In addition, Vatican II's teaching on the episcopacy as of divine institution and containing the fullness of the sacrament of order is also essential to what is proposed in Chapter Five. With these presuppositions, underpinning and shaping what follows, Chapter Five can be said to be "both utilization of the past and rejection of the past."⁴² It rejects the past in as much as it proposes a framework that allows laypeople be ordinary ministers of the liturgical homily. It utilizes the past by reimagining the tradition of "minor orders" to form a new permanently installed instituted ministry of lay liturgical preaching. This rejection and

³⁸ See Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 57-58.

³⁹ Osborne, *Priesthood*, 148.

⁴⁰ See Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 50.

⁴¹ See Schneiders, "New Testament Foundations for Preaching by the Non-Ordained, 63.

⁴² John W. O'Malley, "Reform, Historical Consciousness and Vatican II's Aggiornamento," *Theological Studies* 32, no 4 (1971), 600.

utilization of the past takes place within the overarching framework of Vatican II's teaching on the episcopacy. Thus the starting point in Chapter Five is not the common priesthood and baptism as a consecration for mission, as is often the case with lay ecclesial theologies, but the priesthood of the bishop. While Vatican II made it clear that priestly and diaconate ministry were participations in the bishop's priesthood, there is no tradition of speaking of lay ecclesial ministry in such a way. If, the office of priests and deacons, arises from pastoral need and represents a sharing by the bishop of his authority – a partial sharing in the sacrament of order for the good of the community – then in the context of new pastoral challenges, and theological developments, the Church must be empowered to restructure the sacrament of order, to respond to new pastoral contexts and theological developments. Such a reordering of the sacrament of order is possible as can be noted by the norms of Paul VI's (1963-1978) apostolic letter *Ministeria Quaedam* (1972), which implemented changes to the traditional minor orders and invited episcopal conferences to conceive new ones, which were responses to pastoral need.⁴³ Only following on from creating the foundations for an instituted ministry of lay liturgical preaching is the question of criteria for determining who is called to this ministry set forth. A set of criteria, not directly dependent on, or shaped by, theologies of ordination, is outlined. The thesis has never argued that every layperson can preach in the liturgy solely on the basis of their participation in the common priesthood. Resonances with Barth's criteria for commissioning can be seen in what is proposed. Baptism is a consecration for mission but discerning that mission is essential. Participation in the common priesthood is the basis of life in the Church, which requires a subsequent discernment to determine how God is calling an individual

⁴³ See Paul VI, *Ministeria Quaedam* [Apostolic Letter "motu proprio" on first tonsure, minor orders, and the sub diaconate], The Holy See, August 15, 1972, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/ministeria-quaedam-9006>.

to serve the Church. Baptism, as a consecration for mission, is understood within the framework of Von Balthasar's notion of obedience to mission. Determining admission to the ministry of liturgical preaching must take account of the actions of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's bestowal of charismatic gifts. These charismatic gifts must be tested by the faith community and confirmed by episcopal authority. Such confirmation is essential because the instituted lay liturgical preacher will be participating in that authority's ministry. Should it be discerned that a charism is present, an appropriate formation is necessary followed by commissioning by ritual. Ritual is not simply the public recognition of a person's charism and call to serve the community but a theological-liturgical action in which spiritual authority is transferred from the bishop to the minister, which empowers the minister to confront the community of faith with the living Christ. As the minister confronts the congregation, he does so united to them and representative of the episcopal authority – he or she does not stand outside that authority.

The General Conclusion draws together some of the implications for ministry, priesthood, and laity of what is proposed in the preceding chapters noting that the changed status of the laity in the Church's liturgical ministry means a changed status for all other officeholders in the Church and changes to the status quo can be challenging for those impacted.

IV. Conclusion

The admission of laypeople to the ministry of liturgical preaching must be based on coherent theological principles and not be a response to bad preaching, which is acknowledged as a pastoral problem.⁴⁴ Perhaps the reality of that problem affirms the limitations of the present theological framework for determining who can and cannot

⁴⁴ See Whitfield, *The Crisis of Bad Preaching*, xi.

preach liturgical homilies, and the context for such preaching. It is theological principles, firstly, those that underpin the canonical restriction of the liturgical homily to the clergy and reserves it to them in the Eucharist, and secondly, alternative theological possibilities based on alternative theological principles, that will be the focus of what follows. Behind the thesis question is the recognition that preaching is not only an essential activity of the Church but a profoundly important theological activity, whose importance for the life of the Christian Church was recovered by the work of such theologians as Barth, Schillebeeckx, and Semmelroth, and in the Catholic tradition, affirmed by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. However, sixty years after the conclusion of the Council that newly found high regard for the liturgical homily has yet to be realised in much pastoral practice.⁴⁵ Before examining the thesis question, the theological importance of preaching must be set down, and it is this that concerns Chapters One and Two, to which attention is now turned.

⁴⁵ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* [Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World]. The Holy See, November 13, 2013, §§135, 137, & 138, accessed December 25, 2022. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

Chapter One

A Theology of Preaching Through the Lens of Karl Barth

1.2 Introduction

This chapter will focus on Karl Barth's theology of preaching.¹ As noted in the General Introduction, it is appropriate to begin with a theologian who has taken the question of preaching seriously and, within the Christian Church, Karl Barth is such a theologian. His theology of preaching is a reminder for all Christian denominations, in light of concerns that contemporary preaching lacks focus on the word, that preaching must focus on God and what God is doing.² Barth's theology of preaching represents a recovery of a deeper and older understanding of preaching that was part of the theological tradition of the Reformed Church. It reminds the preacher that it is neither he nor she that consoles the congregation but God. It reminds the listener that God speaks to the human situation and not the preacher. Preaching is not about past deeds but an encounter with the living Christ – who is acting and who will act – and so the themes that are central to Barth's theology of preaching are 1) revelation; 2) preaching as a form of the word of God; and 3) preaching and sacraments in the service of proclamation. In addition to these themes, the question of the criteria required for commissioning preachers was important to Barth. Barth did not believe in a free pulpit. These themes will be examined with particular reference to the text *Homiletics*.³

¹ For a detailed biography see Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1976).

² William H. Willimon, introduction to *The Word is this World: Two Sermons by Karl Barth*, trans. Christopher Asprey, ed. Kurt I. Johnson (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2007), 11.

³ Karl Barth, *Homiletics*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991). The text *Homiletics* as published was a compilation of student notes originally published as *The Preaching of the Gospel* (1963). In 1965 a more complete version entitled *Homiletik* was published by Günter Seyfferth in consultation with Barth. The English language edition *Homiletics* was published in 1991 with addition material gathered by Donald E. Daniels and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley.

1.2 From Liberal Protestantism to *Homiletics*

Barth thought deeply about preaching. In *Final Testimonies* he writes: “my whole theology, you see, is fundamentally a theology for pastors. It grew out of my own situation when I had to teach and preach and counsel a little. And I found that what I had learned at the university was of little help in this. So I had to make a fresh start and I tried to do this.”⁴ This fresh start, which will be expanded upon below, was necessitated by the collapse of his confidence in the nineteenth century liberal Protestantism of his university education.⁵ He needed a new foundation for theology and preaching and found it in placing the word of God at the centre. The impact of this shift can be seen when two of Barth’s most famous sermons, “Sermon on the Sinking of the Titanic” (1912), and the “Bremen Sermon” (1934), are contrasted in Section 1.3.⁶

Barth’s first experience of consistent preaching was to the congregation at Safenwil where he was pastor from 1911-1921. He did not believe his theological formation equipped him for weekly preaching, as was expected of him as a pastor, and consequently he found sermon preparation difficult and preaching a challenge.⁷ Barth’s early sermons identified talk about the achievement of the human spirit as talk about God.⁸ Eberhard Busch notes that Barth’s sermons during his initial years at Safenwil focussed on life, experience, and current affairs; “typical of his sermons were remarks

⁴ Barth, *Final Testimonies*, 45-46.

⁵ Liberal Protestantism can be understood as a term used to describe various movements that sought to reconcile Protestantism with modernity and the rise of the evolutionary sciences, biblical criticism, and the social gospel movement. Faith which was traditionally grounded in Scripture and in Jesus became grounded in human experience and reason; dogma, which traditionally stated what had to be believed came to be identified as one culture’s expression of its belief and so relative and revisable; human beings replaced God at the centre of the theological endeavour. For Barth’s account of nineteenth century Protestant theology, see Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, new edition, trans. Brian Cozens and John Bowden (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002).

⁶ For the text of both sermons, see *The Word is this World: Two Sermons by Karl Barth*, trans. Christopher Asprey, ed. Kurt I. Johnson (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2007).

⁷ William H. Willimon, introduction to *The Early Preaching of Karl Barth: Fourteen Sermons with Commentary by William H. Willimon*, by Karl Barth and Willimon H. Willimon (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), x.

⁸ Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 2.

like, 'The greatest thing is what takes place in our hearts.' Or, 'To each man goes out the call to be true to himself'...Or, 'Dear friend, think seriously about yourself.' As he explained 'Before I can know God, I must know myself.'"⁹

However, one event was to change everything. It was the experience of how some of his teachers responded to the Great War. In October 1914 many of his teachers in Germany signed a manifesto supporting the German war effort, the invasion of neutral Belgium, and militarism. This event was the catalyst leading him to question the liberal Protestant theology of his schooling. Barth later wrote of this experience: "they seemed to have been hopelessly compromised by what I regarded as their failure in the face of the ideology of war."¹⁰ He interpreted this ethical failure on their part to mean something was wrong with their theology and thus he notes, "a whole world of exegesis, ethics, dogmatics, and preaching, which I had hitherto held to be essentially trustworthy, was shaken to the foundations."¹¹ Barth's new foundation for theology and preaching was the recognition that God was qualitatively different from anything created, which in *The Epistle to the Romans* (1918) he expresses as:

God, the pure and absolute boundary and beginning of all that we are and have and do; God, who is distinguished qualitatively from [human beings] and from everything human, and must never be identified with anything which we name, or experience, or conceive, or worship, as God... The Unknown, who is never a known thing in the midst of other known things.¹²

Joseph Mangina writes: "God is not man, Barth said in a thousand variations. God is God. The phrase became something of a motto for his theological revolution."¹³ While a motto reflecting his theological revolution, it also left Barth with a challenge with

⁹ Busch, *Karl Barth*, 54. See also Busch, *Karl Barth*, 62-63.

¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Fakultätsalbum der Evangelisch-theologischen Fakultät Münster* (1927) in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 81. Henceforth ABT I.

¹¹ Karl Barth, ABT I, in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 81. See also Ethan A. Worthington, *The Claim of God: Karl Barth's Doctrine of Sanctification in His Earlier Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 2.

¹² Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th ed., trans Edwyn Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 330-331. See also Karl Barth, "Sermon on the One Thing Needful," in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 90.

¹³ Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness*, 2-3.

regard to preaching: how can a theologian, or a preacher speak, or preach meaningfully, about this God? It was a challenge that had occupied him since 1914 as he acknowledged in *The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching* (1922).¹⁴

The answer was found in the Bible. Speaking in 1916 he noted: “what is there within the Bible? What sort of house is it to which the Bible is the door? What sort of country is spread before our eyes when we throw the Bible open?”¹⁵ To this Barth answers: “within the Bible is the strange, new world, the world of God...the Bible unfolds to us as we are met, guided, drawn on, and made to grow by the grace of God.”¹⁶ As Busch notes: “it was the discovery of the Bible which held his attention.”¹⁷ Barth came to understand that the Bible was not simply an historical document but the place of encounter with the living God who presents Godself to men and women. This was God’s action, as Barth noted in sermons preached at this time: “the Holy Spirit of God must open our ears so that we may hear what the Word has to say to us”¹⁸ and “It is in Jesus that the real light of our life is *eternal* light, a light to which our life is *not at all suited*, a light that completely *contradicts* our life, and light that we are *not able* to see. If we do see it, it is because a miracle is worked in us.”¹⁹

By 1921 Barth was no longer engaged directly in pastoral ministry but teaching at the University of Göttingen, which provided him with the space for in-depth study of the classic texts of theology, especially those of the Reformed tradition. Among his theological works from this time are *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (1922), the Göttingen Dogmatics lecture series (1923-1925) and *Church Dogmatics*, Volume 1, Part

¹⁴ See Karl Barth, “The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching,” in *The Word of God & the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (Kraus House, 2018), 57-58. No city of publication noted in text.

¹⁵ Karl Barth, “The Strange New World within the Bible,” in *The Word of God & the Word of Man*, 12.

¹⁶ Barth, “The Strange New World within the Bible,” 15-16.

¹⁷ Busch, *Karl Barth*, 98.

¹⁸ Karl Barth, “Sermon on 2 Peter 3:12a,” (April 29, 1917) in Karl Barth and William H. Willimon, *The Early Preaching of Karl Barth*, trans. John E. Wilson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 25.

¹⁹ Karl Barth, “Sermon on Luke 2:33-25,” (December 26, 1920) in Barth and Willimon, *The Early Preaching of Karl Barth*, 146.

1 (1932).²⁰ The theology outlined in these texts underpin his theological reflections in *Homiletics*. In *Dogmatics in Outline* Barth noted that the concern of dogmatics is the proclamation of the gospel.²¹ Theology is secondary discourse serving the primary discourse of preaching but essential to it, for the Church's proclamation needs to be tested with regard to its purpose, which is bearing witness to the Word as recorded in the witness of scripture.²²

While at the University of Bonn, where he had moved in 1930, he decided to give a series of "exercises" directly addressing the theme of preaching, and it is from these lectures, originally entitled "Exercises on Sermon Preparation," that the text *Homiletics* arose. These "Exercises" were a series of lectures he gave in the autumn of 1932 and again in the spring of 1933. That the theme of preaching was important to Barth can be seen from the fact that he had no responsibility in the university for teaching homiletics or sermon preparation. These duties rested with others. These "exercises" are not "light relief from more serious business."²³ Rather, they are a forum in which to draw out the implications of his theological enquiry on the ministry and theology of preaching.

Angela Dienhart Hancock argues that the "exercises" are the story of "how a preaching classroom became a place of resistance in Germany in the firestorm of 1932-

²⁰ *Göttingen Dogmatics* was first published in a German edition in 1984. It is based on Barth's 1923-1925 dogmatic lecture cycle delivered at the University of Göttingen where he was teaching Calvinist theology in the Lutheran faculty. See Karl Barth, *Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991). Henceforth *GD*. The text was Barth's first of three cycles of courses in dogmatics; the second was at the University of Münster in 1926 and the third from which arose *Church Dogmatics* began at the University of Bonn in 1931. See Daniel L. Migliore, "Karl Barth's First Lectures in Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion," in *Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Volume 1, by Karl Barth, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), xv. See also Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Volume 1, Part 1, trans. G.W. Bromiley, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975). Henceforth *CD* 1/1.

²¹ See Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G.T. Thompson (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1959), 10.

²² See Geoffrey W. Bromiley, preface to *Homiletics* by Karl Barth, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 13.

²³ Bromiley, preface to *Homiletics*, 13.

1933.”²⁴ In other words, the series of lectures on preaching was designed to equip the students, future pastors, with a theology of preaching capable of resisting the National Socialist threat. Hancock’s analysis of “Exercises on Sermon Preparation” can be correct without reducing *Homiletics* to a text of historical interest. The themes Barth reflects on have a value to preaching in any age. David G. Buttrick notes of *Homiletics*: “Literary critics observe that the beginning of a story often prefigures the whole story – significant themes, central characters, even a kind of shape of things to come. In Barth’s homiletic lectures we have an astonishing disclosure of a young theologian at work forming his later thought.”²⁵ *Homiletics* does not simply point to theological themes of future concern but those very themes that had occupied him from c. 1914, namely, a new theological foundation for doing theology and the implication of such for preaching. Barth recognised that his theological shift impacted his preaching. Speaking in Safenwil in 1935 he noted: “I can see now that I did not preach the gospel clearly enough to you during the time when I was your pastor. Since then, I have often thought with some trepidation of those who were perhaps led astray or scandalized by what I said at that time, or of the dead who have passed on and did not hear, at any rate from me, what by human reckoning they ought to have heard.”²⁶

1.3 The Centrality of Revelation to Preaching

Barth announces very starkly and succinctly: “Preaching must conform to revelation.”²⁷ Central to Christian faith is the belief that God is present in history and human experience, not, Barth would argue, because human beings have spoken about God but because God has spoken to human beings. God steps out of the divine mystery

²⁴ Angela Dienhart Hancock, *Karl Barth’s Emergency Homiletics* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2013), xiv.

²⁵ David G. Buttrick, foreword to *Homiletics*, by Karl Barth, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 7-8.

²⁶ Karl Barth, *Theologische Existenz heute*, 32, 29f, in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 64.

²⁷ Barth, *Homiletics*, 47.

and into the human story to make humanity's cause God's cause. Barth writes: "The purpose of this revelation is relational: [God] wants in [God's] freedom actually not to be without [humanity] but *with* [them] and in the same freedom not against [them] but *for* [them], and that apart from or even counter to what [humanity] deserves. [God] wants in fact to be [humanity's] partner, [their] almighty and compassionate saviour."²⁸

The role of revelation in Barth's preaching is seen in the contrast, as noted in Section 1.2, between two sermons, preached at different moments of Barth's theological journey. While the sermon "The Sinking of the Titanic" (1912) was later acknowledged by Barth to be an embarrassment, he used it as an example of how not to preach during his lectures on sermon preparation: "In 1912, when the sinking of the Titanic shocked the world, the next Sunday I had to make this disaster the main theme of my sermon, and a monster of a full-scale Titanic sermon resulted."²⁹ The Scripture text of the day was Ps. 103:15-17 but Barth rarely refers to it. His text is the disaster and much of the sermon reads like a newspaper article: the context of English-Germany rivalry; technical specifications; facilities on board; the sinking and the fate of passengers, crew, musicians, and the captain are all discussed by Barth. Following this Barth shares with the congregation, "the thoughts and impressions this event has left with me."³⁰ Firstly, Barth, true to the heritage of nineteenth century liberal Protestantism, notes that it is God's will "that the world's technology and machinery attain to higher degrees of perfection...the divine spirit in humanity ought to expand in this labour and to prosper."³¹ Barth suggests that the issue is not the ingenuity of human beings but their "playful arrogance."³² God's real objection, Barth claims, is ostentation and so the

²⁸ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. Thomas Wieser & John Newton Thomas (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 50. See also Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 101.

²⁹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 118.

³⁰ Karl Barth, "Sermon on the Sinking of the Titanic," in *The Word is this World: Two Sermons by Karl Barth*, trans. Christopher Asprey, ed. Kurt I. Johnson (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2007), 36.

³¹ Barth, "Sermon on the Sinking of the Titanic," 36.

³² Barth, "Sermon on the Sinking of the Titanic," 36.

tragedy is the measure of God's judgement on an economic system that would produce such a luxurious ship.³³ Barth the pastor is the prophet of God's retribution on the economic system; "this catastrophe is a crude but all-the-more clear example to us of the essential characteristics and effects of capitalism, which consists of a few individuals competing with each other at the expense of everyone else in a mad and foolish race for profits."³⁴

By the time Barth was preparing his seminars on sermon preparation, revelation – God's speaking to the human person – was the key motif that framed the definition of preaching set down in *Homiletics*:

1. Preaching is the Word of God which he himself [sic] speaks, claiming for that purpose the exposition of a biblical text in free human words that are relevant to contemporaries by those who are called to do this in the church that is obedient to its commission.
2. Preaching is the attempt enjoined upon the church to serve God's own Word, through one who is called thereto, by expounding a biblical text in human words and making it relevant to contemporaries in intimation of what they have to hear from God himself [sic].³⁵

Barth believed this twofold definition was necessary; preaching cannot be defined in a single statement but must acknowledge these related theses which meet in the Scripture text and which the preacher expounds in free words. Together they form a closed circle that begins and ends with God. God is both the subject and the object of preaching, addressing the preacher and congregation through the scriptural text. He notes: "the concept of preaching cannot be fixed on the basis of experience. It is a theological concept which arises in the faith that can only point to the divine reality."³⁶ For Barth this divine reality is God's revelatory action, an event of God's doing which does not

³³ See Barth, "Sermon on the Sinking of the Titanic," 39-40.

³⁴ Barth, "Sermon on the Sinking of the Titanic," 40.

³⁵ Barth, *Homiletics*, 44. See also Karl Barth, *CD 1/1*, 56 and Karl Barth *Church Dogmatics*, Volume 1, Part 2, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980), 74. Henceforth *CD 1/2*. On occasion, [sic] is used in preference to degendered language.

³⁶ Barth, *Homiletics*, 46.

arise from human doing. The event is solely the action of the Triune God – the Father sends the incarnate Son into the world and through the action of the Spirit, the community of faith is formed in response to God’s word by those who accept it. Barth sums this up: “*God reveals [Godself]. [God] reveals [Godself] through [Godself]. [God] reveals [Godself].* If we really want to understand revelation in terms of its subject, i.e., God, then the first thing we have to realise is that this subject, God, the Revealer, is identical with [God’s] Act in revelation and also identical with its effect”³⁷ Revelation is a closed circle. God is both the subject of revelation and the object of revelation. God begins the process by God’s act of revelation and maintains it by making it possible for human beings to meet God through God’s Spirit who creates faith in what God has revealed.

How can human beings meet God through God’s Spirit? Any correspondence between the divine and the human is part of the grace of revelation. God makes it possible for men and women to encounter God through human words and events because God gives these words and events the capacity to represent Godself. Revelation for Barth is a miraculous action. Trevor Hart reflecting on Barth’s theology of revelation notes, “objects which in and of themselves serve only and precisely to veil God (for they are, in themselves, not God) are taken up into a relationship with God where their natural capacities are wholly transcended and where they are rendered transparent with respect to God.”³⁸

This action of God implies a condescension on God’s part. God makes it possible for human beings to hear God. God condescends out of generosity. Throughout the event, God remains sovereign and revelation remains an act of God’s sovereign

³⁷ Barth, *CD I/1*, 296. See also Trevor Hart, “The Word, the Words, and the Witness: Proclamation as Divine and Human Reality in the Theology of Karl Barth,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no 1 (1995), 83.

³⁸ Trevor Hart, “Revelation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 46.

freedom.³⁹ Yet God's self-disclosure does not equate to a direct experience or encounter with God. The human word taken up by God continues to conceal God. This means that any word or object God takes up, does not make God directly visible through those human media, but through faith, and faith is content with indirect knowledge.⁴⁰ Disclosure takes place in hiddenness.

Revealing his indebtedness to dialectical theology, Barth notes that in the Incarnation, God remains hidden in the humanity of Jesus Christ, and without faith Christ's divine nature remains unrecognized. This is key to dialectical theology, and what makes it distinct from Barth's inherited theology of nineteenth century liberal Protestantism: God's Spirit is necessary so men and women can recognize God present in human media. Human beings have no direct immediacy to God's revelation.⁴¹ The Spirit makes the faith response to God's revelation possible. The Spirit makes it possible to call Jesus "Lord" and to accept the witness of the apostles to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as recorded in Scripture. Thus, faith is an essential component of the revelatory act. Without the faith response there is no revelation. It is the Spirit's action in the heart of the listener that makes it possible for him or her to accept what they hear as God's revelation. The faith response is vital to completing the circle of revelation.⁴²

What are the implications of Barth's theology of revelation for this theology of preaching? As noted above, preaching must conform to revelation and it takes place "in

³⁹ Barth, *CD I/1*, 321.

⁴⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Volume 2, Part 1, trans. T. H. L. Parker, W. B. Johnston, Harold Knight, and J. L. M. Haire (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 17. Henceforth *CD 2/1*.

⁴¹ Barth, *The Epistles to the Romans*, 38. Dialectic theology or "crisis theology" as sometimes called was a theological reaction against the claims of liberal Protestantism. It emphasized God's transcendence, God's otherness, and humanity's sinfulness. God could neither be known nor discovered through human experience, history, or natural theology. For an account of dialectical theology see Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelations* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 84-97. For an interpretation of Barth's dialectic theology see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 64-85.

⁴² William Willimon, *Conversations with Barth on Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 125.

listening to the self-revealing will of God.”⁴³ For Barth, the Church is given the task of speaking about God, and in as much as the Church is “obedient to its commission” then God is in the Church’s midst proclaiming God’s revelation.⁴⁴ In *Homiletics* he notes, “Only because the call of revelation goes out and people hear it does the church come into being.”⁴⁵ For Barth, preaching must be scriptural and Christocentric. Scripture stands over the Church, functioning as an objective witness to the ongoing proclamation of the word by the Church; “our task is simply to follow the distinctive movement of thought in the text, to stay with this, and not with a plan that arises out of it.”⁴⁶ For Barth, preaching should: neither be apologetics nor about creating feeling; neither a moral discourse nor the opportunity for a preacher to present his or her theology; and neither a formulation of plans nor a commentary on the state of the Church or society.⁴⁷ He warns against the pastor presenting his own idea instead of God’s Word. This is the charge he lays against David Hollaz (1648-1713) in *Homiletics*.⁴⁸ Such preaching confuses the preacher’s role with God’s role; “if preachers think they should present a theme of their own, it will anticipate what God himself wants to say. If they offer their congregation a clever conceptual picture, even though it be arrived at by serious and intensive exegesis, it will not be scripture itself that speaks, but something will be merely said about scripture.”⁴⁹ Scripture is the preacher’s text because it is the testimony

⁴³ Barth, *Homiletics*, 50.

⁴⁴ Barth, *CD* 1/2, 756. See also *CD* 1/1, 750.

⁴⁵ Barth, *Homiletics*, 57.

⁴⁶ Barth, *Homiletics*, 49.

⁴⁷ Barth, *Homiletics*, 48.

⁴⁸ Barth, *Homiletics*, 19-20. Hollaz was a Lutheran theologian and pastor. He defined preaching as “The minister of the church validly discharges the office of teaching (a) by accurately investigating the true meaning of the divine Word through legitimate methods of interpretation, by surely exegeting and clearly expounding the Word, and (b) by fittingly applying the Word, as thus expounded for the purpose of instruction reproof, education, edification, and consolation.” See *Homiletics*, 19. Barth’s difficulties with this definition has to do with (b) and the idea that the preacher having grasped what the text says applies it to the life of the congregation as the meaning of the text for them. Barth understands that such preaching results in the minister “becoming an autocratic and complacent *dominus*” usurping God’s role. See Barth, *Homiletics*, 20.

⁴⁹ Barth *Homiletics*, 49.

of the apostles and prophets to what God did in Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ But Scripture is not revelation per se but only becomes such for Barth when God chooses to speak through those chosen witnesses. He notes that if God speaks through Scripture, then “the prophets and apostles are actually there even though it be a simple pastor that speaks.”⁵¹

Preaching must be Christocentric. Christian preaching is such because it focuses its attention on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The preacher must proclaim that in Christ we are reconciled to God “once for all” (Heb. 10:10). Preaching “must set itself unconditionally under this presupposition...Not a mere description of Christ, but solely what God has done with us in Christ, Immanuel, God with us – this is the central point of all preaching.”⁵² Preaching is not a recording of past deeds but contains an eschatological hope, a proclamation of what Christ will do. Like Christian life, preaching stands between the first coming and the second coming of Christ. What God has done in Christ will be done again for those listeners who, in faith, accept the testimony of Scripture and preaching; “we walk by faith, i.e., in a double movement from Christ to Christ...Like the Christ who has appeared already, the Christ who is still to come must be the centre of every sermon.”⁵³ Barth’s modelling of this can be seen in his “Bremen Sermon” (1934), which offers a strong contrast with his sermon on the Titanic. As with the sermon on the Titanic, there is a situation to speak to, namely, the rise of National Socialism in Germany. Yet in this sermon he doesn’t preach out of the situation but out of the Scriptural text, Matthew’s account of Jesus walking on the water (Matt. 14:22-33). Barth neither introduces nor contextualizes what follows. He is aware of the context, and no doubt prepared his words in light of the advice he gives in *Homiletics*: “from my knowledge of them [the community being addressed] there will

⁵⁰ Barth, *Homiletics*, 45.

⁵¹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 48-49. See also *CD* 1/2, 743.

⁵² Barth, *Homiletics*, 51.

⁵³ Barth, *Homiletics*, 54.

emerge insights and associations that will be with me verse by verse in my preparation.”⁵⁴ However, Barth never addresses the evil of National Socialism, rather he speaks about the Lordship of Christ, his promise, and his sovereignty, which “stands before us as a divine miracle.”⁵⁵ Peter’s stepping out on the water represents for Barth a symbol of the Church, faithful to Jesus, but fearful and hesitant. Barth’s focus is on the Church’s need for disciples who are ready to respond to the specific word and perform a specific service. Peter’s little faith does not result in any loss of faithfulness on Jesus’ part; “even if Peter sinks, that does not mean that Jesus Christ does. And as long as Jesus does not sink, Peter cannot go under entirely either if he remembers this one thing: that he is now to rely directly and uniquely on *Jesus*.”⁵⁶ Without once mentioning National Socialism, Barth has relativized its claims by preaching, not against them, but preaching on Christ’s Lordship.

1.4 Preaching as a Form of the Word of God

Preachers preach. The preacher serves the commission to preach by preaching – “Only brokenly and very imperfectly can they discharge their mission as proclaimers of God’s Word.”⁵⁷ Preachers are drawn into the event of God’s revelatory activity.⁵⁸ Their preaching is a form of the word of God. For his understanding of preaching as one of the three forms of the word of God, Barth was indebted to Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) who authored the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566).⁵⁹ The Confession was a statement of the common belief of the Reformed Churches of Switzerland. Regarding

⁵⁴ Barth, *Homiletics*, 112.

⁵⁵ Karl Barth, “The Bremen Sermon,” in *The Word is this World: Two Sermons by Karl Barth*, trans. Christopher Asprey, ed. Kurt I. Johnson, (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2007), 50.

⁵⁶ Barth, “The Bremen Sermon,” 59.

⁵⁷ Barth, *Homiletics*, 45.

⁵⁸ See Barth, *Homiletics*, 50.

⁵⁹ Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575) was a theologian and leading Reformer in Zurich. Following the death of Huldrych Zwingli, he served as pastor of the Collegiate Church. He supported Calvin in the writing of the “Consensus of Zurich” (1551), which attempted to bring unity among Protestants on the issue of the sacraments. Acceptance resulted in the rise of the Reformed (Calvinist) tradition in Switzerland and abroad and marks the divergence of Calvinism from Lutheranism.

preaching as a form of the word of God, the Confession reads: “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God. Wherefore when this Word of God is now preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very Word of God is proclaimed, and received by the faithful.”⁶⁰ However, Barth’s early teaching of Reformed Christianity suggests he was not initially so sure with regard to this claim, but he had embraced it by the time he was lecturing on dogmatics at Göttingen.⁶¹

The three forms of the word of God are the incarnate word, Scripture, and the preached word. How do the three forms relate to each other? Only Jesus Christ is the absolute form of the word of God. Scripture and proclamation are not absolute forms of the word of God and so properly speaking only become God’s word when Jesus Christ speaks through the witness of Scripture and the witness of the preacher. Barth writes, “in reality we ought to say that the Bible *becomes* God’s Word. Whenever it *becomes* God’s Word, it *is* God’s Word. What we have here is an event... The fact of the canon tells us simply that the church has regarded these scriptures as the place where we can expect to hear the voice of God.”⁶² This “becoming” is central to Barth’s understanding of the threefold form of the word of God in Scripture and preaching. In Scripture the human word is taken up by God and momentarily given a capacity that allows it to reveal Godself.

The final form of the word of God is preaching, which like Scripture is a human word momentarily given a capacity by God to reveal God. Preaching, even though a form of the word of God, must always refer back to Scripture and Jesus Christ. Barth acknowledges that preaching today differs from that of the preaching of the apostles and

⁶⁰ Heinrich Bullinger, *The Second Helvetic Confession*, 1566, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed April 30, 2020, <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/helvetic.htm>.

⁶¹ See Thomas Christian Currie, *The Only Sacrament Left to Us: The Threefold Word of God in the Theology and Ecclesiology of Karl Barth* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2016), 2-3.

⁶² Barth, *Homiletics*, 78.

prophets “who saw and touched Christ” but this difference is not “qualitative.”⁶³ There is no diminishment between the incarnate word and the Proclaimed word. As the relationship between the preaching and Scripture is formed from the resurrection of Jesus there is no distortion or weakening of them. He writes,

The Church really recollects past revelation, and in faith receives, grasps and really proclaims the biblical witness of it as the real promise of future revelation, future revelation here being simply that which has taken place once and for all but is now directed to us too, just as the Christ who comes once again is no other than the Christ who has come, but this Christ as the One who now comes also to us.⁶⁴

In other words, the biblical witnesses were greatly privileged but not more advantaged than later believers (see Jn. 20:29) because these forms of the word of God are each a dynamic union of divine and human elements. The Incarnation, the written word, and the preached word all share this dynamic union though not in the same way. Through the language of the hypostatic union, Barth found a way to explain preaching as a form of the Word of God despite having preached negatively about Chalcedonian Christianity in his liberal days.⁶⁵ In the incarnate form of the word of God, the word becomes flesh through the power of the Spirit (Lk. 1:35; Matt. 1:20). In the scriptural form of the word of the God, the Holy Spirit makes possible God speaking through the written word. In the proclamatory form of the word of God, the Holy Spirit works through the speaking of the preacher. However, the human element within the written and preached word differs from that of the incarnate word. In the Incarnation the relationship between the humanity and divinity of Jesus is permanent. Jesus as God cannot lay aside his humanity nor as human lay aside his divinity. This does not mean that the incarnate word is transparent with respect to God – the divinity of Jesus remains concealed until in faith, and under the power of the Spirit, an individual accepts Jesus as the incarnate

⁶³ Barth, *Homiletics*, 45

⁶⁴ Barth, *CD 1/1*, 120. See also Barth, *CD 1/2*, 744.

⁶⁵ See Karl Barth, “Sermon of January 1, 1910, in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 54.

word (See Matt. 16:17). The union of divine and human in Scripture and preaching is not a permanent union. Both of these can exist independent of the word. They become transparent with respect to God in the event of revelation. This is a temporary dynamic union rather than a union of identity. It is the Holy Spirit that makes this temporary union possible. The permanent union of the Incarnation and the temporary unions of the written word and proclamation are three forms of the one word of God and not three different words of God.⁶⁶

The Holy Spirit rather than the preacher transforms human words into the word of God. Chalcedon teaches in the hypostatic union there is no admixture of the divine nature with the human nature, and this is also true of the scriptural word and of the proclaimed word. In the proclaimed word, the word of God is concealed in human words. In *Homiletics* Barth writes that “God is the one who makes himself heard, who speaks, and not we, who simply have the role of announcing what God himself wants to say.”⁶⁷ Preaching is an event because of this dynamic union of God with human words but these human words do not remain the word of God; it is only a momentary union made possible by the Holy Spirit. For preaching to be a revelatory event it needs, in addition to God momentarily uniting with the word, a “yes” from the hearer, made possible by the Holy Spirit, if the circle is to be completed. Without this “yes” from the hearer there is no revelation. It is not that preaching per se is a form of the word of God but that through preaching God can speak God’s word to the listener should God choose to take up the words of the preacher and give them a potential that transcends their natural capacities to become revelatory.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Barth, *CD* 1/1, 120. See also Currie, *The Only Sacrament Left to Us*, 10 and Hart, “The Word, the Words, and the Witness,” 89.

⁶⁷ Barth, *Homiletics*, 46.

⁶⁸ Barth, *Homiletics*, 47.

The implication of this understanding of the preacher's office is profound. Barth affirms God's primary role within the preaching endeavour. God must, in God's freedom, take up human words to make them revelatory. The preacher is a participant in God's revelatory act and a covenant partner with God in God's process of saving human beings. This partnership is, however, not that of equals: "it can mean only Lordship on God's side and obedience on ours. Only as preaching is controlled by this relation can it be viewed as *kērgyma*, i.e., as a message that a herald is commissioned to deliver. When it is this the preacher has full authority. But this authority rests on the authority of [God] who sends the herald."⁶⁹

Barth's understanding of preaching as a form of the word of God is profound and liberating for the preacher. The preacher preaches as best he or she can but God remains responsible for what transpires through that preaching. God being the primary agent in the preaching endeavour means the preacher is not responsible for the reception of what is preached. The preacher merely serves the word, and by announcing it, is obedient to what is commanded by God. But it is God who speaks and God who, through God's Spirit at work in the hearer, summons men and women to a decision. Barth notes that the summoning and call to a decision are not constitutive of the task of the preacher; they are God's tasks.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 50.

⁷⁰ Barth, *Homiletics*, 46.

1.5 Preaching and Sacrament as Proclamation of the Word⁷¹

Barth's understanding of sacraments is intimately linked to his theology of revelation; sacraments are revelation, which comes to us as "sign-giving."⁷² Through baptism and the Lord's Supper, God continues to speak.⁷³ As with human words these signs are not, in and of themselves, God's revelation, but become so by God's activity through the Holy Spirit. Following the Incarnation, preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper replace all the signs associated with Israel.⁷⁴ These signs – "the new simplified and concentrated sign-world of the New Testament" – are the proclamation that gather the nations.⁷⁵ In *Church Dogmatics 2/1* he writes: "Revelation means the giving of signs. We can say quite simply that revelation means sacrament, i.e., the self-witness of God, the representation of His truth, and therefore of the truth in which He knows Himself, in the form of creaturely objectivity and therefore in a form that is adopted to our creaturely knowledge."⁷⁶ However, these signs are secondary to Jesus Christ who, as noted above, is the absolute Form of the Word of God and the first sacrament:

That the eternal Word as such became flesh is a unique occurrence. It happened only once. It is not therefore the starting-point for a general concept of incarnation. But its attestation through the existence of the man Jesus is a beginning of which there are continuations; a sacramental continuity stretches backwards into the existence of the people of Israel, whose Messiah He is, and forwards into the existence of the apostolate and the Church founded on the apostolate, The humanity

⁷¹ For Barth preaching was sacramental. In "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching" he speaks of the preaching of the Word as "the only sacrament left to us." See Karl Barth, "The Need and Promise of Christian Preaching," 65. In *Church Dogmatics 1/1*, he quotes the Heidelberg Catechism definition of a sacrament, "visible, sacred signs and seals appointed by God so that through the use of the same God may the better give us to understand the promise of the Gospel." This is, for Barth, the purpose of preaching. See *CD I/1*, 56. Like preaching, the sacraments are a dynamic union of the divine and the human. It is also a work of the Holy Spirit to be accepted in faith, a means to grace, God's free and generous action, an unequal partnership between God and human beings.

⁷² Barth, *CD 1/2*, 233. See also Barth, *CD 1/2*, 223.

⁷³ The Reformed tradition recognizes only two sacraments, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper on the basis that Scripture affirmed their institution by Christ. Barth's understanding of sacraments changed through the course of his life; from an understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments understood as visible signs of an invisible grace to being solely human actions. He became increasingly restrained to speak of anything apart from Jesus Christ as a sacrament; Jesus Christ, the permanent and unique union of the divine and human is the only sacrament. See Barth, *CD 2/1*, 553-54. See also Currie, *The Only Sacrament Left to Us*, 18.

⁷⁴ Barth, *CD 1/2*, 224-227.

⁷⁵ Barth, *CD 1/2*, 227.

⁷⁶ Barth, *CD 2/1*, 52.

of Jesus Christ is as such the first sacrament, the foundation of everything God instituted and used in His revelations a secondary objectivity both before and after the epiphany of Jesus Christ.⁷⁷

Thus preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper give testimony to Jesus who is the true sacrament – they are “always a *signum visibile*, a *symbolum externum*, a sign both in the realm of nature and also in an action executed by people.”⁷⁸ Sacraments attest to God's work in Christ's person and mission. Through the Holy Spirit they witness and signify what Christ has done, namely reconciled us to God. In the later volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*, Barth moved from baptism and the Lord's Supper as mediating grace to a cognitive understanding that identifies the sacraments as bringing about knowledge of grace, to the view of the sacraments as responses to God's prior initiative – not means of grace, but marks of our reconciliation.⁷⁹

For the Reformed theological tradition preaching and sacraments are given in the service of the proclamation of faith. John Calvin had written, “akin to the preaching of the gospel, we have another help to our faith in the sacraments.”⁸⁰ Barth's ecclesiology was based on Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, which for Barth describes the true Church as: “*evangelium pure docetur et recte administrantur sacramenta* [the gospel is purely taught and the sacraments rightly administered].”⁸¹ In *Church*

⁷⁷ Barth, *CD* 2/1, 54.

⁷⁸ Barth, *CD* 1/2, 231.

⁷⁹ See William Stacy Johnston, *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 166-167. Certainty of salvation can only come from God and not through baptism or the Lord's Supper which function for Barth as marks of one's faith commitment to Christ; it points towards Spirit baptism but cannot bring it about. For Barth the Lord's Supper is a human action of thanksgiving for what God has done in Christ. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Volume 4, Part 4, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London: T&T Clark International, 2004); Karl Barth, *The Christian Life*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017). See also Nico den Bok, “Barth on Baptism: Concerning a Crucial Dimension of Ecclesiology,” *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie*, Supplement Series, 5 (2011), 135-151.

⁸⁰ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2008), Book IV, Ch. 14, §1.

⁸¹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 57. See also Philip Melancthon, “The Augsburg Confession,” 1530, accessed September 08, 2020, <https://bookofconcord.org/augsburg-confession/>.

Accessed August 24, 2020. For the text of various Reformed Confessions see Cornelius P. Venema, “The Doctrine of Preaching in the Reformed Confessions,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 10 (1999), 135-183.

Dogmatics 1/1 he writes: “Not the sacrament alone nor preaching alone, nor yet, to speak meticulously, preaching and the sacrament in double track, but preaching with the sacrament, with the visible act that confirms human speech as God’s act, is the constitutive element, the perspicuous centre of the Church’s life.”⁸²

In *The Göttingen Dogmatics* Barth uses nineteenth century liberal Protestant language for describing the Church as “a fellowship of spirit and faith”⁸³ but situates this in the prior action of the Holy Spirit in preaching and sacrament; “God has instituted the preaching office, giving the gospel and the sacrament, so that through them as means, he might give the Holy Spirit who works when and where he wills in those who hear the gospel.”⁸⁴ Thus for Barth proclamation is audible (preaching) and visual (sacrament) action in the Church instituted by God as the ordinary means by which the Holy Spirit can be manifested to men and women and occasion a response in faith. Preaching and the sacraments ground the Church in God’s Word, in God’s revelatory activity; “*Deus Dixit*, God has spoken...God speaking personally as the subject, God as the author, God not only giving authentic information about himself but himself speaking about himself.”⁸⁵ The Church is only the Church, as he notes in *Homiletics*, when preaching recounts the event of the preceding revelation and sacraments bracket that preaching.⁸⁶ The rightly administered sacraments are related to the teaching of the gospel because they are included in the gospel and are the word of God. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are not separate from the word of God but a part of the scriptural witness. Preaching authenticates the gospel by spoken word and

⁸² Barth, *CD* 1/1, 70.

⁸³ Travis McMaken, “Barth’s ‘Göttingen Dogmatics’ – §2: Preaching as the Starting Point and Goal of Dogmatics,” video lecture, January 14, 2020, YouTube, 34.05, Accessed September 08, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myI0K8HVyT8&list=PLZCiMy5uTLvVTNtLSgAtaLB4MVHtJS5FQ&index=3&t=1254s>.

⁸⁴ Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, 24.

⁸⁵ Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, 56-57.

⁸⁶ Barth, *Homiletics*, 61.

sacraments authenticate it by completed actions. Sacraments testify that God's word is also God's action.⁸⁷

Barth suggests that it is only in the Church where sacraments are celebrated that preaching can legitimately take place: "preaching as the specific event, the *signum* [sign], which can point us to the great Christian theme is legitimate only when it derives from the other *signum*...It is legitimate, then, only when it does not seek to be anything other than a commentary, an interpretation of the sacraments, a reference to the same thing, but now in words."⁸⁸ He is critical of both the Protestant and Catholic traditions for emphasizing one, either preaching or sacraments, at the expense of the other:

At the Reformation the Roman church of the sacraments was replaced by the church of the Word on the basis of the gospel. But very soon this was taken to mean that the administration of the sacraments might be omitted from worship as nonessential, all the emphasis now being put on the sermon. Today, then, we have Rome on the one side, still the sacramental church, and Protestantism on the other, the preaching church, which also administers the sacraments, but not so publicly. Both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant overemphases represent a disruption, a distortion, and even a destruction of the church. What kind of preaching is it that receives its prominence from suppression of the sacraments, that cannot refer to the sacraments which it has to interpret and by which it is to be interpreted?⁸⁹

In *Homiletics*, Barth notes that preaching happens between baptism and the Lord's Supper, as whence and whither, a "backward and forward thrust."⁹⁰ Preaching is grounded and oriented on Christ's sacrifice on the Cross as the sole grounds of salvation, as taught by the Heidelberg Catechism.⁹¹ Baptism, Barth says, sets up a relationship with Christ's death (Rom. 6:3) meaning a "death" to sin and an orientation toward the life of grace. Baptism marks the individual out as one who has responded in faith and obedience to the event of revelation. It marks being drawn into the Risen

⁸⁷ Barth, *CD* 1/2, 761.

⁸⁸ Barth, *Homiletics*, 58.

⁸⁹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 59.

⁹⁰ Barth, *Homiletics*, 59.

⁹¹ See Caspar Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 1563, Q&A 67, accessed September 11, 2020. <https://www.rca.org/about/theology/creeds-and-confessions/the-heidelberg-catechism/>. See also Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Ch. 14, §3. See Barth, *Homiletics*, 58.

Lord's milieu of salvation and marks membership of the Church, which Barth notes "is not humanity in general in relation to God. It is humanity gathered around the one event. The church is the church that is based on *this* scripture."⁹² The Lord's Supper also marks Christ's death (1 Cor. 11:26). It marks the same event as baptism but is orientated toward the coming event. For Barth, baptism represents God's election of us while the Lord's Supper represents his feeding us as we journey toward eternal life. Thus, the preacher speaks in the knowledge that the congregation are called to a life of grace marked by Christ's death and resurrection, and this is the starting point and goal of all subsequent preaching. The failure of preachers to focus on the event represented symbolically and sacramentally by baptism and the Lord's Supper is perhaps what Barth meant when he said: "There is no lack of good preachers and sermons, but a lack of sermons that are meant to be God's Word and are received as such – a lack of *qualified* preaching."⁹³ For Barth, Jesus Christ, the one sacrament, is the focus of all preaching and sacramental activity. Through celebrating the sacraments and preaching, Christians are reminded of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, and second coming.

1.6 Commissioned to Preach

As noted in the General Introduction, preaching is a restricted ministry and commissioning is required if any baptized person is to preach in the name of the Church. Barth did not believe in a free pulpit. He did not believe that anyone could come forward and preach without the express commissioning of the Church. For Barth preaching is properly Church preaching, meaning those who preach do so with a commission from the Church: "done in the sphere of the church, i.e., in concrete connection with the existence and mission of the Church."⁹⁴ He writes: "individuals step

⁹² Barth, *Homiletics*, 62.

⁹³ Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics*, 31.

⁹⁴ Barth, *Homiletics*, 56.

forth from the ranks to give witness to the congregation concerning the redemption and the reconciliation to God that has taken place in Christ.”⁹⁵ It is necessary for some individuals to follow on from the apostles and repeat what they did, namely bear witness to the Christ event by preaching. Ministers are thus successors to the apostles and do, within the context of a specific congregation, what the apostles did in the context of the whole Church.⁹⁶ He frames the preacher’s ministry within the context of the Church that preaches and hears the gospel.

While Barth notes that presenting a complete theology of ministerial commissioning was not a concern of the New Testament writers, he sees three components to such a commissioning contained within its pages: 1) the New Testament recognizes a handing on of ministerial offices (*episkopoi* and *presbyter*); 2) by legitimate authority beginning with Jesus and then from him through the apostles; and 3) these officeholders are recognized by the congregation.⁹⁷ The existence and need for ministerial commissioning is related to the institution of the Church. Barth interprets Matt. 16:18-19 to mean that Jesus instituted the Church in a particular order, beginning with Peter, who represents the apostles, then the community. This separation results in a distinction within the Church between the *teaching* and *hearing* Church: “Wherever the church is there also is correspondence to this order – not its repetition.”⁹⁸ The institution of the apostles was unique but nonetheless people must be appointed in succession to the apostles to witness to Jesus Christ. While Barth believes God instituted the ministry, and that it is essential to the proclamation of the gospel, he does not believe it can be known whom God calls to the ministry and that at best there are four criteria, which,

⁹⁵ Barth, *Homiletics*, 66.

⁹⁶ Barth, *Homiletics*, 67.

⁹⁷ Barth, *Homiletics*, 66.

⁹⁸ Barth, *Homiletics*, 66.

while human criteria, and so relative, are the usual basis for the human determination of authenticity of an individual preacher.⁹⁹

Barth's first criterion is that of "call." A minister must feel an inward call to office. They should be conscious that such an inward call is necessary along with the desire to give themselves to this call. However, it is not possible, Barth believes, for an individual to know if the call experienced is really from God. This is the paradox to which there is no resolution.

The second criterion is centred on a blameless life. Barth, noting that the Pastoral Letters (see 1 Tim 1:1-7, 8, 12; Titus 5:6-8) outline a code of behaviour based on Hellenistic virtues, says ministers should be blameless and not draw unnecessary attention to themselves by being overly enthusiastic for matters of the world. He notes that the pulpit, "is not an instrument to serve either the old or what is new."¹⁰⁰ Those in ministry need to live their lives in the presence of God, which finds an expression in a virtuous life. However, the external mark of a virtuous life is not a measure that they are justified in Christ, obedient in faith, and so truly living their life in the presence of God. It cannot be known without doubt whether a minister is justified.¹⁰¹

Barth's third criterion also finds its basis in the Pastoral Epistles. In Timothy's assertion that ministers "be able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:2). The basic premise is that teaching requires learning in theology: "The Church cannot responsibly grant anyone the right to proclaim the Word without a theological education."¹⁰² Barth notes that theological learning involves an internal and external element. While theological learning is a *conditio sine qua non*, the Spirit is the true and necessary teacher, but there

⁹⁹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 67.

¹⁰⁰ Barth, *Homiletics*, 63.

¹⁰¹ Barth, *Homiletics*, 68.

¹⁰² Barth, *Homiletics*, 68.

can be no certainty that the Spirit's activity is underpinning the minister's theological learning or reflection.

The fourth criterion is that the minister exists as part of the congregation and community of faith and not independent of it. A minister is one who is called by the community to serve the community; ministers "have to realise: I am part of them and want to share with them what I have received from God."¹⁰³ The congregation commissions those who minister to it. No individual takes on this role without reference to the discernment of the community. This commissioning by the congregation involves a canonical act, an ordination, a rite that affirms the congregation's call of the individual. Commissioning also points to being called by God but, as with the other criteria, it is not a definitive statement of having been called by God.¹⁰⁴ Barth does not allow these criteria, however important, compromise God's freedom.

However, God is not limited to speaking only through the ordained – through what Barth calls *vocatio ordinaria* (ordinary vocation). God in God's freedom can speak through whom God wants – this is the *vocatio extraordinaria* (extraordinary vocation).¹⁰⁵ These are individuals whom God calls outside the structure of ordination to preach the word. While Barth does not deny their legitimacy, he recognizes that the Church has the right to test them, to scrutinize and judge whether what is proclaimed by them, conforms to Scripture.

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the necessity of preaching and a theological understanding of what is happening in preaching has been outlined. The theology of preaching outlined by Barth represents a recovery of the older Reformed understanding of preaching. At the heart of

¹⁰³ Barth, *Homiletics*, 85.

¹⁰⁴ Barth, *Homiletics*, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Barth, *Homiletics*, 71.

Barth's theology is preaching as encounter with God. Preaching is the ordinary means by which God communicates Godself to men and women. Preaching is a human action through which God's Spirit brings men and women to faith. It is this link between preaching and faith that made preaching so important to Barth. Pastoral concern underpins Barth's reflections on preaching. Barth claimed his theology was for preachers, a theology for those engaged in the pastorate. He was committed to the ministry of preaching both as a pastor and as a university teacher and applied the implications of his theological insights to that ministry.¹⁰⁶ His emphasis on the necessity of both preaching and sacraments for an authentically celebrated liturgy has much in common, despite differences in sacramental theology, with the work of Schillebeeckx and Semmelroth, who in the years immediately prior to the Second Vatican Council were reflecting on the role of the Word and its implication for liturgical preaching and its relationship to the sacraments. Like Barth, Schillebeeckx and Semmelroth were recovering an older understanding of preaching from their tradition and, like Barth, they spoke of preaching as an encounter with God, "a burning focal point" of God's presence.¹⁰⁷ Their theological reflection will be elaborated upon in Chapter Two.

¹⁰⁶ See Barth, *Final Testimonies*, 45-46.

¹⁰⁷ See Schillebeeckx, See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 3rd rev. ed., trans. Cornelius Ernest (London: Sheed & Ward, 1963), 216. Originally published as *Christus, Sacrament van de Godsontmoeting* (1960).

Chapter Two

The Theological Recovery of Word and its Impact on Preaching in the Second Vatican Council's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

2.1 Introduction

Reflecting on Catholic preaching in the 1930s, Barth accused the Catholic Church of not having a developed theology of the word.¹ An accusation he made as he was rediscovering deeper roots for preaching from his studies of the reformed tradition. He accused Catholic dogmatists of simply being uninterested in preaching except in terms of legal questions and issues related to the canonical mission to preach with little theological reflection on revelation or the word. He writes: “It should be noted that in practical writings Roman Catholic theology can incidentally find lofty and what seem to be dogmatically relevant things to say about preaching.”² However, these are “pious opinion” and not reflected in the official theological manuals.³ Barth’s critique should be considered alongside the reflections of Karl Rahner who also commented on the lack of a theology of the word in the Catholic tradition. Writing in the late 1950s he noted: “alas, that there should still be no theology of the Word! Why has no one set about gathering together, like Ezekiel, the scattered members on the fields of philosophy and theology and spoken over them the word of the Spirit, so that they rise up a living body.”⁴ Speaking specifically of preaching at the 1960 Maynooth Union Summer School, Charles Davis noted: “In a Summer School on Preaching twenty years ago, it is

¹ See Barth, *CD I/1*, 65-69.

² Barth, *CD I/1*, 65.

³ Barth, *CD I/1*, 66.

⁴ Karl Rahner, “Priest and Poet,” in *Theological Investigations*, Volume 3, trans. Karl H. and Boniface Kruger (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), 294-295. Originally published as a Forward to Jorge Blajot, *La hora sin tiempo* (1958). See also Karl Rahner, “What is a Sacrament,” *Worship* 47/5 (1973), 275.

unlikely that any time would have been given to the theology of preaching. Perhaps there would have been a lecture on theology *and* preaching, dealing with the doctrinal content of our sermons but at that time only a very percipient [person] would have seen that the theology *of* preaching mattered.”⁵ This Chapter focuses on the preconciliar Catholic theological development of a theology of the word with its implications for preaching. This theological development impacted on how liturgical preaching was understood and presented at the Second Vatican Council. At the Council, the word and preaching were understood as an encounter with the living Christ who confronts the Church rather than a moment of catechetical institution. While this appreciation found expression in the norms of Vatican II’s Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, it would not have been possible except for the work of such theologians as Edward Schillebeeckx and Otto Semmelroth, whose writings in the years immediately before the Council, were deeply concerned with the role of the preaching in the Christian plan of salvation. As with Barth, both Schillebeeckx and Semmelroth’s work reflect a recovery of a deeper understanding of preaching from a study of their Catholic theological tradition; they laboured within the framework of the Church’s sacramental tradition to formulate such a theology.⁶ Schillebeeckx speaks of the word as a sacramental encounter – a burning focal point of sacramentality – within a world deeply marked by sacramentality while Semmelroth’s theology explores how the basis of sacramental efficacy is preaching and the administration of the sacrament in mutual relationship, analogous to the relationship between Incarnation and Passion in the life of Jesus. As to the question of who can confront the community of faith with the living Christ, the preconciliar era was only beginning to reflect theologically upon the laity

⁵ Charles Davis, “The Theology of Preaching,” in *Preaching: Lecturers of the Maynooth Union Summer School, 1960*, ed. Ronan Drury (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1962), 1.

⁶ See Janowiak, *The Holy Preaching*, 20.

and so understood the laity's role in terms of a mission in the world, *ad extra*, and not a mission *ad intra*. Such a mission *ad intra* was the responsibility of the ordained and the preconciliar writings of Schillebeeckx reflect this division despite moving beyond some of the presuppositions underpinning that theology. Before analysing the work of these theologians, the position of the liturgical preaching in the preconciliar era will be examined.

2.2 Liturgical Preaching in the Preconciliar Eucharistic Liturgy

Before the Second Vatican Council liturgical preaching had a somewhat ambiguous place in the eucharistic liturgy. Canon law legislated for a homily, yet this obligation did not extend to every eucharistic liturgy. Secondly, in practice, as noted in the General Introduction, most liturgical preaching was catechetical rather than homiletical.

Regarding whom could preach, the 1917 Code of Canon Law is very succinct: “all laity are forbidden to preach in churches, even religious.”⁷ The norms governing the liturgical homily were set down in cans. 1344 and 1345. Can. 1344 states:

§1. On [Sunday] and other feasts of precept throughout the year, it is the personal duty of the pastor [*cuiusque parochi officium*] to announce [*nuntiare*] the word of God to the people, in the customary homily [*consueta homilia*], especially at the Mass which the greater part of the people attend.

§2. The pastor cannot habitually satisfy this obligation through another, except for just cause approved by the Ordinary.

§3. The Ordinary can permit that on certain more solemn feasts, and even, for a just cause, on [Sundays], the homily be omitted.⁸

The Law imposes no obligation on the pastor to preach at every Mass – can. 1345 only speaks of a homily as “desirable” [*optandum*] at all masses on holy days of obligation.

While can. 1345 explains what is meant by the “customary homily” – “a brief

⁷ *The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law*, trans. Edward N. Peters (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), can. 1342 §2.

⁸ The source of can. 1344 §1 is the teaching of the Council of Trent (1545-1563): “All who in any manner have charge of parochial and other churches to which is attached the *cura animarum*, shall at least on Sundays and solemn festivals, either personally or, if they are lawfully impeded, through others who are competent, feed the people committed to them.” See *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. H. J. Schroeder (Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, 1978), Sess. 5, ref., Ch. 2. See also Sess. 23, ref., Ch. 1.

explanation of the gospel” [*brevis Evangelii aut alicuius ...explanatio fiat*]” – preaching was most often in practice catechetical. However, this disconnect between what the law laid down and actual practice was not without its critics. In the encyclical letter *Acerbo Nimis* (1905), Pius X (1903-1914) makes it explicit that catechetical instruction is separate, and in addition, to “the usual homily on the Gospel which is delivered at the parochial Mass on Sundays and holy days.”⁹ He recognised that both served a different purpose: “The sermon on the holy Gospel is addressed to those who should have already received knowledge of the elements of faith. It is, so to speak, bread broken for adults” (*Acerbo Nimis* 12). The liturgical homily nourishes rather than instructs people in the faith. However, the change in practice Pius wished to see was hampered by centuries of pastoral practice, which had legislated for catechetical instruction in the liturgy because of concerns over the competence of pastors to preach expository biblical sermons.¹⁰

Fr. Michael Connors, Director of the John S. Marten Program in Homiletics at the University of Notre Dame, notes: “The sermon—if, indeed, there was a sermon at all, since it was regarded as unnecessary and quite secondary to the Holy Eucharist, and thus optional—was generally approached as a moment to teach the assembled people and remind them of their moral and sacramental duties as Catholics.”¹¹ In addition, Connors notes that after the sermon the priest, “resumes the Mass.” No doubt, Connors chose these words carefully, to reflect the preconciliar attitude that saw the sermon as an interruption, rather than a part, of the liturgy; “It was not necessarily connected either to the Scripture readings or to the eucharistic Prayer (the Roman Canon) but represented

⁹ Pius X, *Acerbo Nimis* [Encyclical Letter on Teaching Christian doctrine], The Holy See, April 15, 1905, § 24, accessed June 24, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_15041905_acerbo-nimis.html.

¹⁰ McVann, *The Canon Law of Sermon Preaching*, 7-26. See also DeWitte T. Holland, *The Preaching Tradition: A Brief History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 28.

¹¹ Connors, “Preaching as Worship.”

rather a few moments of interlude between the two.”¹² The entire Liturgy of the Word was but a preamble to the Holy Sacrifice which was the sole reason and obligation of the Sunday gathering.¹³ The “Real Presence” of the Risen Lord in the eucharistic species, which was emphasized during the Tridentine era (1563-1962), resulted in such a presence in the Scriptures and in preaching being downplayed. Mary Catherine Hilbert notes that the preacher was identified as the principal cause of preaching while God was identified as the principal cause of the sacraments.¹⁴ Connors writes: “Catholics had been taught to revere the ‘Real Presence’ residing in the bread and wine, and in the Church’s minister who acted *in persona Christi*, but the notion of God also present in the Word and in the community struck many as inexplicably new and perhaps even suspiciously Protestant.”¹⁵

This was the broad theological and liturgical environment in which Schillebeeckx and Semmelroth were writing and, if Connors can speak of the recovery of Catholic understanding of the divine presence in the word and preaching as *Sacrosanctum Concilium*’s “most important theological contribution,”¹⁶ it is, in major part, because of the work of these two theologians.

2.3. The Theological Reflection of Edward Schillebeeckx.¹⁷

Schillebeeckx’s understanding of preaching begins with a world that is deeply marked by sacramentality. For Schillebeeckx sacramentality refers to God’s

¹² Connors, “Preaching as Worship.” The Society of Saint Pius X, a religious body opposed to the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council and reflecting a common preconciliar attitude of the Church states: “It is a venial sin if one misses out on a non-essential part of the Mass, on purpose or by culpable negligence, for example, from the beginning until the beginning of the Offertory, or all that follows after Communion.” Michael Simoulin, Society of Saint Pius X, “Attendance and Participation at Mass,” Society of Saint Pius X, March 1997, accessed July 20, 2021, <https://fsspx.ie/en/attendance-and-participation-mass-30440>.

¹³ See Connors, “Preaching as Worship.”

¹⁴ Mary Catherine Hilbert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 31.

¹⁵ Connors, “Preaching as Worship.”

¹⁶ Connors, “Preaching as Worship.”

¹⁷ For a detailed biography see Erik Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx: A Theologian in His History*, Volume 1, trans. John Bowden (London: Continuum, 2004).

communication of Godself in history. In *Revelation and Theology*, he notes the breadth but diminishing intensity of sacramentality, flowing out from the sacramental Church:

The Eucharist, the focal point of Christ's real and active presence among us, is at this centre of the sacramental church. The six other sacraments radiate clearly from this focal point. It is only the preaching of the church that can disclose this mystery to us and enable us truly to believe in it. Illuminated by this word, we see a broad wave of sacramental activity continue to flow outwards – grace is visible for us in all the church's activities, and in the Christian life of the faithful as a power attracting others. But, although less pronounced and already flowing away, these sacramental waves still continue to surge in the sacramentals. Finally, this sacramental life ebbs away in the reality of the material and historical world of [people], which is equally under the influence of Christ, the Lord. All these factors are, *each in their own way*, 'sacraments,' that is, true, visible realities, of which the Lord makes personal use in a richly inspired and varied manner in order to orientate [people] towards God in Jesus Christ. All this means that the grace of Christ does not only come to us inwardly. His grace approaches us, in many different variations, visibly as well.¹⁸

Without sacramentality, the gap between God in heaven and humanity on earth could not be bridged. Sacramentality is "the visible and tangible embodiment of the heavenly saving action of Christ...the saving action itself in its availability to us; a personal act of the Lord in earthly visibility and open availability."¹⁹ While all Creation is marked to a degree by God's communication, it is the Church that most profoundly bridges the gap, through preaching and sacraments. These are, Schillebeeckx notes, the "'burning focal points' within the entire concentration of this visible presence of grace."²⁰ In advance of looking at how Schillebeeckx understands God's activity in preaching, his theology of the word will be outlined as this underpins what he says about preaching.

While sacramentality is part of the very structure of creation, the "inward word of God," which all humanity have received, is, while real, obscure: "an inward religious

¹⁸ Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx, Volume II, Revelation and Theology*, trans. Paul Barrett and Lawrence Bright, ed. Ted Mark Schoof, Carl Sterkens, Erik Borgman, and Robert J. Schreiter (London: T&T Clark, 2018), 32-33. This text is a compilation of essays written between 1954 and 1962. Originally published as *Openbaring en theologie* (1964) and published in English in 2 parts as *Revelation in Theology* (1967) and *The Concept of Truth and Theological Renewal* (1968).

¹⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 44.

²⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 216.

experience produced by grace does not yet encounter the visible embodiment of that grace, the fact of which remains unknown, hidden in the depths of the human heart.”²¹ Grace, Schillebeeckx notes, remained “strictly anonymous” until it was given “clear shape” in “a special divine revelation” to Israel.²² Words and deeds express what it means to be human and, through language, human beings turn toward each other. Words are central to human encounter; without words there can be no dialogue and thus no self-disclosure. Because divine activity concealed in the event is ambiguous, a complementary word – God’s speaking the divine word through the prophets – is needed to clarify God as the God of salvation, covenant, and saving activity. Schillebeeckx writes: “The world, created by Yahweh’s word and disrupted by [human] sin, was to be recreated by Yahweh’s word.”²³ Schillebeeckx speaks of this divine revelation as a dialogue of three component parts: firstly, a content, something is said that is of importance to the speaker and which he or she wishes to share with his or her partner; secondly, an invitation is made, someone is addressed and is invited and expected to respond to what the speaker has shared; and thirdly, a self-unveiling to speak is to share oneself and not just to impart information.²⁴ This is what Avery Dulles calls “a mysterious salvific encounter with the living God.”²⁵ In such speaking what was concealed is freely communicated by one person to another. As words open the inner life of two people to each other, so the divine word spoken to the prophet opens the inner life of God to men and women.²⁶ Revelation is not a set of objective truths *about*

²¹ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 7. See also Rahner, “Priest and Poet,” 304.

²² Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 10.

²³ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 27.

²⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 29.

²⁵ Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 85. See also Hilbert, *Naming Grace*, 31.

²⁶ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 27.

God but God's very self. This is what Schillebeeckx calls "Revelation of Reality", but it comes through "revelation in word."²⁷

In the Incarnation, the word takes on a new depth. Jesus, as the second person incarnate of the Trinity, is the visible presence of God's grace and redemptive intent. Thus, Jesus' human word is of fundamental significance: "the anthropological fact of the effect of the human word retains its full validity, but gains an unsuspected depth because the speaker is now God himself – the Son, God in human form."²⁸ In taking on humanity, Jesus acts in the world in a human way – through words and deeds – but as he is also the Son of God incarnate, his human acts are also divine acts, and so sign and cause of grace; "Jesus' human love is the translation of divine love itself into human form."²⁹ Jesus' words and acts are divine words and acts in a visible form and thus they are sacramental because, as Schillebeeckx writes, "a sacrament is a divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility."³⁰

Jesus' speaking invites a response from the addressee (see Mk. 8: 27-29). When the speaker bears witness to something the listener cannot know, then the appeal of the speaker is that the listener have faith in the speaker and trust his or her testimony. However, this does not mean acceptance of what the speaker has said (see Jn. 6: 66-69). Having faith in Jesus' words is beyond human power.³¹ Assent to Jesus' testimony is grounded in the inward grace of faith: "It is only by this inward grace of faith that I know myself, in and through what is spoken by Christ, to be addressed by the living God."³² To the words of Jesus must be added the work of the Spirit without which

²⁷ Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx: A Theologian in His History*, 140.

²⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 29.

²⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 39.

³⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 15.

³¹ See Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 30.

³² Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 30.

Jesus' words are not heard as God's revelatory word or Jesus' actions seen as God's active presence in the World. Faith comes from *fides ex auditu* and *locutio interna*, which is the work of the Spirit; "the inward unction is essentially connected with the *ex auditu*."³³ Those who hear Jesus' words as revelation do so because God, acting through the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, makes "yes" possible. Schillebeeckx notes that this understanding was central to Aquinas who believed the invitation to faith to be given as grace through Christ's word and the Holy Spirit speaking inwardly.³⁴

In the post-Ascension era, word and sacraments remain as the personal address of the Risen Lord to men and women in a visible human guise. Through preaching and sacraments, the Church, which Schillebeeckx defines as "an invisible communion in grace with the living God manifested in visible human form," continues God's saving activity in a visible earthly way.³⁵ As with Jesus' words and actions, so with the preaching and sacraments of the apostolic and post-apostolic Church, assent demands the inward activity of the Spirit, so that what is heard and received, is heard and received as God's saving activity.³⁶

The preaching of the apostles was based on their experience of the historical Jesus and the Risen Lord. Their preaching is an activity of the living *Kyrios* himself; "The Lord himself spoke in the apostolic preaching... The apostolic kerygma is therefore the historical form in which the Lord's actual inner speech appeared, as the glorified continuation of Christ's preaching."³⁷ Schillebeeckx identifies three aspects of apostolic witness: firstly, their preaching in the Spirit of Christ's saving death and resurrection (*kerygma*); secondly, their official witness to salvation brought about by Christ as Risen

³³ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 30.

³⁴ See Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 30.

³⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 7.

³⁶ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 33.

³⁷ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 22-23.

Lord (*martyrion*); and thirdly, their teaching (*didache*), which disclosed the meaning of this salvation and what it meant for life in the world.³⁸

Apostolic preaching is part of the deposit of revelation: “it is, together with the saving reality which it passes on to the church, the lasting norm for the whole of the church’s further life.”³⁹ Beyond the time of the apostles, the Church continues to preach in fidelity to the witness of Scripture: “Scripture provides us with an infallible and precise expression of the revelation as this was revealed in God’s saving activity in Christ.”⁴⁰ The proclamation is made “in the form of the apostolic word...the Church’s ministry of the word possesses an inward power of grace...it is the personal word of the heavenly Christ in the form of the apostolic word...*in forma ecclesiae*.”⁴¹ This preaching, like that of Jesus and the apostles, is sacramental because it is a saving act of God in human form; it is “inwardly effective”, by which Schillebeeckx means it is “divine saving power” because it is Christ’s “personal speaking to [people].”⁴²

What is the implication of Schillebeeckx’s theology of the word for preaching? What does Schillebeeckx mean when he speaks of preaching as sacramental, inwardly effective, and a saving act of God in human form? For Schillebeeckx a sacrament is:

an act of the primordial sacrament which is the Church, is a visible action proceeding from the Church as redemptive institution, an official ecclesial act performed in virtue either of the character of the priesthood or of the characters of baptism and confirmation...primarily and fundamentally a personal act of Christ himself, which reaches and involves us in the form of an institutional act performed by a person in the Church who, in virtue of a sacramental character, is empowered to do so by Christ himself: an act *ex officio*...ecclesial acts of worship, in which the Church in communion of grace with its heavenly Head (i.e., together with Christ) pleads with the Father for the bestowal of grace on the recipient of the sacrament, and in which at the same time the Church itself, as a saving community in holy union with Christ, performs a saving act.⁴³

³⁸ See Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 21-22.

³⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 19.

⁴⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 9.

⁴¹ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 31.

⁴² Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 32.

⁴³ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 52 -53, 66

Preaching is a visible act that proceeds from the Church as redemptive institution; it is an official ecclesial act performed by persons in virtue of a sacramental character; it is a source of grace, and an act of love, praise, and thanksgiving. However, Schillebeeckx, as he makes clear in *Revelation and Theology*, is making no claim for preaching as an eighth sacrament.⁴⁴ He can speak of preaching in sacramental terms because the Church is the sacrament of Christ from which “all kinds of dynamic sacramental movements proceed.”⁴⁵ However, while preaching is a saving act of God, inwardly effective, and a means of manifesting divine saving power, its role in the Christian plan of salvation differs from the role proper to the sacraments. Understanding the role of preaching and sacraments reveals “the proper efficacy of these two activities of the church.”⁴⁶ The activity of preaching and sacraments are the “burning focal point” of God’s saving action and the efficacy of each can only be measured by what is intended by each activity. The intended result of preaching and hence its efficaciousness is obedience in faith – that is the mark of its efficacy, when one who hears believes: “Christ is therefore present, and actively present, in the word of the church, but in the manner of the word that invites us to believe.”⁴⁷ The efficaciousness of the sacraments is sanctifying grace, which presupposes faith. Schillebeeckx recognizes a unity between both the ministry of word and the ministry of the sacrament. What begins with word is completed in sacrament: “without the saving power of the word, a sacrament cannot in fact be fruitful...what is commenced in the word is completed in the sacrament...Faith, aroused and made meaningful by the ministry of the word, is the space in which the sacraments must live.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 32.

⁴⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 31.

⁴⁶ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 33.

⁴⁷ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 34.

⁴⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 34-35.

Having set forth a theology of the word and accounted for the sacramentality of preaching, Schillebeeckx is able to proceed to outlining the purpose and place of preaching with the eucharistic assembly. Schillebeeckx begins by noting that the ministry of the word is most appropriately heard in “the assembled people of God, the faithful community which unites for the purpose of worshipping and praising God.”⁴⁹ While the whole Mass is a service of the word it is within the Liturgy of the Word that this service is most prominent. The multiple forms of word in the Eucharist are forms of Christ’s presence “bearing witness, instructing, and admonishing in order to bring us to the more profound obedience in faith that is necessary if we are to offer *his* sacrifice with him under the visible forms of bread and wine.”⁵⁰ All the different forms of word are the “first fruit” of the eucharistic celebration, namely “obedience and surrender in faith to Christ’s sacrificial act of love”⁵¹ The Liturgy of the Word deepens faith in what is celebrated in the Liturgy of the Eucharist; deepening praise and gratitude in what Christ does for us *in forma sacramenti*.

In a liturgical culture that downplayed the importance of the liturgical homily, Schillebeeckx notes that the sermon is not an interruption to the eucharistic liturgy but integral and an aspect of its saving power.⁵² This sermon must be based on the Scripture readings proclaimed in the assembly because these texts are the record of the apostolic witness to the Risen Lord and thus are the norm for the Church’s life of faith: “The church’s apostolic office acts as a norm for our life of faith only as ruled itself by the norm of the apostolic church, and it is in this way that the church’s preaching gives visible form to a continuous speaking here and now by the living Lord.”⁵³ The sermon

⁴⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 37.

⁵⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 37.

⁵¹ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 38.

⁵² Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 39.

⁵³ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 24.

deepens our obedience to faith and our surrender to Christ's sacrificial act of love and is also concretely related to the congregation gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, "directly concerned with the actual day-to-day life, in the Christian sense, of the Christian people."⁵⁴ This breaking open is "mystagogical catechesis," not because the sermon is always on the Eucharist, but because it is a word about Christ's redemptive action in history, of which the celebration of the Mass is a memorial and the Liturgy of the Eucharist the highpoint of that remembering.⁵⁵

The 1950s saw a renewed theological interest in the laity.⁵⁶ Speaking in 1962, Enda McDonagh noted that if this theology appeared "new," it was, "due to theological neglect, in particular to an unbalanced development of the theology of the Church."⁵⁷ Erik Borgman notes that Schillebeeckx' reflection on the laity, beginning in the early 1950s, coincides with his turn towards reflecting on the Church.⁵⁸ During this period, he, as Borgman notes, "remained formally within the framework laid down by the magisterium at the same time broke through a number of its presuppositions."⁵⁹ Schillebeeckx's reflections on the laity coincide with the early years of the "worker-priest" movement, which was looked upon with suspicion by the ecclesiastical authorities as it stood over and against the image of the clergy as representatives of the supernatural order. For Schillebeeckx, the ideals and aims of the worker-priests was to

⁵⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 40.

⁵⁵ See Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 39 in John Baldovin, "The Sacramentality of the Word: An Ecumenical Approach," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 53, no. 2 (Spring, 2018), 238.

⁵⁶ See Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, trans. Donald Attwater (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1956). Originally published as *Jalons pour une théologie du Laïcat* (1953); Leon Suenens, *Theology of the Apostolate of the Legion of Mary* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955); Gerard Phillips, *The Role of the Laity in the Church*, trans. John R. Gilbert and James W. Moudry (Notre Dame, IN: Fides Publishers, 1955). Originally published as *Le Rôle Du Laïcat Dans L'Eglise* (1955); See Karl Rahner, "The Lay Apostolate," trans. John A. Hess, *CrossCurrents* 7, no. 3 (summer 1957), 227-228. Originally published in *Schriften zur Theologie*, Volume 2 (Einsiedeln: Benzinger, 1955).

⁵⁷ Enda McDonagh, "The Layman in the Church," *The Furrow* 14, no. 11 (Nov 1963), 863.

⁵⁸ See Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, 140.

⁵⁹ Borkmann, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, 140.

be commended but he believed the work they were doing was not proper to them.

Priests were engaged in this work because laypeople were only just becoming conscious of [their] Christian vocation in the world. In “Priest and Layman in a Secular World,” he notes, “the priestly hierarchy is gradually freeing itself from its former too worldly commitments and concentrating all its efforts on its own religious mission and that the Catholic laity is at the same time becoming fully conscious of its own distinctive vocation within the world and is making its Christian life incarnate in this vocation.”⁶⁰ Borgman writes: “Schillebeeckx approached the priesthood primarily as a special task in the Church, a special responsibility for building up the people of God.”⁶¹ If the worker-priest model represents an all too worldly focus by the clergy, Catholic Action also represents an incorrect focus for Schillebeeckx, in this case, of the vocation of the layperson. The Catholic Action model focused on the layperson as a collaborator in the apostolate of the hierarchy. Schillebeeckx laments this fact, noting that laypeople had been used by the hierarchy to help them in their own pastoral and priestly work.⁶² For Schillebeeckx, the laity’s mission is not to be an auxiliary force to the hierarchy but to be in the world. For Schillebeeckx, they represent one of the Church’s two functional apostolic activities,

– the priestly or hierarchical activity and the characteristically lay activity, both as the visible sign of the apostolic impulse of the church’s inner life of grace. In other words, the church’s apostolate has two aspects – on the one hand, the interior effect of the grace of the Holy Spirit and, on the other, the two exterior functions of this interior effect of grace, the priestly hierarchy and the laity. The priest and the baptized layman are therefore two essential functions of the church which make the supernatural presence visible in this world.⁶³

⁶⁰ See Edward Schillebeeckx, “Priest and Layman in a Secular World,” in *The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx*, Volume IV, *World and Church*, trans. N.D. Smith, ed. Ted Mark Schoof, Carl Sterkens, Erik Borgman, and Robert J. Schreiter (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 51.

⁶¹ Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, 155.

⁶² Schillebeeckx, “Priest and Layman in a Secular World,” 51. See also Luigi Civardi, *A Manual For Catholic Action*, trans. C.C. Martindale (New York: Sheed & Ward Inc, 1936), 54.

⁶³ Schillebeeckx, “Priest and Layman in a Secular World,” 27.

Thus both hierarchy and laity are called to be “an active presence of the community of grace of the church on earth.”⁶⁴ However, each do so in a distinctive way. Writing in 1962 he noted that all Christians, whether lay or ordained, must strive for perfection “in a situational way” – i.e., within the concrete situation of their lives.⁶⁵ For Schillebeeckx, preaching and liturgy are priestly tasks. Priests are “the stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God “ (1 Cor. 4:1). He writes, “the apostolate and thus the ‘apostolicity’ of the priest as priest is distinctive in that it is he who has the task of realizing, throughout the history of the church, the actual connection linking man with Christ’s mysteries, his historical acts of redemption. The priest’s primary function is thus mediatory and all the other work that he may undertake must be geared to this function.”⁶⁶ In *Revelation and Theology*, he identifies preaching with the ministerial priesthood whose “specifically sacerdotal function” arises from the need for a guiding authority to direct the People of God. This is done through serving word and sacrament, both ministries being entrusted by Christ to one office.⁶⁷ Schillebeeckx writes: “The priestly function of the People of God, which is present in all who are baptized and confirmed, is present in the episcopate in the mode of a guiding authority, and hence as the immediate representatives of Christ in his role as Head of the Church...it is distinct from and constituted above the *laikoi* or the members of the priestly People of God.”⁶⁸ Bishops and priests are empowered to perform visible ecclesial acts which are distinct from the visible ecclesial acts of the layperson: “the bishop is fundamentally the liturgical minister of the community of the faithful, the teacher, and preacher...The character of the priesthood gives to already initiated members of the community a commission and an ordination to act in the person

⁶⁴ Schillebeeckx, “Priest and Layman in a Secular World,” 28.

⁶⁵ Edward Schillebeeckx, “Dogmatiek van ambt en lekestaat,” in *TvT 2* (1962) in Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, 160. See also Rahner, “The Lay Apostolate,” 227-228.

⁶⁶ Schillebeeckx, “Priest and Layman in a Secular World,” 28

⁶⁷ See Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 35.

⁶⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 170.

of Christ as Head of the Church.⁶⁹ Schillebeeckx notes: “On the plane of the ecclesial manifestation of the heavenly mystery of Christ as the Way to the Father, the priest is the ‘sacramental Christ,’ *alter Christus*, here present for the faithful.”⁷⁰ Within this structure the minister of the liturgical homily is the priest who acts, *alter Christus*, in the name of both Christ and the faithful.

The laity have a different functional apostolic activity, namely, to build up the Kingdom of God in the world. This is the laity’s mission, and is not one that comes to them from the hierarchy, it is not an auxiliary apostolate of a more important apostolate but the realization of the same apostolate but in the context of the world – the laity are to be bearers of grace and not simply recipients. They are to be bearers of the Church’s care and not merely receivers of that care. With reference to the language of Christian perfection, he notes, “perfection, then, is not a flight from the world, but a commitment within the world on the part of the Christian lay[person] to be, in and through his secular professional or working life, practiced in true perfection in love, a Christian fermentation of his fellow-workers or colleagues.”⁷¹ For Schillebeeckx, the layperson does this in the midst of temporal affairs.

In addition to establishing the distinctive focus proper to priest and layperson in the mission of the Church, Schillebeeckx also wanted to ground the laity’s activity in the sacraments and not a canonical mission received from the hierarchy. The evangelical impulse to mission is contained within baptism and confirmation. As Rahner notes, the baptised is “one in whom grace is meant to be made manifest in the dimension of history.”⁷² For Schillebeeckx, the Church is Christ’s earthly body, and its activity,

⁶⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 170.

⁷⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 170.

⁷¹ Schillebeeckx, “Priest and Layman in a Secular World,” 52.

⁷² Karl Rahner, “The Sacramental Basis for the Role of the Layman in the Church,” in *Theological Investigations*, Volume 8, trans. David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1971), 58.

through the sacramental character conferred by either baptism/confirmation or orders, represents forms of Christ's activity as High Priest: "The Church is the earthly prolongation or, better, visibility of, Christ's high priesthood in heaven."⁷³ The Church, through the power given to it at Pentecost, is a sender of the Spirit through its sacramental acts. Through baptism a person enters into the death and resurrection of Christ, and through confirmation enters into Christ's sending of the Spirit. So baptism and confirmation are not only a connecting to the Church's visible structure but also to its inner mystery. The baptized and confirmed Christian participates in "visible ecclesial acts."⁷⁴ Baptism establishes the duty and right to active participation in the Church's sacramental life while confirmation – "being established in power" – confers a commission to take their place in the "in the public life and work of the Church, actively and visibly sharing in Christ's work of sending the Spirit."⁷⁵ Lay activity in the Church, whatever that is understood to include, is based on the laity's sacramental configuration to Christ, not on a canonical mandate from the bishop:

There has now been a return to the realization that by the fact of a person's bearing a character he possesses a commission to the lay apostolate in the Church. A juridical mandate after the character has been received cannot confer this commission, nor can its absence nullify the commission possessed by anyone who has received a character. Such a mandate, if given, relates more to the practical needs of organization. Hence, to be a lay[person] means, in an unqualified sense, to be a member of the messianic and priestly People of God in virtue of baptism and confirmation. And although baptism alone makes one a lay[person]-in-the-Church, confirmation is the actual establishment in power of this Christian lay status, and thus the full initiation into the Church's apostolic life.⁷⁶

This was affirmed at Vatican II: "the laity derives the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their Head. Incorporated into Christ's mystical body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through

⁷³ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 159.

⁷⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 162.

⁷⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 164.

⁷⁶ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 168-169.

confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 33).⁷⁷

Borgman notes that the theological reflections of the 1950s would “lead to an extensive theology of the laity, whose position in the Church was defined as fundamentally different from that of the priest”⁷⁸ and this can be seen in how Vatican II treated the laity and their apostolate (see *Lumen Gentium* 30-36; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2-8). Chapter Three and Four will reveal how this teaching shaped postconciliar magisterial thinking on the laity. Borgman writing in light of the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the laity notes,

formulae which previously offered scope and had seemed liberating, and had made clear the importance for the faith of the activities of the people in the world, were used as an argument to identify the task within the church that the laity could perform with objection, as distinct from the really priestly tasks. The Synod represented the restoration of the very notion that people were trying to break through in the 1950s with the development of a theology of the laity: that the holiness of the church was represented by the hierarchy, and that the laity then had to put this holiness into practice in the world.⁷⁹

A central motif, and one of abiding value, from Schillebeeckx’s early 1950s writings on the laity is his understanding of the laity’s mission as a call to be an active presence of grace in the world. This presence in the world is not a compromise with Christian perfection but the arena in which makes present faith, hope, and love. This was radical in a world that prioritized the vowed religious life and separation from the world. *Christifideles Laici* represents a return to older understandings and theologies of holiness with implications for ecclesiology and ministry. This should not surprise, for as

⁷⁷ See also Yves Congar, “The Laity,” in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 241.

⁷⁸ Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, 141.

⁷⁹ Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, 141.

Timothy O’Brian notes, *Lumen Gentium*’s universal call to holiness (see §§39-42) has received “scant theological study in the years since the Council.”⁸⁰

2.4 Preaching and Sacraments in Mutual Relationship: The Theology of Otto Semmelroth

Writing in *The Preaching Word: On the Theology of Proclamation* (1965)

Semmelroth notes: “In the area of Catholic theology we are only beginning gradually to work out the role which is proper to the preaching of God’s word in [a person’s] sanctification before God.”⁸¹ The question he sets is: “Does the preaching of God’s word continue to have only an indirect and preparatory significance for the bestowal of grace upon [men and women]? Or does preaching also share really and effectively in the origin of [a person’s] justification and sanctification – in a manner similar to, or in connection with, the causal efficacy of the sacraments.”⁸² Semmelroth was theologizing in an era when preaching was understood to only bestow an indirect and preparatory grace upon men and women; Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835-1888), spoke of the grace that comes from hearing as “only the very preliminary grace of *illustratio intellectus*.”⁸³ But, when Semmelroth examined Scripture he noted that something more was going on with regard to preaching than merely preparing people for sacramental reception:

According to the evidence of holy scripture the preaching of God’s word seems to effect more than the psychological and moral motivation of [people] by means of knowledge and the appeal to the will which is proper to human words. God’s word

⁸⁰ Timothy W. O’Brien, “If You Wish to be Perfect: Change and Continuity in Vatican II’s Call to Holiness”, *Heythrop Journal* LV, (2014), 286. See also John O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 310. Schillebeeckx’s theologies of Church, ministry, and laity continued to evolve as he studied the sociological, historical, and theological origins of ecclesiastical structures. See his *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981); See also his reworked edition of *Ministry in The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx*, Volume IX, *The Church with a Human Face*. Translated by John Bowden. Edited by Ted Mark Schoof, Carl Sterkens, Erik Borgman, and Robert J. Schreiter. London: T&T Clark, 2018. See also *Church: The Human Story of God*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1990).

⁸¹ Otto Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word: On the Theology of Proclamation*, trans. John Jay Hughes (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 135. Originally published as *Wirkendes Wort*, (1962).

⁸² Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 203-204.

⁸³ Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Handb de Kath Dogm.*, vol. 3, 1882, new edition, 1925, 666 in Barth, *CD* I/1, 69.

as it is preached in the church seems to cooperate in producing, effectually and in fact [people's] state of grace, [their] righteousness and [their] salvation.⁸⁴

While wanting to take preaching's efficacy seriously he does not want to undermine the sacraments: "At the same time however we must hold with equal insistence to the fact that the sacraments instituted by Christ are the instrumental cause and source of the grace of justification."⁸⁵ Like Schillebeeckx, Semmelroth sees preaching sharing many characteristics of a sacrament, including having its own proper efficacy, but this efficacy is most profound within a sacramental context, where preaching and the sacraments are a single work.⁸⁶ Preaching and celebrating the sacrament are complementary: "the two phenomena of the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments are a symbolic portrayal of that event in Christ which effects salvation. And like the original reality which they signify and which is, of course, also a whole composed of two events which are its two elements, these two phenomena are also a unified whole."⁸⁷

Semmelroth understands sanctifying grace as the holiness that comes from participation in the divine life, as the fruit of preaching and sacrament in mutual relationship. In this mutual relationship the entire liturgical action comes to be understood as sacramentally efficacious, so the grace ascribed to the sacrament is properly grace ascribed to the sacrament united with the word.⁸⁸ The unity between preaching and sacraments, he noted, "must be forged again into that unity which belongs to them."⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 208.

⁸⁵ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 208.

⁸⁶ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 233-235. See also Rhodora E. Beaton, *Embodied Words, Spoken Signs: Sacramentality and the Word in Rahner and Chauvet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 9.

⁸⁷ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 233.

⁸⁸ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 212.

⁸⁹ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 211.

To explain this mutual relationship, and unity between preaching and sacraments, Semmelroth took the relationship between Incarnation and Passion as forming a single work of redemption, as a model: “if we wish to interpret the meaning and significance of the preaching of God’s word as something in the church’s life whose function it is to mediate grace, then we must direct our attention to the significance of the incarnation for [people’s] redemption and sanctification.”⁹⁰ Semmelroth notes that a one-sided emphasis on the Passion as the meritorious cause of our sanctification tends to separate the Passion from the totality of Jesus’ life as obedience to the will of the Father (see Heb. 10:5-7), which reaches its fulfilment in the Passion. Consequently the significance of the Incarnation for sanctification is played down in favour of the propitiatory sacrifice.⁹¹ The Incarnation is not simply a prerequisite that remains “external to the crucial thing.”⁹² In *Mysterium Paschale*, Hans Urs von Balthasar writes, “There can surely be no theological assertion in which East and West are so united as the statement that the Incarnation happened for the sake of man’s redemption on the Cross.”⁹³ Quoting a series of Eastern and Western patristic sources, Von Balthasar shows the purpose of the Incarnation as ordered toward the Passion. Such a theology, Semmelroth would note, reduces Christ’s work to the Cross and ignores the Incarnation as a sanctification of the created order. This, for Semmelroth, is an inadequate understanding of the Incarnation: “It is not sufficient, as an interpretation of the incarnation, to say that it is a prerequisite in the sense of something that must exist in order that something else which alone is crucial may occur, but which at the same time remains purely external to this crucial other thing.”⁹⁴ For Semmelroth the Incarnation is much more: “the incarnation is

⁹⁰ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 227.

⁹¹ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 228.

⁹² Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 230. See Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. Aidan Nichols (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 12-14.

⁹³ Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 20.

⁹⁴ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 229-230.

one part of a twofold total event in which the second part is the answering complement of the first, and in which the first part is also, to be sure, the necessary requisite for the second.”⁹⁵ Incarnation and Passion are both essential to God’s redemptive activity. In the Incarnation, the Word enters human history in the life of Jesus. Jesus is both God’s speech to human beings and also the one who responds to God’s address through the Paschal Mystery; Jesus comes to humanity from the Father and returns to the Father as head and representative of humanity. To understand Christ’s sacrificial death in terms of a mutual dialogue is to understand the Incarnation as having a

real redemptive significance – not for itself alone but taken together with the sacrifice of the cross. And this sacrifice in its turn does not affect redemption all by itself, but as a partial element taken together with the incarnation. Both constitute together the redemptive dialog in which God and [people] are a living unity joined in a personal confrontation.⁹⁶

The source of salvation, and its sanctifying grace, is thus the Incarnation and the Passion considered as a complementary unity.

Just as Incarnation and Passion form a unified redemptive whole, so preaching and sacraments form a unified sanctifying whole. Preaching and the sacraments are symbolic representations of the Christ event and so belong together, as Incarnation and Passion belong together. There is not a grace associated with preaching nor a parallel grace associated with the sacraments; there is only the grace of Christ which unites men and women to Christ through the totality of the liturgical action that signifies the redemptive action of Christ. The act of preaching “expresses symbolically that element in the incarnation and life of Christ which complements and supplements that other act expressed in the administration of the sacrament. If the celebration of the sacraments point to Christ’s sacrificial death, then the preaching of the sermon points to the climax

⁹⁵ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 229-230.

⁹⁶ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 231-232.

of God's own sermon, the incarnation of his Son as the word of God to [people]."⁹⁷ Preaching must be an image of the Incarnation; preaching must be the proclamation of God's word made flesh in Jesus Christ. In Christ's saving acts of preaching and sacrificial death he represents both word (*Wort*) and answer (*Antwort*). Just as the Incarnation is a sending forth of the enfleshed word, so preaching must send forth that enfleshed word from the Church into both Church and world. The high point of this word is the sacramental celebration of the paschal mystery, which reveals the full significance of this word. Paul Janowiak writes, "The conjunction of the two events, located in the person of Christ, expresses a profound theological affirmation about God's salvific plan, which the liturgy embodies and conveys."⁹⁸

Semmelroth contends that preaching and the administration of the sacraments can be, and often are, celebrated apart from each other. Even when preaching and the sacrament are performed apart from one another in time they supplement each other and constitute one single portrayal, as well as a single efficacious cause. The preaching of God's word which is the portrayal of the incarnation does not impart any grace peculiar to itself, just as the sacramental portrayal of Christ's sacrifice does not effect a grace separate from that of the sacrifice itself.⁹⁹ A question arises: is grace imparted at the beginning of the process with preaching or solely when the process is completed with the celebration of the sacraments? While Semmelroth contends that both preaching and sacrament must be complete for justifying grace to be imparted, he notes that this ought not to be considered solely in temporal terms: "It may be doubted whether a grace of which the mediating cause is the performance of the sacrament and the acceptance of preaching which takes place in the sacrament does in fact exist only after the entire

⁹⁷ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 222.

⁹⁸ Janowiak, *The Holy Preaching*, 27.

⁹⁹ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 234-235.

process is complete not merely in intention and in desire but really and in fact.”¹⁰⁰ He points to the fact that the Church teaches that the grace of the sacrament can be received before receipt of the sacrament on the basis of both objective and subjective desire – for example, baptism by desire. Semmelroth writes: “Now the hearing of the Church’s preaching in faith is however an objective and, at least, in the inclusive sense, a subjective desire for the sacrament since it is orientated toward the reception of the sacrament. Therefore, it could very well be that the grace resulting from this whole process is already given when the actual performance of the second phase is still lacking.”¹⁰¹ It is only for God to know how this becomes so in the life of any individual.

2.5 Vatican II and the Liturgical Homily

The renewal and reforms of the liturgy undertaken by the Second Vatican Council bear the mark of the liturgical, biblical, and theological movements of the 19th and 20th century.¹⁰² On the question of the Council’s liturgical renewal, Massimo Faggioli writes: “the liturgical constitution not simply extended the reforms of Pius X and Pius XII but also developed theologically the insights of the liturgical movement that had flourished, along with the *ressourcement* and the rediscovery of patristic theology.”¹⁰³ Perhaps with an eye toward irony, Faggioli notes that the Council’s liturgical reforms “advocated for a strongly ‘traditional’ concept of the liturgy, against some ‘modernist’ attempts to freeze the Roman Rite in its most recent forms.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 236.

¹⁰¹ Semmelroth, *The Preaching Word*, 236.

¹⁰² For histories of the Council see *History of Vatican II*, 5 Volumes, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995-2006); Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, trans. Matthew Sherry (Maryknoll, NY: Obis Books, 2006). For works addressing the liturgical reform, see Bernard Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An Insider’s View of the Liturgical Renewal*, trans. John Sullivan (Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 1988); J.D. Crichton, *Lights in Darkness: Fore-runners of the Liturgical Movement* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1996).

¹⁰³ Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), 20; For a review of the liturgical reforms initiated by Pius XII (1939-1958) see Yves Chiron, *Annibale Bugnini: Reformer of the Liturgy*, trans. John Pepino (New York: Angelico Press, 2018), 37-47.

¹⁰⁴ Faggioli, *True Reform*, 121.

Sacrosanctum Concilium, Faggioli writes, is based “on the principle of reform as a hermeneutical act of resumption of the sources of the great tradition of the Church.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 50 calls for the revision of the Mass rite so that “the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts” is more clearly manifest; that “devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved;” and that “elements which have suffered injury through accidents of history are now to be restored to the vigor which they had in the days of the holy Fathers, as may seem useful or necessary.” Jungmann notes that this is the result of the Council’s Preparatory Commission’s “very definite notions of the reform to be striven after. . . It was essentially the exposition of that form of the Mass which was seen in the Roman sacramentaries and oldest ordos – in which there was still a real community service before it became clericalized.”¹⁰⁶

Sacrosanctum Concilium affirmed three elements of a reorientated liturgical preaching: 1) the place of Scripture; 2) the relationship between word and sacrament; and 3) the homily as the appropriate form of preaching in the liturgy.

The importance of Scripture was affirmed: “Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from Scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 24). In addition, liturgies of the word, in the tradition of the patristic period, were encouraged on the eve of the great feast days (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35/4). This high regard for Scripture arises from the recognition of the growing appreciation of its sacramentality; “[Christ] is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7). Language more traditionally associated with the sacraments was applied to the word: “the treasures of the bible are to be opened

¹⁰⁵ Faggioli, *True Reform*, 121.

¹⁰⁶ Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” 35-36.

up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word [*mensa verbi Dei*]” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 51).¹⁰⁷ Where *Sacrosanctum Concilium* led later conciliar documents followed: “the Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body [*non desinat ex mensa tam verbi Dei quam Corporis Christi panem vitae sumere atque fidelibus porrigere*]” (*Dei Verbum* 21). The decree on the life and ministry of priests noted: “outstanding among all these spiritual aids are those acts by which the faithful are nourished in the word of God at the double table of the Sacred Scripture and the Eucharist [*ex duplici mensa Sacrae Scripturae et Eucharistiae Verbo Dei nutriuntur*]” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 18).

The unity of the word and sacrament – their “intimate connection” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35; cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 52) in the liturgy – is strongly affirmed: “the two parts which, in a certain sense, go to make up the Mass, namely, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, are so closely connected with each other that they form but one single act of worship” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 56). Pastors were to “insistently teach” that the faithful take their part in the entire Mass, especially on Sundays and feasts of obligation” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 56) – a contrast to the attitudes that prevailed before the Council as noted in Section 2.2.¹⁰⁸

Sacrosanctum Concilium also defined, as noted in the General Introduction, the content, source, and form of liturgical preaching: “the sermon, moreover, should draw its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources, and its character should be that of a proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ, ever made present and active within us” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35). Content,

¹⁰⁷ See also Beaton, *Embodied Words*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ See also Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” 42.

source, and form are a return to the liturgical preaching of the early Church where the homily – “a conversing in company” – was conversational free-flowing language that united the sacred text proclaimed to the life situation of the congregation gathered to celebrate a particular Eucharist on a particular Sunday.¹⁰⁹ Louis-Marie Chauvet notes:

The liturgical and theological movement which proceeds from the first table [the Word] to the second [the Eucharist] signifies concretely that the “this is my body” should be pronounced against the background of the Scriptures proclaimed on such – and – such a Sunday...A eucharistic prayer which lacks any reference to the readings is seriously deficient; one certainly wants to celebrate a sacrament of the Church, but in such a way that the Church can “veri-fy” itself (make itself true) in *this* assembly, on *this* Sunday, where one has read *these* Scriptures.¹¹⁰

Jungmann writes of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35 that “it concerns a return to that high regard, in practice, for the word of Scripture, which flourished in the primitive Church and which, among other things, led to the widespread scriptural services of the vigils.”¹¹¹ He notes that such an explanation of the word of God proclaimed “corresponds to the most ancient tradition”¹¹²

Despite the Council’s identification of preaching with bishops and priests (*Lumen Gentium* 10, 20, 23, 25, 28; *Christus Dominus* 12; *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2, 4; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2), *Sacrosanctum Concilium* proposed “a deacon or some other person” [*diaconus vel alius*] to lead bible services on the vigils of feasts in the absence of a priest (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35). This was contrary to Can. 1342§2 of the 1917 Code and a recognition of a non-ordained person leading an assembly of the faithful in worship. Jungmann notes that this section was an addition to the original schema and followed the intervention of bishops Jorge Kemerer SVD (1908-1998) and Alberto Devoto (1918-1984), both of whom served remote Argentinian communities.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ See Peter T. Sanlon, *Augustine’s Theology of Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 11.

¹¹⁰ See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament* in Baldovin, “The Sacramentality of the Word,” 238.

¹¹¹ Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” 24.

¹¹² Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” 37.

¹¹³ Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” 24. See also Rita Ferrone, “For the love of the Word: Renewing Catholics’ Relationship to Scripture,” *Commonweal*, January 28, 2020, accessed July 21, 2022. <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/love-word>.

Such interventions recognised the pastoral reality facing many communities of faith. Pastoral need influenced the Council Fathers' decision making. As Schillebeeckx notes, "practice follows from faith (i.e. the spontaneous or implicit "theory"), so practice does not precede faith, but theology."¹¹⁴ While pastoral need can be a reason for lay participation in the ministry of liturgical preaching, it cannot be the basis for such preaching. The basis of such preaching, independent of a shortage of clergy, must be theological insights that develop conciliar teaching. However, necessity, as will be seen, dominates the thinking of the magisterium and Roman Curia through much of the postconciliar period, will be shown in Chapters Three and Four.

2.7 Conclusion

Without an adequate theology of word there could neither be an adequate theology of preaching nor could its proper role in the plan of salvation be appreciated. The work of Schillebeeckx and Semmelorth represents a recovery paralleling that of Barth. Without such a theology it was not possible to appreciate what God was doing in the homily or how word and sacrament existed in mutual relationship as a moment of encounter with the living Christ. *Acerbo Nimis*, and later can. 1344 §1 of the 1917 Code, spoke of the importance of, and legislated for, a liturgical homily but without the framework of a theology of word, such pronouncements were not generally translated into concrete practice, impacting parish life. Once a theology of word was formulated it was legislated for in the norms set down by the Council.

The question of who can preach was not a significant question for the Council or in the theological reflection that preceded it. The mission of the laity and their role in ministry was shaped by the two-tier ecclesiology of the time – a theology that created a sharp distinction between categories of the faithful, a categorization and relationship

¹¹⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Ministry*, 102.

that Karen Jo Torjesen speaks of as a “dyad.” The clergy-lay dyad emerged as an asymmetrical hierarchical relationship and not that of equals.¹¹⁵ The layperson was, from the beginnings of the second millennium *vir saecularis* [a secular [person]], whose concern was the world and not ecclesial affairs, and who was subordinate to the non-secular, i.e., the sacred minister.¹¹⁶ The Council’s documents bear witness to this traditional ecclesiology (see *Apostolicam Actuositatem*; *Lumen Gentium* 34-36) alongside new emerging possibilities – “the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy” (*Lumen Gentium* 33) – with regard to the participation of the laity in the pastoral ministry of the Church.

The postconciliar era, to which attention now turns, took the teachings of the Council and began to study their implications and possibilities for the life and mission of the Church. What are the possibilities for lay ministry – including, as concerning what follows, lay liturgical preaching – offered by the Council’s teachings? This is a question of postconciliar hermeneutics. Chapters Three and Four reveal competing hermeneutics and consequently divergent possibilities.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Karen Jo Torjesen, “Clergy and Laity,” *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 389.

¹¹⁶ See Edward Schillebeeckx, “The Right of Every Christian to Speak in the Light of Evangelical Experience ‘In the Midst of Brothers and Sister,’” trans. David Smith, in *Preaching and the Non-Ordained: An Interdisciplinary Study*, ed. Nadine Foley (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 18-19.

¹¹⁷ On Conciliar hermeneutics see Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004); Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle of Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012); Catherine E. Clifford, *Decoding Vatican II: Interpretation and Ongoing Reception* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014).

Chapter Three

Lay Liturgical Preaching in the Postconciliar Era: A Case Study of Decree 2 of the Synod of Würzburg and Related Documents

3.1 Introduction

Having set forth the theological significance of preaching and studied the recovery of such a theology in the Catholic tradition in the years preceding the Council, attention can now focus on the postconciliar era and how preaching by laity, and attitudes towards such preaching in the liturgy, developed during that time. Two texts help frame the issue and represent particular theological presuppositions at work. Firstly, the decree on lay preaching of the Synod of Würzburg of the West German Church, which called for lay participation in the office of liturgical preaching and secondly, the letter of the Congregation for Clergy to the West German bishops addressing the West German request that such participation be allowed. The vision of Church outlined by the synod's decree, the Congregation for Clergy's response, and the subsequent norms for lay participation in the preaching ministry set down by the West German bishops, is contrasted with the vision of Church outlined by Karl Rahner in *The Shape of the Church to Come*. For Rahner the challenge facing the Church is addressed by either adopting "presuppositions and horizons of understanding from the past" or developing what he calls a charismatically creative imagination, based on a sense of history and a prophetic awareness of the gospel.¹ Following on from the analysis of Rahner's text, the key presuppositions underpinning the Congregations for Clergy's rescript are analysed. In advance of studying these, a brief note on hermeneutics will begin the chapter. The

¹ See Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 47.

purpose of this note is to highlight the fact that theological positions represent the consequence of particular interpretation of texts and shape what is regarded as possible. The theology of lay ecclesial ministry is no different and the position adopted by the magisterium, the critique of the magisterium's positions, or the framework proposed in Chapter Five reflect a particular approach to the text and spirit of the Council.

3.2 A Note on Hermeneutics

In 2005, on the fortieth anniversary of the closing of the Council, Benedict XVI (2005-2013), addressed the Roman Curia and laid out the contours of how he understood the Council was being received. He spoke of the difficulty implementing the Council as a clash between two contrary hermeneutics, which “came face to face and quarreled with each other. One caused confusion, the other, silently but more and more visibly, bore and is bearing fruit.”² Deciding which hermeneutic is causing the confusion and tension is itself a matter of interpretive choice. From the perspective of the magisterium and Roman Curia, the disruptive interpretation is a hermeneutic of discontinuity, or “rupture” as Benedict speaks of it. For Benedict, the proponents of a hermeneutic of discontinuity risk splitting the Church between its preconciliar and postconciliar self. For him, those who espouse a hermeneutic of discontinuity reject what is set down in the final text, as a compromise between competing ecclesiologies, or an affirmation of old things. In rejecting the text, the “spirit” of the Council is emphasised. What matters are the “impulses” towards the new contained in the text. He rejects the way of “discontinuity” but argues for a “hermeneutic of reform,” “renewal in the continuity of the one subject Church which the Lord has given to us. She is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God.” A hermeneutic of reform rejects discontinuity and a

² Benedict XVI, “Christmas Greeting to the Roman Curia 2005.” All quotations not specifically referenced are taken from the text.

continuity that prevents a critical analysis of the past. True reform, Benedict XVI contends, is a “combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels.” He distinguishes between principles and practical forms: “It was necessary to learn to recognize that in these decisions it is only the principles that express the permanent aspect, since they remain as an undercurrent, motivating decisions from within. On the other hand, not so permanent are the practical forms that depend on the historical situation and are therefore subject to change.”³ Applying this to the office of preaching, can it not be said that the permanent principle is the proclamation of the gospel for the purpose of proclaiming Christ to the world? If this is what is permanent, the who and the how are dependent on the context – “not so permanent are the practical forms that depend on the historical situation and are therefore subject to change.” What is contingent is the structure that arose out of a particular historical context and deemed best to realise the permanent principle at a particular moment in time. Thus historically, the identification of the preaching office with holy orders might have best served the Church’s mission of proclamation at a particular cultural and historical moment. Is this still true today, in all contexts in which the Church finds itself charged with the proclamation of the gospel?

John O’Malley says of Benedict XVI’s terminology: “in that instant reform was immediately and powerfully rehabilitated. It was authoritatively readmitted into Catholic theological vocabulary.”⁴ For O’Malley, Benedict XVI’s comments on reform were a “validation of the *dynamic* character of the Council’s enactments, a dynamism many conservative commentators have denied or decried.”⁵ Because of this combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels, reform “does not,

³ Benedict XVI, “Christmas Greeting to the Roman Curia 2005.”

⁴ John W. O’Malley, “*Ressourcement* and Reform at Vatican II,” *Concilium* 2012/3, 53.

⁵ O’Malley, “*Ressourcement* and Reform at Vatican II,” 54. Italics in original.

therefore, jeopardize a deeper identity; it is rather, the precondition for maintaining the authenticity of that identity.”⁶ The approach adopted in Chapters Three and Four is based on a hermeneutic of reform. It goes beyond text and spirit to analyse the thesis question in light of the contemporary situation. Do the official pronouncements and response to the question of lay liturgical preaching pronouncements reflect the interplay of continuity and discontinuity at different levels and respond to the contemporary situation of the Church? Have the faithful “received” the magisterium’s teaching on the question of their role in the ministry of liturgical preaching? The role of the Holy Spirit who distributes “special graces among the faithful of every rank” (*Lumen Gentium* 12) cannot be overlooked. The Spirit works to reveal shortcomings and suggests future development. Catherine Clifford writes: “readers of the documents of Vatican II who approach them from the perspective of a profoundly changed social and historical context might perceive new meanings or new applications of their teaching, exceeding at times what the Council fathers themselves may have considered.”⁷ In a profoundly changed context, the competing ecclesiologies of the conciliar texts reveal the value of Otto Hermann Pesch’s concept of “contradictory pluralism” within the conciliar texts, which “deliberately sets in tension two positions, *leaving the issue open for future synthesis*” (italics in original).⁸ This is how the conciliar texts are approached in what follows. The magisterium has a responsibility towards how others are receiving the conciliar texts and interpreting them. Writing of the papacy of John Paul II, whose papacy cover the major documents to be examined in Chapter Four, Mannion notes,

there appears to be little genuine conversation between those in positions of high authority in the church and those over whom and, we must not forget, *on behalf of whom* such authority is exercised. Indeed, if one takes the example of an official

⁶ John W. O’Malley, “Developments, Reforms, and Two Great Reformations: Towards a Historical Assessment of Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 44, no. 3 (1983), 374.

⁷ Clifford, *Decoding Vatican II*, 46.

⁸ See Otto Hermann Pesch, *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil: Vorgeschichte-Verlauf-Ergebnisse-Nachgerichte* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2001), 150 in Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 28.

document such as *Donum Veritatis* we see that voices that do not fall into harmony with such official opinions are not simply ignored as valid conversation partners; they are rejected out of hand as voices of *dissent*.⁹

However, Pope Francis (2013 –) has emphasised the need for the leadership of the Church to listen. He has spoken about the need of the Roman Curia to listen – he speaks of the need for the Curia as an “antenna” – to what is being said by the churches:

grasping the aspirations, the questions, the pleas, the joys and the sorrows of the Churches and the world, and transmitting them to the Bishop of Rome... By this receptivity, which is more important than their preceptive role, the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia enter generously into that process of hearing and synodality of which I have previously spoken.¹⁰

In a speech to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Synod of Bishops he noted that a synodal Church is “a Church which listens, which realizes that ‘listening is more than simply hearing’. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the College of Bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other and listening to the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth” (*Jn* 14:17), in order to know what “he says to the Churches” (*Rev* 2:7).”¹¹

With this hermeneutical note in mind, attention will now turn to the Synod of Würzburg and its reflection on lay participation in the preaching office, a process that was itself an interpretation of the Council and its application to a concrete pastoral situation.

⁹ Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 106. See also Donna Hanson, “Meeting U.S. Laity,” *Origins* 17, no. 18 (1987), 320; Bradford Hinze, *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 84-85; Ben Kimmerling, “Who Speaks for the Laity?” *The Furrow* 37, no. 9 (Sept 1986), 547-548; Tom Gillen, “The Laity in the Church Today,” *The Furrow* 37, no. 4 (April 1986), 228, 231. Many of these voices of dissatisfaction are contemporaneous with the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the Laity.

¹⁰ Francis, “Christmas Greeting to the Roman Curia,” The Holy See, December 21, 2017, accessed December 26, 2023, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/december/documents/papa-francesco_20171221_curia-romana.html.

¹¹ Francis, “Address at Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops,” The Holy See, October 17, 2015, accessed December 26, 2023, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html.

3.3 The Synod of Würzburg, the Congregation for Clergy, and the West German Bishops on Lay Participation in the Preaching Office

The Synod of Würzburg (1971-1975) was a synod of the dioceses of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) to discern the practical implications of the Second Vatican Council for the West German context.¹² The question of lay participation in the preaching office was addressed in Decree 2: “Decree on the Participation of the Laity in Preaching” [*Die Beteiligung der Laien an der Verkündigung*].¹³ The decree identifies three reasons for raising the question regarding the possibility and manner of lay participation in the office of preaching [*ob und in welcher Form sich die Laien an der Verkündigung beteiligen sollten*] (See Decree 2.1.4.): firstly, the “experience of shared responsibility” for preaching; secondly, the decline in the number of priests; and thirdly, the obligation of the Church to ensure Christ is preached. While noting that the mission to preach belongs to the entire People of God, responsibility for preaching is primarily identified with bishops, priests, and deacons because, as ministers of Jesus’ salvation, their ordination contains within it the “meaningful and efficacious word of preaching which opens the Gospel” [*wirksame Wort der Verkündigung einschließt, das die Wirklichkeit des Evangeliums erst erschließt*] (Decree 2.2.3.4). Taking its lead from *Lumen Gentium* 31, the Synod notes that the Council was “especially insistent in reminding laypeople about their role in the world” [*Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil hat gerade die Laien entschieden an ihre Weltaufgabe erinnert*] (Decree 2.2.1.2). The laity have a “world-task” [*Weltaufgabe*]

¹² Synod membership consisted of 58 bishops (22 ordinaries of dioceses and 36 auxiliaries); 154 elected members (3 priests and 4 laypeople from each of West Germany’s 22 diocese elected by diocesan councils); 40 laypeople elected by Central Committee of German Catholics; 40 members (experts and laypeople) chosen by German Bishops’ Conference; 22 religious (10 men, 10 women and 2 brothers) elected by their peers. See Society of Saint Pius X, “The Synodal Path to a German National Church (3): The Würzburg Synod,” Society of Saint Pius X, November 19, 2019, accessed July 10, 2022. <https://fsspx.news/en/news/synodal-path-german-national-church-3-wuerzburg-synod-22953>.

¹³ William Skudlarek provides the German text with English translation of “Decree 2: Lay Participation in Preaching,” in William Skudlarek, *Assertion without Knowledge? The Lay Preaching Controversy of the High Middle Age* (Ann Arbor, MI: Xerox University Microfilms, 1978), 440-454.

(See Decree 2.2.1.2 & 2.2.1.3) meaning, a mission in the secular sphere. Their “preaching” is realized in living a Christian life in the world. Within liturgical celebrations, laypeople can witness, by sharing their faith experiences, and so enrich the liturgy for others (See Decree 2.2.2.2). The emphasis on preaching as personal testimony, and witness to faith continues, in Decree 2.2.2.3 and 2.2.2.4. The Synod’s starting point reflects two tacit assumptions, deeply rooted in the conciliar texts, namely the identification of the clergy with preaching and the laity’s secular mission.

However, despite these traditional theological presuppositions the decree looks at the question of the explicit commissioning of “suitable men and women” [*geeignete Männer und Frauen*] (Decree 2.2.3.2) to the preaching ministry, including liturgical preaching. The conciliar basis for this possibility, the Synod notes, rests with *Lumen Gentium* 33: “the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy...they have the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.” In addition, it noted that history records men being commissioned to preach independent of sacramental orders and thus, “the office of preaching cannot finally be said to be tied to sacramental ordination” [*nicht ausschließlich an das priesterliche Amt und die sakramentale Befähigung*] (Decree 2.2.3.4).

The Synod grounds the commissioning of laypeople to preach, not as a merely juridical act [*bloß formeller juridischer Akt*] but in their baptism and confirmation: “It is joined to the power given by the Spirit to witness to the faith, a power which belongs to each Christian in virtue of their baptism and confirmation” [*sie knüpft nämlich an die jedem Christen in Taufe und Firmung geschenkte, geistgewirkte Befähigung zum Glaubenszeugnis*] (Decree 2.2.3.4). In addition, the commissioning of laypeople to preach takes seriously the gifts – charisms – given by the Spirit to build the “active

cooperation of a community” [*lebendige Mitarbeit in einer Gemeinde*] (see Decree 2.2.3.4). Charisms are, as Aloys Grillmeier notes, “eminently central and essential to [the Church] ... If the Holy Spirit were not constantly impelling the Church to find new forms of life, the Church would not be the developing organism which it is.”¹⁴

Central to the Synod’s understanding of commissioning is that it creates a relationship between pastor and commissioned lay preacher. The commissioned lay preacher does not become a minister or acquire an ecclesiastical office (see Decree 2.2.3.2); “such a service of preaching is a participation in the carrying out of an ecclesiastical office. [They are] there to help those who hold the office of preaching accomplish their task” [*Ein solcher Verkündigungsdienst ist Teilhabe am Auftrag des kirchlichen Amtes; er will die Amtsträger in ihrer Verkündigung unterstützen*] (Decree 2.2.3.2; see also Decree 2.2.3.3). They are commissioned to “complement” the preaching of the pastor. (Decree 2.2.3.3). Lay preachers help the pastors “accomplish their task” (Decree 2.2.3.2). Two key terms are used by the Synod to describe the relationship between pastor and commissioned layperson: “complement” [*ergänztan*] (Decree 2.2.3.3) and “co-celebrant” [*Mitfeiernder*] (Decree 2.4.2.1).

Perhaps, most radically, the Synod also proposes that laypeople be commissioned to preach during the eucharistic liturgy. The Synod notes that while it is appropriate for the priest to be both preacher and president [*Prediger und Vorsteher*] this “is not absolutely necessary” [*nicht unbedingt notwendig*] (Decree 2.2.3.3): “the commissioned layperson is not only allowed to preach the sermon in liturgies of the word and in parish liturgies when no priest is present, but also, in extraordinary situations, at the liturgy of the Mass” [*Der beauftragte Laie kann die Predigt nicht nur im Wortgottesdienst und bei Gottesdiensten in Gemeinden ohne Priester, sondern in außerordentlichen Fällen auch*

¹⁴ Aloys Grillmeier, “The People of God,” trans. Kevin Smyth, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Volume 1, gen. ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burn & Oates, 1967), 165-166.

innerhalb der Eucharistiefeier übernehmen] (Decree 2.2.3.3). Central to the Synod's position are two qualifiers: necessity in the absence of a priest and "extraordinary situations." Thus while advocating for the practice, the Synod does not intend such preaching to be a regular event.

The commissioning of a particular individual must begin with the understanding that to preach is to engage in an event whereby the word of God is spoken in human words (Decree 2.4.1). Preaching is not an exercise in human ingenuity but a "standing under the word of God, under God's promise and under God's judgement" [*Er steht unter dem Wort Gottes, unter seiner Verheißung und unter seinem Gericht*] (Decree 2.4.1.2). A preacher proclaims their faith, and that of the Church, in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, whose word they serve. They must listen for the Spirit's voice: "He is not Lord of his message but its servant. This service demands sobriety and enthusiasm, fraternal consideration and prophetic courage, submission to Jesus Christ and agreement with the Church's magisterium" [*Er ist nicht Herr der Botschaft, sondern ihr Diener. Dieser Dienst erfordert zugleich Nüchternheit und Begeisterungsfähigkeit, brüderliche Rücksichtnahme und prophetischen Mut, Hingabe an Jesus Christus und Übereinstimmung mit dem Lehramt der Kirche*] (Decree 2.4.1.2).

The decree proposes several practical criteria necessary for commissioning. In addition to theological learning there must be spiritual preparation – the continuous intellectual, meditative, and prayerful reflection on God's word along with communication and speaking skills (Decree 2.4.1.1). The vision of preaching and the criteria for commissioning set forth by the synod share many traits with Barth's criteria for commissioning outlined in Chapter One: 1) call 2) a discernable charism from the Spirit (see Decree 2.2.3.4); 3) theological learning (Decree 2.4.1.1); 4) probity of life (Decree 2.4.1.3); and 5) discernment by the pastor and parish council (Decree 2.4.2.2).

In summary the following points can be noted from the Synod's proposals:

1. There is an obligation to ensure that Christ is preached (Decree 2.2.1.4).
2. Preaching is a responsibility of the whole Church, and includes the specific commissioning of laypeople to liturgical preaching, including in the Eucharist, though in "extraordinary situations." (Decree 2.2.3.3)
3. Lay preaching is a "complement" to the preaching of the pastor. (Decree 2.2.3.3). Lay preaching helps priests "accomplish their task" (Decree 2.2.3.2)
4. The lay preacher is a "co-celebrant" in the liturgical celebration (Decree 2.4.2.1)
5. Commissioned lay preachers are not "ministers" nor do they acquire an ecclesiastical office (Decree 2.2.3.2)
6. While recognizing an intimate link between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, it is not "absolutely necessary" that the preacher and celebrant be the same person (Decree 2.2.3.3)
7. Commissioning is not solely a juridic act but based on baptism and confirmation, which gives the power of the Spirit to witness to the faith (Decree 2.2.3.4).
8. Commissioning follows the discernment of the pastor and the parish council (Decree 2.4.2.2).
9. Commissioning lay preachers takes seriously the Spirit's distribution of charisms for the building up of the community (Decree 2.2.3.4).
10. Commissioned lay preachers are to be theologically and spiritually prepared for the ministry (Decree 2.4.1.1) and live lives of probity (Decree 2.4.1.3).

In 1973 the West German hierarchy wrote to the Congregation for Clergy requesting permission to enact the decree: "Granting them [laypeople] permission to preach in a liturgical setting by giving testimony to their faith and also to preach the sermon at Mass in extra-ordinary situations, provided they have been expressly commissioned to do so" [*Auch eine Beteiligung an der Verkündigung im Gottesdienst in den Formen des Glaubenszeugnisses und der Predigt mit ausdrücklicher Beauftragung, in außerordentlichen Fällen auch in der Eucharistiefeier, wird gutgeheißen*] (Decree 2.3). The Congregation's rescript acknowledges the Synod's starting points, namely: 1) participation in the saving mission of the Church belongs to all the faithful; 2) Vatican II endorsed "the apostolate of the laity in both the world and the Church;" 3) the West German experience of the "shared responsibility" of the People of God for proclaiming the word of God; and 4) the bishops' desire that shared responsibility be extended to

include liturgical preaching including preaching in the Eucharist.¹⁵ Before outlining its concerns with what the Synod proposes, and the norms it set down, the Congregation notes that the question of a layperson preaching the “homily” during the Eucharist was addressed juridically in the 1971 judgement of the Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of the Decrees of Vatican Council II.¹⁶ However, the Synod did not speak of “*die Homilie*” but “*der Predigt*,” which translates as sermon. This distinction will be explored in Chapter Four.

The Congregation begins by repeating the traditional identification of preaching with holy orders; responsibility rests in the first instance with bishops (*Lumen Gentium* 20; *Christus Dominus* 12) and priests as their cooperators (*Lumen Gentium* 28; *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4). While the Congregation references deacons, their role in the preaching office is historically ambiguous, and Vatican II is not explicit in assigning them a role in preaching liturgical homilies, speaking rather of their “diaconate of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity to the people of God” and “instruct[ing] and exhort[ing] the people” (see *Lumen Gentium* 29).¹⁷

The identification of preaching with holy orders is spoken of as an “intimate connection.”¹⁸ Addressing the Synod’s notion of “shared responsibility,” the Congregation makes recourse to traditional categories: “the theme of the people of God’s shared responsibility for proclaiming [God’s] word must therefore be understood of the people of God as constituted hierarchically, that is, through the sacrament of

¹⁵ For the complete text of the Congregation’s reply to the West German Bishops see Congregation for Clergy, “Letter of Cardinal J. Wright to Cardinal J. Döpfner,” in *Documents on the Liturgy*, 914-916. Henceforth referenced as “Letter on Preaching.”

¹⁶ See Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of the Decrees of Vatican Council II, “Reply to a Query on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 42” (1972), in *Documents on the Liturgy*, 544.

¹⁷ The 1969 *General Instruction for the Roman Missal* §§131-132 outlines the deacon’s duties in the Liturgy of the Word. He is not referenced as a minister of the liturgical homily in contrast to concelebrants who can be entrusted with it by the celebrant. See Congregation for Divine Worship, “*Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*,” The Holy See, April 06, 1969, §165, accessed July 14, 2022, https://archive.ccwatershed.org/media/pdfs/13/08/22/15-12-23_0.pdf.

¹⁸ Congregation for Clergy, “Letter on Preaching,” 914.

orders.”¹⁹ The hierarchical ordering of the Church separates the ministerial priesthood from the common priesthood and, because it identifies the preaching office with the clergy, it expresses concern that extending the office to laypeople would confuse – “obscure the essential distinction” – between clergy and laity especially if laypeople were preaching regularly rather than by way of exception.²⁰ The Congregation notes the unity of the Liturgy of Word and Liturgy of Eucharist as forming a single act of worship as a reason why the liturgical homily belongs properly to the priest. Through his ordination, the priest participates in Christ’s threefold office of priest, prophet, and king, and in the Eucharist exercises these public functions on behalf of the community: “in the Mass of the community the priest exercises not only his ministry of word and sacrifice but also his office as pastor of the people.”²¹ What does this reasoning mean in the case where concelebrants preach, non-concelebrating priests preach, or when deacons preach?

Despite these expressed concerns and its emphasis on the “intimate connection” between holy orders and preaching, the Congregation sanctioned the request of the Synod that laypeople be allowed to preach in non-eucharistic liturgical settings and, in “extraordinary situations,” in the Eucharist. Firstly, in non-eucharistic settings the following norm is outlined, and note should be taken of the use of the term “homily” in the context of No. 1, and the absence of the term in No. 2:

1. In places lacking a priest or deacon, bishops are to choose laypersons who will be empowered to give a homily during the celebration of the word of God so that on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation the faithful may receive help to sanctify the day.

While the Synod did not say what constituted an “extraordinary” situation that would allow a layperson to preach in the Eucharist, the Congregation noted:

¹⁹ Congregation for Clergy, “Letter on Preaching,” 914.

²⁰ Congregation for Clergy, “Letter on Preaching,” 914.

²¹ Congregation for Clergy, “Letter on Preaching,” 915.

2.a. During a Mass the celebrant normally gives the sermon.

2.b. [When] a celebrant may be physically or morally prevented from fulfilling this function, no other priest or deacon may be available, and thus the faithful may be deprived of the spiritual help coming from the word of God. In such a case of compelling or reasonable need, bishops have the power to grant laypersons the faculty to preach even during a Mass.

c. Bishops are empowered to grant the same faculty when on a particular occasion (for example, celebrations on behalf of the Christian family, to promote works of charity or foreign mission, or other celebrations at the discretion of the bishop) laypersons are available who have special qualifications and whose words are likely to be especially effective.²²

Both in non-eucharistic and eucharistic liturgical settings, the context for such preaching is necessity or an extraordinary occasion. Thus what is sanctioned is not really an advance of the laity per se but a consequence of necessity due to the shortage of clergy. The Congregation writes: “In order therefore that in liturgical services the office of preaching will be fulfilled by ordained ministers, vocations to the priesthood and the diaconate must be promoted through every available means. We are deeply convinced that in this regard bishops must leave no measure untried: this is an essential element of their pastoral concern.”²³ Such a directive within the context of this letter reveals an attitude at odds with the Synod’s concept of lay preaching as a “shared responsibility,” or a “help [to] those who hold the office of preaching accomplish their task.” Once there are enough priests, or deacons, to provide for the Church’s preaching needs, the laity’s participation in the office will no longer be required. The attitude of the Congregation towards lay preaching is that of expediency due to pastoral necessity and not a legitimate conciliar development. The letter speaks of Paul VI’s (1963-1978) approval of these norms as an “apostolic concession.”²⁴

²² Congregation for Clergy, “Letter on Preaching,” 915.

²³ Congregation for Clergy, “Letter on Preaching,” 915.

²⁴ Congregation for Clergy, “Letter on Preaching,” 916.

In addition to the major regulations noted above the Congregation required: 1) the celebrant should give an introduction and conclusion to preaching by laypeople; 2) laypeople who are called to preach must receive a canonical mandate from the bishop, which can be revoked; 3) the West German Bishops' Conference must set regulations to govern the practice that takes into consideration knowledge, probity of life, and submissiveness toward the magisterium and pastors; 4) former clerics are "barred" from such a ministry in accordance with norms set by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith;²⁵ and finally, 5) bishops must consult their Council of Priests, not the diocesan Pastoral Council, before giving faculties to laypeople to preach.²⁶ The rescript suspended can. 1342 §2 of the 1917 Code – "all laity are forbidden to preach in churches, even religious" – and the norms sanctioned as a four-year experiment after which the West German bishops would report on the results to the Holy See.

In response to the Congregation's letter, the West German bishops established a set of norms to govern the participation of laity in the liturgical preaching office. These norms reflected the Congregation's regulations, rather than the more expansive vision of the Synod's decree. As with the Congregation for Clergy, the bishops' norms centre on necessity as the context for lay liturgical preaching. Karl Lehmann notes that only on reading the Congregation's letter and the bishops' norms "does it become clear in what sense the Synod resolution 'The participation of the laity in the proclamation' came into force"²⁷ The bishops' norms begin by noting that the ministry of preaching is the responsibility of ordained ministers and that lay preachers when commissioned

²⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Norms for preparing petitions in diocesan or clerical religious Curias for reducing priests to the lay state with a dispensation from all the obligations arising from Sacred Orders," §VI.4.b., in *Documents on the Liturgy*, 789-790.

²⁶ See Congregation for Clergy, "Letter on Preaching," 915-916.

²⁷ Karl Lehmann, Preliminary Remarks on the "Dokumente zum Inkrafttreten des Synodenbeschlusses 'Die Beteiligung der Laien an der Verkündigung,'" in *Synode Der Bistümer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Offizielle Gesamtausgabe, Band 1: Gemeinsame-Synode-1971-1975* (Freiburg: Herder, 2001), 179., accessed July 15, 2022, https://www.dbk-shop.de/media/files_public/42aecb45ba48a8de1dc705308d4752c9/DBK_GS_05_Beteiligung_Laien.pdf.

“supplement” their ministry.²⁸ The synodal language of “shared responsibility” is absent (see Decree 2.1.4). The bishops’ norms repeat the Congregations’ regulations. Norm 1.2 affirms that laypeople only preach when no priest or deacon is available. Norm 1.4 notes that in “exceptional cases” a layperson can be commissioned to preach in the Mass. These exceptional cases, outlined in Regulation 2.b and 2.c of the Congregation’s letter are simply repeated in the bishops’ norms (see Norm 1.4.1.1, 1.4.1.2). Lay sermons are to be introduced and concluded by the celebrating priest (Norm 1.5). The norms for commissioning and the criteria for commissioning reflect the thinking of both the Synod and the Congregation. Overall, there is little beyond the very practical in the norms that reflects the Synod’s decree. The bishops, in line with the Congregation, reduce lay participation in the liturgical preaching office to necessity.

3.4 Reflection on these documents in Light of Karl Rahner’s *The Shape of the Church to Come*

In this section the vision of ministry outlined in Decree 2, the Congregation for Clergy’s letter, and the West German bishops’ norms on lay participation in the preaching office, will be contrasted with Karl’s Rahner’s vision of Church outlined in his text *The Shape of the Church to Come* (German original, 1972). This text is concurrent to the work of the Synod of Würzburg and was written in response to something Rahner felt missing from its deliberations, namely clearly identified assumptions that underpin the work of the Synod that precede answers to particular problems. Rahner asks: what is “its basic conception, overriding everything else?”²⁹

For Rahner the key concept on which the Synod must base its work is understanding the present context as a period of “transition” from what Rahner calls “a

²⁸ See “Richtlinien für die Beteiligung der Laien an der Verkündigung in den Diözesen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” in *Synode Der Bistümer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Offizielle Gesamtausgabe, Band 1: Gemeinsame-Synode-1971-1975*, Norm 1.1, accessed July 12, 2022.

²⁹ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 11.

Church sustained by a homogeneously Christian society and almost identical with it, from a people's Church, to a Church made up of those who have struggled against their environment in order to reach a personally clearly and explicitly responsible decision of faith. This will be the Church of the future or there will be no Church at all."³⁰ This era of transition, in which the West German Church and Synod finds itself, marks

the disappearance of the preconditions of that very special kind of faith and Christianity, by no means identical with the essence of faith and Christianity, which was involved in social conditions which are now disappearing and could not be assumed as permanent by Christian faith, since they are not at all necessary for a true and ecclesial Christianity.³¹

This is the basic concept that Rahner believes should inform all the Synod's work. The new ecclesial context for Christianity and faith "today and still more tomorrow" will be, "a situation in which the general and public consciousness, marked by the empirical sciences and their methods, knows no world in which, although not really excluding faith and all reference to God, is in a quite definite sense a-theistic."³²

What does this age of transition mean for the question of ministry and lay liturgical preaching? For Rahner the question, as noted above, cannot be answered by a simple repeat of the decrees and declarations of the Second Vatican Council. They bind to varying degrees, and provide a framework for reflection, but are themselves the product of "presuppositions and horizons of understanding which cannot simply be regarded as those of today or tomorrow."³³ For Rahner, the present and future require reflection on context and needs, a deep sense of history, prophetic awareness of the gospel, and the "courage of an ultimately charismatically, creative imagination."³⁴ Also needed is "courage in certain circumstances to give up tasks and positions which the Church has

³⁰ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 24.

³¹ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 24. See also Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, trans. Paul Philibert (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2011), 44-47. Originally published as *Varie et fausse réforme dans l'Église* in 1950.

³² Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 25.

³³ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 13.

³⁴ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 47.

hitherto insisted on claiming for herself... inopportune defence has only injured herself and her proper task.”³⁵ Rahner does not believe such a vision underpins the approach of the ecclesiastical authorities, and he notes a tension between the authority’s role to defend the status quo, and planning for the future. Often the primary question asked by authority in the face of a creative imaginative response to a new situation is whether it is compatible with how things are done – how it sits with present practice and tradition – rather than asking how such practice and tradition secures the “sacred duty to provide for the Church’s endurance in a situation still to come.”³⁶ He takes lay preaching as an example of the situation: “If we imagine the situation as it may well be in ten years or even earlier, shall we not be glad to see that ‘laymen’ [sic] are still present at Mass and get up to speak there? Do we then have to treat the problem of ‘lay-preaching’ with so many ‘ifs’ and ‘buts,’ with so much theological misgiving ultimately irrelevant to the future situation?”³⁷ These “ifs,” “buts,” and “theological misgivings” arise out of the presuppositions and horizons of understanding of the past applied to the detriment of something new:

timely planning is necessary if only because opportunities and their preconditions are now present for what will be required later. If we go on as we have been doing these will disappear, since they will not have been tested in practice and subjected to experiments... opportune planning and opportune execution of the plan must take place at a time when the project is not yet absolutely necessary or obvious to everybody.³⁸

The ecclesiology of Rahner’s future Church is complex, involving the notion of a declericalized Church and a Church from the roots. Despite how radical this sounds, Rahner is very careful to set both within the context of what he calls the “episcopal great Church” – a Church under the authority of a bishop.³⁹

³⁵ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 48.

³⁶ See Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 26.

³⁷ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 27.

³⁸ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 50-51.

³⁹ See Rahner *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 109.

A declericalized Church is not one without clergy but rather one that involves the repositioning of clergy. Office in the declericalized Church consists of office-holders “in joyous humility” recognising that the Spirit will blow where it will and that no “exclusive and permanent tenancy” has been arranged with the priest and believers who “gladly concede to office-holders in special obedience the special functions in a society – and thus also in the Church – which cannot be exercised by all at the same time.”⁴⁰

In the declericalized Church charismatic gifts are central but not exclusive. Rahner speaks of a Church from the roots, a basic community that has its “own pronounced character, gives itself a certain structure and constitution, that it really demands from its freely associated members something which goes completely beyond what a parishioner today has to do for the ordinary parish.”⁴¹ Leadership in the basic community is subject to testing for suitability by those in apostolic succession who may also have to take responsibility for their training so they can fulfil their functions toward the basic community. However, despite both those criteria the leadership of the basic community is not conceived as an appointee of the “episcopal great Church.”⁴² While Rahner imagines the basic community along with the parish as an element of the Church, it seems he does envisage the parish becoming in effect a basic community – a community of those committed “through the free decision of faith.”⁴³ Rahner admits the ecclesiology outlined is vague but notes that experimental attempts at basic communities can help types to emerge.

What can be said about the Synod’s decree, the Congregation for Clergy’s rescript, and the West German bishops’ norms when considered in light of Rahner’s reimagining of the Church in the future? The Synod attempted to broaden the responsibility for the

⁴⁰ See Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 57-58.

⁴¹ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 111.

⁴² See Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 109-111.

⁴³ Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 109. See also, 115-117.

Church's mission to preach beyond identification with holy orders but did so within the traditional framework of a two-tier ecclesiology and presuppositions such as the traditional identification of preaching with holy orders, rigid distinctions between the hierarchical and ministerial priesthood, and the laity's secularity. A declericalized Church with a repositioned clergy is not in the vision of either the Synod or the Congregation for Clergy. Without an underpinning concept such as Rahner's era of transition to guide its work it was not able to address the question of lay liturgical preaching in a systemic way but only symptomatically.

3.5 Analysing the Congregation for Clergy's Rescript – "Presuppositions and Horizons of Understanding from the Past"

At the heart of the Congregation for Clergy's rescript are two key themes that shape its response to the West German bishops' letter and the question of lay liturgical preaching: 1) the emphasis on the "intimate connection" between holy orders and preaching; and 2) concern that lay liturgical preaching as a regular reality would "blur the distinction" between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood.

In what follows these concerns will be analysed, beginning with the "intimate connection" between holy orders and the ministry of preaching. This is an historical fact, but history alone should not determine whether, the "intimate connection" between preaching and holy orders, understood in an exclusivist sense, should continue in the present. The past cannot bind the present without firstly understanding the historical conditioning of the past and determining if it remains theologically relevant to the present.⁴⁴

To understand the origin of the "intimate connection" between holy orders and preaching, it is necessary to understand what Thomas O'Meara describes as "for fifteen

⁴⁴ See Schneiders, "New Testament Foundations for Preaching by the Non-Ordained," 63.

hundred years the primal structure of the Christian Churches,”⁴⁵ namely the clergy-lay dyad. This dyad, which began to take shape early in the history of the Christian community, radically impacted upon the development of ministerial structures.⁴⁶

The apostolic and sub-apostolic Church witnessed a variety of structures, but over time a uniformity of ministerial structure came to dominate.⁴⁷ Understanding the origin of orders helps to show how the Church’s ministerial structure was influenced by its cultural situation and borrowed from it so as to be comprehensible to the culture and people it was seeking to evangelise. While the Church is the mystical body of Christ, it is also a sociological entity, and exists in the world through structures, which O’Meara writes, “could not help but be modified in its self-understanding by the powerful and useful thought-forms and political institutions of the Roman world.”⁴⁸ One such thought form and institution was the Roman *Ordo* (pl: *ordines*), which created the dyad that would dominate, not simply ministerial structure, but the life of the community of faith; “differences in people which came from levels of being and which created not services but classes.”⁴⁹ An *ordo* consisted of a specific group, distinct from the wider group. This was fundamentally different to the practice of the apostolic and sub-apostolic era in which, as Jeremiah Newman notes, “there was no dichotomy between clergy and laity. These did not constitute two separate classes, two groups representing two different states of life. They were united, all as members of the ‘People of God.’ All lived the same state of life, in the world and in Christ, but with differentiation of function.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 161.

⁴⁶ For detailed studies on the origin of ministerial structures and the rise of Orders in the early Church see Hans Von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. A. Baker (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969); Andre Lemaire, *Ministry in the Early Church*, trans. The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (London: SPCK, 1977).

⁴⁷ On the variety of ministries and structures in the apostolic and sub-apostolic Church see Raymond Brown, *The Church the Apostles Left Behind* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984).

⁴⁸ Thomas O’Meara, “Order and Ordination,” *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), 724-725.

⁴⁹ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 161.

⁵⁰ Jeremiah Newman, *The Christian in Society* (Dublin: Helicon Press, 1962), 9.

The original identification of a member of the community with a function changed as those holding positions designated by titles such as *episkopos*, presbyter, and deacon became identified with the formation of a Christian *ordo*. It is only with the formation of *ordo* that we can speak meaningfully of clergy and laity. O'Meara writes, "the use of *klerikoi/laikoi* did not give rise to *ordines*; rather, the incorporation of *ordines* into the Church structures gave rise to the meaning and subsequent usage of *klerikoi/laikoi*."⁵¹

Kenan Osborne notes: "*Ordo* became the hermeneutic through which *klerikoi/laikoi* received their ecclesiastical meaning. The structuring of the churches along the lines of *ordines* gave rise, in turn, to the theologising of these various *ordines*."⁵² The "ontologising of the issue of ordination"⁵³ resulted in these *ordines* becoming increasingly powerful, with the priestly language of Leviticus being applied to them. Ministry is no longer simply a function serving the community but a function serving the community carried out by one who is distinct from the rest of the community by virtue of membership of the *ordo*. The liturgy came to reflect the structure of the *ordo*, and given the importance of the principle *lex orandi lex credendi* the importance of these *ordines* was affirmed: "*nos et plebs tua sancta* (we [i.e., those in order] and your holy people)."⁵⁴

Noting the historical conditioning of ministry structures is not to suggest that the establishment of a professional clerical class was an incorrect development. Hans Von Campenhausen writes: "the increasing remoteness of the Church's beginnings, the emergence of heretical deviations, the growth in numbers, and to some extent also the

⁵¹ O'Meara, "Order and Ordination," 724.

⁵² Osborne, *Ministry*, 27.

⁵³ Osborne, *Ministry*, 26.

⁵⁴ Osborne, *Priesthood*, 115. This language and all it implies returned with the 2011 English translation of the missal, "my sacrifice and yours." Compare with the rejected 1998 ICEL translation: "Pray, brothers and sisters, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father." See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops *The Sacramentary*, Volume 1: Sundays and Feasts (Washington D.C: International Commission on English in the Liturgy, 1998), 439.

flagging zeal in the congregations made it essential in time to develop everywhere a responsible cadre of leaders, and ultimately to arrange for the formal appointment of authorised officials.”⁵⁵ André Lemaire writes: “little by little, when people talked of the Church’s ministries, a language very different from that used in the New Testament was developing. No doubt it resulted from the wish to become involved with the Mediterranean society of the time, but the risk was great that fidelity to the gospel conception of the ministry might be lost.”⁵⁶ However, as Osborne notes:

Distinction between cleric and lay is one thing: the degree of such a distinction is quite another. As the degree of distinction, sociologically, psychologically, culturally, widened, so too, did the theological base for such a distinction widen. The process of clericalization influenced, in no small measure, the process of theologizing on the clergy.⁵⁷

Under the influences of the process noted above, the laity were increasingly excluded from the Church’s ministerial life, and increasingly identified with a mission in the world. Thomas O’Meara writes: “the reduction of Church life during the second and third centuries – necessary perhaps at that time of expansion – prepared for the unfortunate separation of the Christian community into a large passive laity directed in word and sacrament by a very small separate group, who alone were publicly constituted in fulltime service, i.e., ordained.”⁵⁸

The historic identification of preaching with holy orders was taken up by the Council. The documents of Vatican II are replete with statements affirming the connection between the ministry of preaching and those in holy orders, especially episcopal and priestly orders. *Lumen Gentium* 10 states: “The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people;” “episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the office of teaching and of

⁵⁵ Von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power*, 80.

⁵⁶ Lemaire, *Ministry in the Early Church*, 56.

⁵⁷ Osborne, *Priesthood*, 148.

⁵⁸ O’Meara, “Order and Ordination,” 724.

governing...bishops in an eminent and visible way sustain the roles of Christ Himself as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His person.” (*Lumen Gentium* 21); “it is the duty of all bishops to promote and to safeguard the unity of faith and the discipline common to the whole Church, to instruct the faithful...the task of proclaiming the Gospel everywhere on earth” (*Lumen Gentium* 23); “Bishops, as successors of the apostles, receive from the Lord, to whom was given all power in heaven and on earth, the mission to teach all nations and to preach the Gospel” (*Lumen Gentium* 24); “among the principal duties of bishops the preaching of the Gospel occupies an eminent place...they are authentic teachers” (*Lumen Gentium* 25); “Bishops, therefore, have been made true and authentic teachers of the faith” (*Christus Dominus* 2); “In exercising their duty of teaching – which is conspicuous among the principal duties of bishop – they should announce the Gospel of Christ to [people]” (*Christus Dominus* 12, see also *Christus Dominus* 13, 14); “Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2). Of priests, the conciliar documents state: “By the power of the sacrament of Orders, in the image of Christ the eternal high Priest, they are consecrated to preach the Gospel...Partakers of the function of Christ the sole Mediator, on their level of ministry, they announce the divine word to all” (*Lumen Gentium* 28); “In the measure in which they participate in the office of the apostles, God gives priests a special grace to be ministers of Christ among the people. They perform the sacred duty of preaching the Gospel” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2); “priests, as co-workers with their bishops, have the primary duty of proclaiming the Gospel of God to all” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4). Little is said of deacons: “it is the duty of the deacon, according as it shall have been assigned to him by competent authority...to read the Sacred Scripture to the

faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful” (*Lumen Gentium* 29).

In these pronouncements the Council affirms a very traditional understanding of the relationship between those in holy orders and the ministry of preaching. Similarly, *Lumen Gentium* 30–36 and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* present a very traditional outline of the role of the laity. Thus Congregation for Clergy’s affirmation of the “intimate connection” has a strong conciliar basis. The question remains: does the affirmation of an “intimate connection” between preaching and holy orders necessarily mean laypeople cannot have a fuller, more participative, role in the preaching ministry? Chapter Five will offer a new theological framework that allows for such a possibility.

The second concern noted by the Congregation for Clergy in its reply to the West German bishops was that in becoming a regular practice lay preaching would “blur the distinction” between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood. This distinction is a key theological motif of the Congregation for Clergy, and for much of the official postconciliar pronouncements on the question of the laity’s participation in ministry, let alone that of liturgical preaching. A distinction which David Coffey says is “sometimes seen as little more than a ploy for maintaining a rigid distinction of clergy and laity and thereby reinforcing clerical control in the church. It is apprehended as a throwback from the conciliar ecclesiology of the People of God to the preconciliar theology of a perfect – and therefore strongly regimented – society.”⁵⁹ To assess whether there are grounds for concern regarding the blurring of distinctions between ministerial and common priesthood requires that each be properly understood.

What is meant by the common priesthood? It is the primary state of life in the Church preceding any subsequent classification. Through baptism–confirmation–

⁵⁹ David Coffey, “The Common Priesthood and Ordained Priesthood,” *Theological Studies* 58, no. 2 (1997), 210.

Eucharist, the believer shares in Christ's priestly office by "receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity" (*Lumen Gentium* 10); his prophetic office "by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give praise to His name" (*Lumen Gentium* 12); and his kingly office by abnegation leading to Christian freedom (*Lumen Gentium* 10). The priesthood of all believers confers a ministry and vocation of praise, witness, and self-abnegation on all Christians and is the first and primary mission of all Christians.

What is meant by ministerial priesthood? *Lumen Gentium* 10 declares that the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood [*sacerdotium ministeriale seu hierarchicum*] differs from the common priesthood not only in degree – "[ministerial] priesthood is not to be understood merely as an intensification and heightening of the dignity of the common priesthood"⁶⁰ – but in essence: "[it] represents a new type of priestly dignity and power, even though it is based on the common priesthood."⁶¹ While *Lumen Gentium* 10 speaks of the hierarchical priesthood, the role assigned is appropriate to bishops and priests but not deacons: "the ministerial priest [*sacerdos*], by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ [*in persona Christi*], he makes present the eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people" (see also *Lumen Gentium* 28; *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2). This "sacred power" is "a special grace to be ministers of Christ among the people," which, in the first instance, is the "sacred duty of preaching the Gospel" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2). This sacred power comes through ordination and empowers a bishop or priest to act in the person of Christ and act in the name of the community: "Priests, as co-workers with their bishops, have the primary duty of proclaiming the Gospel of God

⁶⁰ Grillmeier, "The People of God," 158.

⁶¹ Grillmeier, "The People of God," 158.

to all. In this way they fulfill the command of the Lord: ‘Going therefore into the whole world preach the Gospel to every creature’ (Mk 16:15), and they establish and build up the People of God” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4). In the words of Aloys Grillmeier, this sacred power means being placed at the junction between what comes from above to below and goes from below to above; the midpoint of a sacred exchange.⁶²

In *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2, the term “*in persona Christi Capitis*” is used: “priesthood...is conferred by that special sacrament; through it priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and are conformed to Christ the Priest in such a way that they can act in the person of Christ the Head [*in persona Christi Capitis agere*].” This is not language found in *Lumen Gentium*, which speaks only of “*in persona Christi*” to describe the bishops and priests actions. Why the change? Perhaps the change reflects the continued need to keep separate the clergy and the laity in a context where the Council was recovering the understanding that to be baptized is to share in Christ’s priesthood and in the mission and ministry of the Church but in a way that ensures the difference in essence is maintained. The ministerial priest’s configuration to Christ the Head, as David Coffey notes, is an ecclesiological statement, “for the headship of Christ as exercised in the only place where it can be exercised, namely the Church, is clearly an ecclesial function.”⁶³ When understood in ecclesiological terms, the common priesthood is a sharing in the membership of the mystical body, through a union of faith and baptism with Christ the priest, without sharing in Christ’s headship, while ordination confers a sacramental sharing in Christ’s priesthood as head. Coffey writes, “the priest is head only in a sacramental sense, by sacramental participation in Christ the head. But this is still an ecclesial reality and

⁶² See Grillmeier, “The People of God,” 158.

⁶³ Coffey, “The Common Priesthood and Ordained Priesthood,” 211.

function.”⁶⁴ For Coffey the ecclesiological framework allows for both forms of priesthood having Christ as their ontological ground while operating as different gifts of God.⁶⁵ Despite being the language of a minor conciliar document, the language of *in persona Christi Capitis* was incorporated into the 1983 code:

By divine institution some among Christ’s faithful are, through the sacrament of order, marked with an indelible character and are thus constituted sacred ministers; thereby they are consecrated and deputed so that, each according to his own grade, they fulfil, in the person of Christ the Head, the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling, and so they nourish the people of God (can. 1008).

This canon is not without its theological difficulties, as will be shown in Chapter Four.

Whether the language used to describe ministerial activity in the Church is “acting in the person of Christ” or “acting in the person of Christ the Head,” the emphasis is Christological. Richard R. Gaillardetz notes that the conciliar documents and many of the subsequent documents of the magisterium lack a pneumatology that would balance the Christological emphasis. He writes: “in the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, most magisterial documents have continued to give priority to the Christological strand of the Council’s teaching on the priesthood, a strand that continues to stress the priority of the priest acting in *persona Christi Capitis*, the person of Christ the head of the Church.”⁶⁶ He questions whether the failure to develop adequately an ecclesiology based on the Spirit’s distribution of charismatic gifts (*Lumen Gentium* 12; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3) is nothing more than ensuring the clerical control on ministry. He writes: “some balk at the articulation of any ecclesiology that would give a formal and constitutive role to the charisms of the baptized as anything more than a helpful augmentation to ordained ministry. One begins to suspect that what is actually at work here has to do with fear and power.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Coffey, “The Common Priesthood and Ordained Priesthood,” 212, footnote 7.

⁶⁵ See Coffey, “The Common Priesthood and Ordained Priesthood,” 212.

⁶⁶ Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, 136.

⁶⁷ Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making* 151.

As the primary classification for life in the Church, the common priesthood does not stand in opposition to the ministerial priesthood, as if an initiated Christian belongs to one or the other, though the language of the Congregation for Clergy suggests that. The ministerial priesthood arises from the common priesthood and is dependent on it (see *Lumen Gentium* 10). For Osborne the common priesthood is a common consecration and function that unites all the baptized in Christ's priesthood, "the common matrix of gospel discipleship."⁶⁸ The Congregation's language seems to equate the laity, and not initiated Christians, with the common priesthood, and this suggests an understanding that all Christians are laity until called forth from that state to ordination to one of the grades of the ministerial priesthood. However, as Kenan Osborne notes: "as one enters into the Jesus community through the sacrament of initiation [baptism-confirmation-eucharist] a person is not thereby a lay person. Baptism-eucharist is not the sacramental initiation into lay status in the Church."⁶⁹ The sacrament of initiation gives each one a positioning in the church itself, not in the secular realm.⁷⁰ He writes:

Lay status, then, is a positioning in the Church which only an adult or mature Christian selects. He or she decides as an adult to take an active and specific role in the Church as a servant-leader...Lay status, as a result, is not a private issue, but rather a choice made, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by an individual, but also a choice made, under the guidance of the same Spirit, by that community in which the lay person will serve. Like priestly vocation, lay vocation is a two-way street, requiring both an individual's assent and the assent of the community.⁷¹

A layperson is not simply an initiated Christian but one who is called to a task in the Church and takes up that task. It is a point that will be returned to in Chapter Five.

Leaving aside the question of whether the Congregation for Clergy is identifying the laity with the common priesthood and setting it in opposition to the ministerial priesthood, its concern for blurring the distinction rests on a clear and particular

⁶⁸ Osborne, *Ministry*, 536.

⁶⁹ Osborne, *Ministry*, 537.

⁷⁰ Osborne, *Ministry*, 539.

⁷¹ Osborne, *Ministry*, 598.

understanding of what constitutes the laity's task in the Church's mission, which is properly in the temporal sphere. The blurred distinction rests on laypeople doing tasks considered properly to belong to the clergy. Underpinning the Congregation's attitude is the presentation of the laity in the conciliar documents, which heavily emphasised their priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission in the world. *Lumen Gentium* 31 states: "What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature [*Laicis indoles saecularis propria et peculiaris est*]. This is developed in *Lumen Gentium* 34-36:

offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of [people]...For all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life...adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God (*Lumen Gentium* 34)

announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by spoken word...in the ordinary circumstances of the world (*Lumen Gentium* 35).

conquer[ing] the reign of sin in themselves [so as to] live holier lives even in their daily occupations (*Lumen Gentium* 36).

This is a repeat of *Lumen Gentium* 10-12 where the understanding of the common priesthood is outlined but now in a secular context.

Osborne speaks of the Council's presentation of the laity as an "attempt," a "working explanation" of the laity.⁷² The *relatio* during the Conciliar debate on *Lumen Gentium* 31 noted that the statements on the laity were not theological but typological: "the bishops had no intention of formulating a definition of the 'lay' person."⁷³ Ferdinand Klostermann says: "a kind of definition is attempted. Here the whole approach indicates that no essential theological definition is to be offered but simply a description *ad hoc*."⁷⁴ Osborne says of Gerard Philips' commentary on *Lumen Gentium*

⁷² See Osborne, *Ministry*, 538.

⁷³ Osborne, *Ministry*, 562. See also Zeni Fox, "Laity, Ministry, and Secular Character," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, 132.

⁷⁴ Ferdinand Klostermann, "The Laity," trans. Richard Strachan, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Volume 1, gen. ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 236.

31 that “the uncharacteristic length given to this section, 31a/b, in Philips’ commentary indicates that there was a strong need for explanation, because there had been – and still is – a major degree of unclarity about the passage.”⁷⁵

However, what was a “working explanation” for the bishops in 1964 was later presented in the 1988 post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (1988) as a definition of the laity (see *Christifideles Laici* 9). The definition offered by John Paul is rooted in *Lumen Gentium* 31, and the laity’s mission and ministry in the life of the Church shows little sign of having evolved in the postconciliar years. Writing in *Sources of Renewal* (1971), Karl Wojtyla (John Paul II) stated that *Lumen Gentium* 31 “contains the essential truth concerning the laity’s vocation and mission in the Church. By its nature ‘laity’ implies connection with the world... this link with the world, this “lay character” which is proper to the laity, is the basis of their specific apostolate, whereby they are called by God to contribute to the sanctification of the world.”⁷⁶

For John Paul II, secularity sets the parameters for the laity’s mission. Speaking in 1987 to the U.S. laity he notes: “the Council taught that *the specific task of the laity* is precisely this: to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs *...to exercise your proper functions according to the spirit of the Gospel* and to work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven”⁷⁷ This is an interpretation beyond the intent of the Council participants. Osborne writes

To deduce from this typological description an ontological one goes beyond both the text and context. To deduce that the proper sphere of mission and ministry for the non-ordained, non-vowed religious Christian is primarily or exclusively to the secular arena is again a reading beyond the text and context of the Vatican documents. In fact *Lumen Gentium* (12,2) speaks of *opera vel officia* [works and offices] for all Christians, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (3,4) speaks of *ius et officium* [right and duty] given to the baptized Christian through various charisms.

⁷⁵ Osborne, *Ministry*, 692.

⁷⁶ Karol Wojtyla, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of the second Vatican Council*, trans P. S. Falla (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), 341.

⁷⁷ See John Paul II, “Address to the Meeting with the Representatives of the Catholic Lay People of America,” accessed August 14, 2021. Italics in original.

This kind of language was carefully chosen and has strong theological overtones as regards one's role in the church. When all the theological dust begins to settle, it is clear that the documents of Vatican II hardly provides us with a clear-cut specific difference on cleric/lay, namely that the layperson's specific difference is the secular character of [their] mission and ministry.⁷⁸

He notes that the consequence of stressing a layperson's secularity means, he or she is "excluded from the inner or centripetal life of the church and is directed specifically to the outer or centrifugal life of the Church."⁷⁹ The documents of the Council modify any either/or position with regard to ministry. *Lumen Gentium* 31 notes that while those in holy orders can have secular professions and engage in secular activities they are "principally and expressly [*praecipue et ex professo*] ordained for the exercise of sacred ministry." Osborne comments: "words such as 'principally' and 'not exclusively' cannot be set to one side. They are chosen deliberately by the bishops to indicate that such a boundary as 'inner-Church/secular world' has great fluidity."⁸⁰ The laity are not simply orientated towards a mission in the temporal order. The language of *Lumen Gentium* and its motifs of the People of God, acknowledgement of charisms as allotted by the Spirit for the Church's good, the priesthood of all believers, and the universal call to holiness, do not mean that Christian ministry is exercised in the world until one is called through ordination to exercise a "sacred" ministry as a cleric.

The identification of the laity with secularity is the basis of concern over blurred distinctions and is a diminishment of the laity's role in the mission and ministry of the Church. To think of the laity's role in terms of secularity shows a failure to develop a more rounded definition of who they are. As late as 1988, *Christifideles Laici* could only define them by who they were not, namely clergy or vowed religious (see *Christifideles Laici* 9), and their position in the Church was "fundamentally defined by

⁷⁸ Osborne, *Ministry*, 563.

⁷⁹ Osborne, *Ministry*, 562.

⁸⁰ Osborne, *Ministry*, 562.

their *newness in Christian life* and distinguished by their *secular character*”
(*Christifideles Laici* 15).

Osborne’s comment that lay status is a positioning in the Church is a useful reference point: a layperson is a committed initiated Christian who feels called to a specific mission in the service of the gospel, and that service could be in the world through engagement with temporal affairs, through marriage, parenthood, or work, or directly at the service of the Church’s pastoral ministry. *Lumen Gentium* should not be read so as to define the laity in terms of secularity even if, as Aurelie A. Hagstrom notes, the laity’s mission “will be *typically* carried out in and through engagement in temporal affairs.”⁸¹ The majority of laity may fulfil their vocation and work out the call to holiness (*Lumen Gentium* 39-42) within the secular sphere, but not all. It must be recognised that some laymen and laywomen feel called, and are called, to what *Lumen Gentium* 33 calls “a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy” as Paul VI recognised in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* when he noted that the laity can:

feel themselves called, or be called, to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community for its growth and life, by exercising a great variety of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord is pleased to give them... the Church recognizes the place of non-ordained ministries which are able to offer a particular service to the Church.⁸²

As shall be shown in Chapter Four, Paul VI’s acknowledgement was not pursued, at least with regard to lay participation in the liturgical preaching ministry.

3.6 Conclusion

What has been learned from reviewing the postconciliar period? The analysis of the decree of the Synod of Würzburg revealed a desire to develop lay participation in the

⁸¹ Aurelie A. Hagstrom, “The Secular Character of the Vocation and Mission of the Laity: Towards a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry,” in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, 156. Italics in original.

⁸² Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel], The Holy See, December 08, 1975, §73, accessed December 30, 2023. https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

liturgical preaching office including in the Eucharist. However, this participation was conceived in terms of necessity and occasional advantage and these two contexts were the conditions under which the Congregation for Clergy allowed for a very limited lay participation in the liturgical preaching office. The reminder to foster vocations, so that the “office of preaching will be fulfilled by ordained ministers,”⁸³ shows how allowing such lay preaching is pastoral expediency rather than the consequence of a developing theology of ministry or the laity. Rahner proposed something more radical, something beyond the theological presuppositions that underpin the Synod’s decree and the Congregation for Clergy’s letter. Presuppositions and horizons of understanding from the past such as the traditional identification of preaching with holy orders, the distinction between the hierarchical and common priesthoods, and the laity’s secularity, meant both the Synod and the Congregation for Clergy were attempting to address the challenges of the situation symptomatically rather than systemically through a deep sense of history, prophetic awareness of the gospel, and charismatically creative imagination centered on the episcopal great Church. The analysis of the Congregation’s two presuppositions reveal shortcomings with how both are used and, as Chapter Four will show, continue to be the basis for subsequent pronouncements of the magisterium. Both presuppositions were challenged: the first on the basis that repeating the claim of an “intimate connection” between holy orders and the ministry of preaching fails to recognize the historical conditioning of such a connection. The Congregation for Clergy’s second presupposition focused on affirming the distinction between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood and was challenged on the basis of the identification of the common priesthood with the laity and secularity. The Congregation’s presuppositions and the continued identification of the laity with

⁸³ Congregation on Clergy, “Letter on Preaching,” 915.

secularity, as will be shown in Chapter Four, when subsequent texts are analysed reflects a failure of theological development on the part of the magisterium. The continued ahistorical appropriation of conciliar texts can be seen in the subsequent magisterium pronouncements on matters of theological, pastoral, and structural concern relating to lay ecclesial ministry. It is to these documents that attention now turns.

Chapter Four

Lay Liturgical Preaching in the Postconciliar Era: Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Contexts

4.1 Introduction

Three major texts, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the joint dicastery 1997 Instruction *On Certain Question Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest (Instruction on Collaboration)* and the Congregation for Divine Worship's 2004 Instruction *On Certain Matters to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist (Redemptionis Sacramentum)* outline the official attitude towards lay liturgical preaching in the 1990s and early 2000s. These texts are also indebted to earlier pronouncements particularly the Congregation for Clergy's 1973 rescript. These texts, particularly the *Instruction on Collaboration* and *Redemptionis Sacramentum* reflect the increasing hostility toward lay ministry in the speeches of John Paul II. This hostility is based on the logic of John Paul II's emphasis on the laity's secularity, which in turn shaped what he understood to constitute the mission and ministry "proper" to the laity.

In advance of exploring the theological basis of the reservation of the eucharistic homily in can. 767 §1, two other questions are examined. Firstly: is can. 766 a warrant for lay liturgical preaching and, if so, what is the context for such preaching? And secondly, can laypeople preach liturgical homilies? This second question recognises that a distinction is drawn between liturgical preaching and the liturgical homily, which needs to be explained. Having addressed these two questions, the theological basis for reserving the eucharistic homily in can. 767 §1 to priests and deacons is explored. As noted above, the fate of lay liturgical preaching in the 1990s and early 2000s is linked to

John Paul II's theological understanding of the laity and their role in the mission and ministry of the Church. This is explored with particular reference to 1994 speech, "The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry." Despite the lack of curial support towards lay preaching, the practice was developed in a number of dioceses particularly in the United States and this experience will be briefly reviewed. The increased general hostility towards the practice, as evidenced by the Instructions noted above, and John Paul II's attitude, resulted in these practices ending in the early 2000s, especially as new bishops were appointed in succession to the bishops who had allowed the practice. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the reservation of the eucharistic homily to deacons, the key concern being the applicability to them of the theological rationale underpinning the reservation of the eucharistic homily in light of Benedict XVI's 2009 motu proprio *Omnium in Mentum*.

Before examining the specific canons that deal with liturgical preaching, an overview of what the Code says about this preeminent ministry will be outlined.

4.2 The Ministry of Preaching in the 1983 Code of Canon Law

In 1983, John Paul II promulgated a new Code of Canon Law for the Latin Rite Church. This, he claimed,

fully corresponds to the nature of the Church, especially as it is proposed by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in general, and in a particular way by its ecclesiological teaching. Indeed, in a certain sense, this new Code could be understood as a great effort to translate this same doctrine, that is, the conciliar ecclesiology, into canonical language"¹

Whether this is actually achieved is debated. Elissa Rinere contrasts how the word "ministry" is used at the Council and in the Code, and the ecclesiological implications of this change. She writes: "if the conciliar use of the word 'ministry' had

¹ John Paul II, *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges* [Apostolic Constitution Promulgating the New Code of Canon Law], The Holy See, January 25, 1983, accessed September 22, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_25011983_sacrae-disciplinae-leges.html.

ecclesiological significance, what are the ecclesiological consequences of the Code's withdrawal of the word from the priesthood of the people?"² The ministry of preaching is dealt with in Book III, entitled "The Teaching Office of the Church" (cans. 747-839).³ However, it is cans. 766 and 767 §1 that are of primary concern in what follows.

The first canon of Book III affirms the "innate duty and right" [*officium est et ius nativum*] of the Church to proclaim the Gospel because it is to the Church that the Lord entrusted the deposit of faith so that aided by the Holy Spirit it may "guard revealed truth, more intimately penetrate it, and faithfully proclaim and expound it" (can. 747 §1). It is the People of God who are the subject of this canon and not simply the clergy or professional theologians (see *Lumen Gentium* 12). James A. Coriden writes: "The Spirit of truth arouses and sustains a 'sense of the faith' in the universal body of the faithful and the same Spirit distributes gifts to the faithful of every rank. The entire Church, under the Spirit's guidance, dynamically engages God's revealed truth, safeguarding it, searching for a more profound grasp of it, faithfully announcing and explaining it."⁴

From the People of God, cans. 756-759 delineate the preaching duties of different categories of the faithful beginning with the "Roman Pontiff and the College of Bishops," to whom the ministry of preaching is primarily entrusted (can. 756; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 23; *Christus Dominus* 3, 4, 12). From bishops, the Code proceeds to speak of priests: "it is proper [*proprium*] to priests as co-workers [*cooperatores*] of the Bishops to proclaim the Gospel of God [*Evangelium Dei annuntiare*]" (can. 757; cf. *Lumen*

² See Elissa Rinere, "Conciliar and Canonical Applications of 'Ministry' to the Laity," 227. See also Elissa Rinere, "Canon Law and Emerging Understandings of Ministry," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, 68-84.

³ The Code legislates for various aspects of the Church's teaching office under five titles: I) The Ministry of the Divine Word (cans. 756-780); II) The Missionary Activity of the Church (cans. 781-792); III) Catholic Education (cans. 793-821); IV) The Means of Social Communication and Books in Particular (cans. 822-832); and V) The Profession of Faith (can. 833).

⁴ James A. Coriden, "Introductory Canons [cc.747-755]," in *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, ed. John P. Beal, James A. Coriden, and Thomas J. Green (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 912.

Gentium 28; *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4). While can. 757 binds all presbyters [*Presbyterorum*] it is especially binding on “pastors and others” [*parochi aliique quibus*] “entrusted with the care of souls” [*quibus cura animarum concreditur*]. Deacons, the canon notes, “serve the People of God in the ministry of the word, in union with the Bishop and his *presbyterium*” (can. 757; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 29). Thus cans. 756-757 affirm the priority of the ordained in the ministry of preaching. James Coriden speaks of their “innate” – what the Code calls “proper” [*proprium*] – duty to preach the gospel. These canons cannot be read separately to cans. 1008 and 1009

By divine institution, the sacrament of orders establishes some among the Christian faithful as sacred ministers through an indelible character which marks them. They are consecrated and designated, each according to his grade, to nourish the people of God, fulfilling in the person of Christ the Head the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing (can. 1008)

The orders are the episcopate, the presbyterate, and the diaconate (can. 1009 §1). Each of these three grades of the hierarchy have the function of teaching in the person of Christ the Head [*in persona Christi Capitis*].

Can. 758 addresses the place of vowed religious in the ministry of the Word. The canon speaks of their consecrated life [*vitae consecratae*] as “giv[ing] testimony” “in a special manner” [*peculiariter modo*]. However, in addition they can be “appropriately enlisted by the bishop [*Episcopo auxilium convenienter*] to assist in proclaiming the Gospel.” This canon effectively privileges religious vows, as a consecration for mission and status in the Church, over baptismal consecration.⁵ Can. 759 outlines the role of the laity in the preaching ministry: “in virtue of their baptism and confirmation lay members of the Christian faithful [*Christifideles laici*] are witnesses [*testes*] to the gospel message by word and by example of a Christian life; they can also be called upon to cooperate [*vocari etiam possunt ut in*] with Bishops and presbyters in the

⁵ See O’Meara, “Lay Ecclesial Ministry –What It Is and What It Isn’t,” 72.

exercise of the ministry of the word” (can. 759; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 33; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3). Two distinct roles are envisaged: 1) witness to the gospel in their daily secular lives; and 2) a more direct ministry in service of the word, which is not the same as “proclaiming the gospel.” The strong identification of the ministry of preaching with holy orders and the role assigned to laity suggests that cans. 756-759, while based on the conciliar text, show little appreciation for the theological reflection and pastoral experience of the subsequent eighteen years; presuppositions from the past are preferred to frame the law and to frame practice. Because liturgical preaching is the primary concern of what follows, cans. 766 and 767 §1 will be analysed in detail.

4.3 Lay Liturgical Preaching in the Context of Canons 766 and 767 §1.

James Coriden contends that can. 766 refers to liturgical preaching even though the canon does not state it explicitly, and this interpretation is the one most commonly accepted, though contrary views are held.⁶ Can 766 states: “Lay persons can be admitted [*admitti possunt*] to preach in a church or oratory if it is necessary in certain circumstances [*certis in adiunctis necessitas*], or if it is useful in particular cases [*casibus particularibus utilitas*], according to the prescriptions of the conference of bishops and with due regard for can. 767 §1.” The influence of the Congregation for Clergy’s 1973 rescript can be seen in the canon with its emphasis on necessity and occasional advantage. While can. 766 is an advance on the 1917 Code’s absolute prohibition – “all laity are forbidden to preach in churches, even religious” (can. 1342 §2) – and gives preaching by laypeople a canonical basis for the first time since the Fourth Lateran Council,⁷ the circumstances of such preaching remain very limited.

⁶ Coriden, “The Ministry of the Divine Word,” 927. For a contrary position see Cathy Caridi, “Who May Preach?” Canon Law Made Easy, June 26, 2008, accessed December 31, 2023, <https://canonlawmadeeasy.com/2008/06/26/who-may-preach/#forward>.

⁷ Patricia A. Parachini, *Lay Preaching: State of the Question* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 38.

Coriden speaks of this canon as “a broad warrant for lay preaching...this canon states the general admissibility of lay persons to preach, while drawing attention to the single limitation regarding the homily stated in the following canon.”⁸ He speaks of lay preaching as “a fully legitimate lay function which has now become commonplace in the Catholic Church” and “one more instance of the impact of [the] rich vein of conciliar teaching on church discipline.”⁹ Can. 766 as a “broad warrant” for lay participation in preaching needs to be examined if Coriden’s claim can be supported. He notes that the canon does not “view lay preaching as a substitute for clerical ministry, nor does it require that other ministers be lacking. There is no reason to describe this lay ministerial role as exceptional, abnormal, or extraordinary.”¹⁰ Yet according to the canon the laity can preach if in certain circumstances it is necessary or in particular cases useful. Do “certain circumstances,” “necessary,” or “useful” suggest a “fully legitimate” lay activity? Do they not in fact imply exceptional, abnormal, or extraordinary? In support of his argument, Coriden suggests that the framers of the Code could have used the same language to describe lay preaching as they did in can. 774 §1 when speaking of catechesis: “concern for catechesis pertains to all members of the Church in proportion to each one’s role.”¹¹ However, the same language was not used by the framers of the Code and so the same intent cannot be implied. If those who framed the Code had wanted to express the same intent about the laity’s participation in the preaching office, including preaching in the liturgy, as they did about their participation in catechesis, they could have used the same language. In fact, what the Code says about the laity’s participation in the ministry of catechesis contrasts strongly with what it says about their participation in liturgical preaching. While recognizing the

⁸ Coriden, “The Ministry of the Divine Word,” 927.

⁹ Coriden, “The Ministry of the Divine Word,” 927.

¹⁰ Coriden, “The Ministry of the Divine Word,” 927.

¹¹ See Coriden, “The Ministry of the Divine Word,” 927.

central role that bishops and pastors play in the ministry of catechesis (see can. 773; 775 §1), they are nonetheless to actively engage the support of the laity (see can. 776) in the fulfillment of this office. Can. 766 does not encourage such active engagement of the laity in the ministry of liturgical preaching. The modifying terms, “if it is necessary in certain circumstances,” and “if it is useful in particular cases,” are not randomly chosen but essential to a proper understanding of the laity’s participation in the liturgical preaching ministry; an understanding that reflects a particular theology of ministry rooted in the traditional identification of preaching with holy orders that was examined in the previous chapter. Even though Coriden believes such lay preaching was not dependent on an absent cleric, in reality it is in most circumstances.¹²

The thinking of the Congregation for Divine Worship’s 1988 *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (SCAP)* also suggests that Coriden is overly generous in his assessment of the canon’s openness towards lay liturgical preaching.¹³ *SCAP* is a recognition that many parish communities have no pastor in residence to serve the community, have no access to weekly (let alone daily) Eucharist, and so gather as faith communities to celebrate liturgies of the word. On preaching in such liturgies, §43 states, “In order that the participants may retain the word of God, there should be an explanation of the readings or a period of silence for reflection on what has been heard. Since only a pastor or a deacon may give a homily, it is desirable that the pastor prepare a homily and give it to the leader of the assembly to read.”¹⁴ What is of concern for the present moment is not the assertion that only a priest or a deacon can give a homily but that the Congregation for Divine Worship would rather the pastor “prepare a homily”

¹² See Coriden, “The Ministry of the Divine Word,” 927.

¹³ Congregation for Divine Worship, “Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest,” The Holy See, June 02, 1988, accessed August 22, 2021, <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/CWC/Directory-SCAP.pdf>.

¹⁴ Congregation for Divine Worship, “Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest,” §43.

for the assembly leader to read than have a layperson leading the congregation or another member “give an explanation.” Patricia Hughes Baumer of “Partners in Preaching” notes this as “a lack of endorsement of lay preaching”¹⁵ and not reflective of an attitude that sees lay preaching as a “fully legitimate lay function.”

The distinct terminology used in the directory needs to be noted. *SCAP* 43 stated that only a priest or deacon can give a homily, and so describes what the lay leader does as “an explanation.” This raises the question of whether laypeople can preach liturgical homilies or not. Before turning to that question, a final document, the 1997 joint Dicastery *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest (Instruction on Collaboration)* will be examined to see if its reflections on lay participation in the liturgical preaching office dovetails with Coriden’s understanding in can. 766. Article 2 of the Instruction deals with the question of the laity’s role in the ministry of the word with §§1-3 repeating canon law (can. 756, 757; 766; 759; 774). Article 2 §1 emphasises the laity’s prophetic function as witnesses and their role as catechists, while acknowledging that they can be called upon to exercise the ministry of the Word (cf. can. 759; 774 §1). Article 2 §3 states that can. 766 “makes clear the exceptional nature” of lay liturgical preaching, and the local episcopal conference’s authority to decide what constitutes necessity and usefulness. The Instruction interprets “*admitti possunt*” [can be admitted], as making it clear that laity have no right to preach, such as given to bishops, priests, and deacons (see article 2 §3). After laying the foundation for what follows, the Instruction continues: “In some areas, circumstances can arise in which a shortage of sacred ministers and permanent, objectively verifiable, situations of need or advantage exist

¹⁵ Patricia Hughes Baumer, “The Need for Lay Preaching,” in *Empowering a New Voice: A Lay Preaching Training/Formation Manual*, 1999, 3, accessed August 22, 2021. <http://www.godswordmanyvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/preachingneed.pdf>.

that would recommend the admission of the non-ordained faithful to preaching” (article 2 §4). Yet, despite this situation being a permanent reality for many communities, it remains nonetheless only a “supply” for absent clergy and “cannot be regarded as an ordinary occurrence nor as an authentic promotion of the laity” (article 2 §4). The entire tenor of *Instruction on Collaboration 2* ensures that liturgical preaching by the laity is understood as an extraordinary activity to meet immediate pastoral need. In a context of “permanent, objectively verifiable, situations of need,” the concern of the *Instruction on Collaboration* is that the practice of lay liturgical preaching does not achieve the force of custom, which is a central principle of ecclesiastical law.¹⁶

Coriden’s generous interpretation of Can. 766 as evidence of lay liturgical preaching as a “fully legitimate lay function,” and “a rich vein of conciliar teaching impacting on church discipline,” does not stack up in light of the Code itself and post-1983 documents that address such preaching. Lay liturgical preaching faces many more limitations than simply the one set by can. 767 §1.

As noted above, *SCAP 43* stated that only priests and deacons can preach homilies and spoke of what a layperson does in a non-Eucharistic liturgical setting as an “explanation.” Before proceeding these issues around terminology and the use of the word “homily” need clarification. The confusion over this question is not helped by conflicting assertions in official texts, with *SCAP 43* stating that only priests and deacons can give homilies and directing readers towards can. 767 §1 and *Instruction on Collaboration* article 3 §4, which states: “Homilies in non-eucharistic liturgies may be preached by the non-ordained faithful only when expressly permitted by law and when its prescriptions for doing so are observed.” If the legal instrument of an Instruction clarifies what the law says then the answer is that laypeople can preach homilies, though

¹⁶ See John M. Huels, “Title II: Custom [23-28],” in *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, 86-94.

there is a caveat, namely, that they can only do so in non-eucharistic settings. The question with regard to the eucharistic liturgy will be examined below. *SCAP* 43's position rests on the interpretation given to the first clause of the text of can. 767 §1, which reads, "Among the forms of preaching the homily is preeminent [*forma eminet*]; it is part of the liturgy itself [*est para ipsius liturgici*] and is reserved to a priest or deacon [*sacerdoti aut diacono reservatur*]." Disagreement rests on what is meant by "liturgy" in the canon, and it is clear that *SCAP* and the *Instruction on Collaboration* do not agree on what it means in the context of can. 767 §1. Is it a reference to all liturgies, in which case *SCAP* 43 is correct, or does it refer solely to the eucharistic liturgy, in which case *Instruction on Collaboration* is correct?

John M. Huels and John Kozlowski believe Can. 767 §1 refers to all liturgies. Huels notes that if the Code meant only the eucharistic liturgy, then why did the legislator not simply speak of the Eucharist rather than liturgy in Can. 767 §1?¹⁷ Kozlowski agrees with Huels and contends that all references to laypeople preaching homilies in non-eucharistic liturgical settings, such as in the *Rite of Baptism for Children* were abrogated by the 1983 Code.¹⁸ Kozlowski writes: "these texts demonstrate the possibility of lay liturgical preaching at non-eucharistic liturgies in the period following Vatican II but prior to the promulgation of the 1983 Code."¹⁹ If Kozlowski is correct, he is left having to explain why the 1997 *Instruction on Collaboration* allowed not only lay liturgical preaching, but the preaching of homilies. He notes: "in using the term 'homily' to describe the preaching of laypeople at non-

¹⁷ John M. Huels, "Lay Preaching at Liturgy," in *Disputed Questions in the Liturgy* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996), 183 in Parachini, *Lay Preaching: State of the Question*, 41.

¹⁸ See John Chrysostom Kozlowski, "The Laity and Liturgical Preaching: What are the Necessary Theological and Canonical Requirements?" *The Jurist* 72, Issue 1 (2012), 247 and 253. See also Congregation for Divine Worship, "Rite of Baptism for Children," The Holy See, May 15, 1969, §26, accessed August 06, 2021, <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/Baptism-Children.pdf>.

¹⁹ Kozlowski, "The Laity and Liturgical Preaching," 247.

eucharistic liturgies, *Ecclesiae de mysterio* [*Instruction on Collaboration*] lacks a certain consistency with respect to Canon 767 §1.”²⁰

Contra Kozlowski and Huels, James H. Provost and James Coriden believe the term “liturgy” in can. 767 §1 refers solely to the eucharistic homily. Provost writes: “it does not seem that other liturgical homilies, outside eucharistic celebrations and in liturgical rites which can be conducted by persons who are not ordained ministers, are necessarily included in the restriction of this canon.”²¹ Coriden writes: “the canon refers to homilies presented within eucharistic liturgies. This is clear from the text and its sources. This means that homilies in other liturgical contexts are not reserved to presbyters and deacons, at least not in virtue of this canon.”²² Coriden argues the canonists simply took over the term “liturgical” from the text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 52 and this context makes it clear that it is the Eucharist that is being spoken about.

Going forward, Provost’s and Coriden’s interpretation, backed up by *Instruction on Collaboration* 3 §4, will be taken to be correct, and what follows is based on an acceptance that laypeople can preach homilies in non-eucharistic liturgical settings. “Liturgical homily” in the context of can. 767 §1 means eucharistic homily.

However, this leaves the question: can laypeople preach homilies in the Eucharist? This is a complicated question, made moreso by the distinction drawn between preaching in the Eucharist, and preaching a eucharistic homily.

Can 767 §1 speaks clearly of such a homily being reserved to priests and deacons, so from the canonical perspective the matter is settled. However, theologically and pastorally, the question is far from settled, as will be shown below. Before analysing the reservation clause in can. 767 §1, it is necessary to look briefly at the distinction and

²⁰ Kozlowski, “The Laity and Liturgical Preaching,” 255.

²¹ James H. Provost, “Brought Together by the Word of the Living God (Canons 762-772),” *Studia Canonica* 23, no. 2 (1989), 361 in Parachini, *Lay Preaching: State of the Question*, 41.

²² Coriden, “The Ministry of the Divine Word,” 929.

ambiguity between lay preaching in the Eucharist and lay preaching of eucharistic homilies. Church law allows laypeople preach in the Eucharist. The Congregation for Clergy's rescript stated: "bishops may grant to laypeople the faculty to preach even during a Mass" yet it does not use the term "homily" to describe that preaching.²³ A contemporaneous document to the Congregation for Clergy's rescript, published by the Congregation for Divine Worship, called *Directory for Masses with Children (Pueros Baptizatos)*, also allowed laypeople to preach in the eucharistic liturgy, though here the term "speak" is used rather than "preach."²⁴ *Pueros Baptizatos* 24 notes: "With the consent of the pastor or rector of the Church, nothing forbids one of the adults who is participating in a Mass with children *from speaking to the children after the gospel reading*, especially if the priest finds it difficult to adapt himself to the mentality of children" (italics added). In the context of a Mass such as a parish Sunday Eucharist at which children are present it is proposed as an option, that they have their own separate liturgy of the word "including a homily" in a "separate, but not too distant room" (*Pueros Baptizatos* 17).²⁵ Laypeople can preach in the Eucharist but not homilies, and so what they do is called speaking, explaining, sharing, reflecting – any such term that clouds the activity as preaching.

What is it about the word "homily" in the context of the eucharistic celebration that limits it to priest and deacons? Section 4.5 will address theologically what is understood

²³ See Congregation of Clergy, "Letter on Preaching," 915.

²⁴ Congregation for Divine Worship, *Pueros Baptizatos* [Directory for Masses with Children], The Holy See, November 01, 1973, §24, accessed January 28, 2021, <https://jesuitinstitute.org/Resources/Directory%20for%20Masses%20With%20Children.pdf>.

²⁵ Underpinning *Pueros Baptizatos* 24 is the recognition that preaching is not a clerical privilege but a Christian's right to hear the gospel and receive the spiritual good that comes from God's Word. See Provost, "Lay Preaching and Canon Law in a Time of Transition," 148. In addition, *Pueros Baptizatos* recognizes that effective preaching demands the ability to understand both the text and the congregation being addressed and having the capacity to speak to that congregation. See William Skudlarek, "Lay Preaching and the Liturgy," *Worship* 58, no. 6 (November 1984), 504. Such a principle situates the hearer rather than the preacher at the centre of the preaching endeavour. However, as R. Kevin Seasoltz notes, these norms were not given wider application. See R. Kevin Seasoltz, *New Liturgy, New Laws* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1980), 97.

to be happening in the eucharistic homily that means it can only be preached by priests or deacons. In the interim the question may be asked: what does this distinction mean for the community of faith gathered to hear the Word broken, and shared, whether it is a homily preached by a priest or deacon or an “explanation,” a “sharing,” a “reflection” by a layperson? What does the distinction mean for content and for reception of what is heard? The content of what ought to be preached in the eucharistic liturgy is set down in canon and liturgical law and is derived from Vatican II’s *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35 and 52. Canon law states that “the mysteries of faith and the rules of Christian living are to be expounded in the homily from the sacred text” (can. 767 §1), while liturgical law says that “it should be an exposition of some aspect of the readings from Sacred Scripture...and should take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners.”²⁶ What of reception of what is heard? Does the community of faith receive what is preached differently because in one instance it is a priest delivering a homily, and in another it is a layperson sharing/explaining/reflecting or preaching? The capacity to hear what is preached as God’s word spoken through the preacher is not, as was shown, a human power. It is only the Holy Spirit acting through the words of the preacher, and the heart of the hearer, that can make what is heard be heard as God’s speaking. Attention now turns to the theological basis for the reservation clause in can. 767 §1 and why the “homily,” and not preaching in the Eucharist, is reserved to priests and deacons.

Four characteristics of the eucharistic homily can be identified from Can. 767 §1: 1) it is a form of preaching; 2) it is part of the liturgy; 3) it is reserved to priests and

²⁶ See Congregation for Divine Worship, “General Instruction of the Roman Missal,” The Holy See, March 17, 2002, §65, accessed August 25, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_ordinamento-messale_en.html.

deacons; and 4) its content is the mysteries of faith drawn from the sacred text.²⁷ Huels notes: “the legislator has defined the homily in a way that excludes its being preached by a layperson.”²⁸ But it could be defined differently. The 2002 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* separates the definition of the eucharistic homily (§65) from who should ordinarily preach it (§66). The Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches also separates the description of the eucharistic homily from who preaches it.²⁹

Before examining the theological basis for the reservation clause, a review of what the 1917 Code and various liturgical norms say on the issue of who can preach the eucharistic homily will be examined. This review will help contextualize the origin and precursor to the 1983 reservation clause. The 1917 Code did not have any language comparable to the blunt reservation clause of the 1983 Code. Can. 1344 §1, as noted in Chapter Two, spoke of the pastor’s obligation to preach a eucharistic homily. The eucharistic homily is, in the first instance, identified not with “priests” per se but pastors.³⁰ While can. 1344 §2 did allow another priest substitute for the pastor, it was not to be a regular occurrence. The 1917 Code made no provision for concelebrants or non-concelebrating priests to preach the eucharistic homily, and only in one instance were deacons allowed to preach the eucharistic homily, and that context was itself abrogated in can. 453 §1 of the 1917 Code but did not apply retrospectively. This context was where a deacon, rather than a priest, held an appointment as a pastor. James McVann notes that in such a role the deacon was “not only empowered, but also obliged

²⁷ Huels, “Lay Preaching at Liturgy,” 190 in Parachini, *Lay Preaching: State of the Question*, 40-41.

²⁸ Huels, “Lay Preaching at Liturgy,” 190 in Parachini, *Lay Preaching: State of the Question*, 41.

²⁹ See “Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches,” The Holy See, October 18, 1990, can. 614, accessed August 04, 2022, https://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG1199/_PH2.HTM. See also Coriden, “The Ministry of the Divine Word,” 930.

³⁰ Pastors and priests are not synonymous terms. Priestly ordination confers priestly status and authority to preside over the Eucharist and the sacraments in general. Pastors are priests who are appointed to pastoral ministry and the care of souls through celebrating sacraments and preaching in the context of a particular, clearly defined, parish.

to preach” during the celebration of the Eucharist.³¹ This anomaly points to a vital principle set down in can. 344 of the 1917 Code but absent from can. 767 §1’s reservation clause, namely, the importance of being engaged pastorally with those to whom the homily is directed. David Power notes “the one who presides cannot serve the people in this exercise of their royal priesthood unless he is one with them in pondering the Word of God and relating this to human events and history as they are currently lived.”³² Henderson identifies being in a pastoral relationship with those being preached to as an essential criterion for the ordinary minister of the liturgical preaching office.³³ The reservation clause breaks that link between people and pastor and places greater weight on being ordained than being in a pastoral relationship with the people being addressed.

The 1917 Code does not provide a precursor or basis for the 1983 reservation clause. Neither does *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 52 nor the 1964 Instruction *Inter Oecumenici* 53, which are the source documents for can. 767.³⁴ The Instruction *Liturgicae Instaurationes* (1970), speaks of the priest as the “homilist,” but makes no reference to reservation or deacons. It is clear from the context that the priest’s role as homilist is linked to his theological learning and pastoral care of those to whom he is preaching.³⁵ While the 1980 Instruction *Inaestimabile Donum* does not speak of reservation it does, for the first time, specifically reference deacons.³⁶ *Inaestimabile Donum* 3 references *Liturgicae Instaurationes* 2.a, as the source of this provision but, as

³¹ McVann, *The Canon Law of Sermon Preaching*, 90.

³² David Power, *Mission, Ministry, Order: Reading the Tradition in the Present Context* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 277.

³³ Henderson, “The Ministry of Liturgical Preaching,” 219.

³⁴ Congregation for Divine Worship, *Inter Oecumenici* [Instruction (first) On the Orderly Carrying out of the Constitution on the Liturgy], §§53-55, in *Documents on the Liturgy*, 100.

³⁵ See Congregation for Divine Worship, *Liturgicae Instaurationes* [Instruction (third) On the Orderly Carrying out of the Constitution on the Liturgy], §2.a, in *Documents on the Liturgy*, 161.

³⁶ Congregation for Divine Worship, *Inaestimabile Donum* [Instruction Concerning Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery], The Holy See, April 17, 1980, §3, accessed August 06, 2021, https://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_dw80id.htm.

noted above, that document makes no mention of deacons. Is an interpretation of a 1972 judgement of the Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of the Decrees of Vatican II (the present Dicastery for Legislative Texts) of §42 of the 1969 edition *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* the basis for the reservation clause? This judgement is referenced in the Congregation for Clergy's rescript.³⁷ The Pontifical Commission was asked whether at Masses where there was only a celebrant, if laypeople who participate in the Mass would preach the homily because the text read: "the homily should ordinarily be given by the celebrant." The Commission answered "No" but provided no reasoning or basis for its judgement.³⁸ If a factor influencing the reservation clause in can. 767 §1 then, in the opinion of Provost, it would be an incorrect application of the judgement, for he believes the judgement was not "intended to address the question of whether sometimes, for a reasonable cause, the liturgical homily could be committed to laypersons."³⁹ The lack of a clear reservation clause in earlier legislative documents is not an argument for the invalidity of such a clause in the 1983 Code of Canon Law. Law is shaped by theological insights, clarifications, and the pastoral context, and so subject to change and development. Ladislav Orsy defines it as a "force for life that helps sustain and nourish the community."⁴⁰ However, it remains to be determined if the reservation clause set down in can. 767 §1, sustains and nourishes, and is a force for life in the community or hinders it.

As noted previously, the ecclesial authorities make a difference between a layperson's "speaking" in the Eucharist and a priest or deacon's eucharistic homily. Given that laypeople cannot preach eucharistic homilies, but can speak, there must be

³⁷ See Congregation for Clergy, "Letter on Preaching," 914.

³⁸ See Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of the Decrees of Vatican Council II, "Reply to a Query on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 42," in *Documents on the Liturgy*, 544.

³⁹ Provost, "Law Preaching and Canon Law in a Time of Transition," 144.

⁴⁰ See Ladislav Orsy, *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 56.

some theological significance to the homily, as a word or event, that is absent when a layperson speaks. *Instruction on Collaboration* 3 §1, taking its lead from can. 767 §1 and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35, notes that the homily is part of the liturgy, and “therefore, during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, must be reserved to priests and deacons.” Through the liturgy the Church fulfils its sanctifying mission, and so the homily, as part of the liturgy, is an act of worship. Can. 834 §1 notes that sanctifying is an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ; “the liturgy, including the homily, is primarily an act of Christ the priest,”⁴¹ which can. 834 §2 notes, “takes place when it is carried out in the name of the Church by persons lawfully deputed and through acts approved by the authority of the Church.” The role of the ordained minister in worship is to represent Christ to the Congregation and the Congregation to Christ.⁴² Hence, the homily is proper to priests and deacons because the ordained stand in the place of Christ the priest in the liturgy and act in the person of Christ the Head (see can. 1008). Thus, the homily must be reserved to them because laypeople do not act in such a way or share in such a relationship with the person of Christ. Consequently, the reservation clause is based on the priest and deacon’s identity as a sacred minister.

Exercising the functions of teaching and sanctifying is not merely a function but a sacramental configuration. Ordination provides the ontological basis for this mission to publicly act in the name of the Church and preside over worship. Pope Francis speaks of this as a “theological-liturgical reality,” and he notes that the priest or bishop who presides does so in the person of Christ.⁴³ Henderson speaks of the homily as a presidential prayer as much as the eucharistic prayer.⁴⁴ William Skudlarek notes: “Only

⁴¹ Kozlowski, “The Laity and Liturgical Preaching,” 261.

⁴² See Grillmeier, “The People of God,” 158.

⁴³ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the International Union of Superiors General,” The Holy See, May 12, 2016, accessed March 11, 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/may/documents/papa-francesco_20160512_uisg.html.

⁴⁴ Henderson, “The Minister of Liturgical Preaching,” 219.

‘presidents’ can give ‘presidential addresses.’”⁴⁵The sacred minister who presides in the person of Christ is placed in point of junction between the Risen Lord and the community of faith: “the homily, then, is reserved to those who are sacramentally configured to Christ the priest in a manner that is essentially different than what occurs at one’s baptism and confirmation.”⁴⁶

Yet this seems to put a type of preaching, a “homily” rather than the very act of preaching, central. The difficulty may lie in the fact that the compilers of the Code simply took over the language of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 52, without thinking through the possible implications of the word homily, in the context of what they may have been trying to do in can. 767 §1. There would be a logic in reserving eucharistic preaching to priests and deacons if can. 767 §1 spoke of eucharistic preaching rather than the homily, and perhaps this explains *Redemptionis Sacramentum*’s change of language and emphasis, which no longer spoke of the homily but of preaching in the Eucharist.⁴⁷

But this leaves questions for the practice that allows concelebrants, non-concelebrating priests, and deacons preach, even though they do not preside at the liturgy, and it raises the theological question if there can be more than one minister standing in the place of Christ and acting *in persona Christi Capitis* at a particular eucharistic liturgy? Can more than one celebrant stand at the midpoint between Christ and the community representing each to the other? Can different priests take on this role at different points during a particular eucharistic celebration? These questions cannot be answered here but ought to be noted. In addition, the reservation of the eucharistic homily to the deacon raises its own theological difficulties, especially in light of the

⁴⁵ Skudlarek, “Lay Preaching and the Liturgy,” 505, footnote 18.

⁴⁶ Kozłowski, “The Laity and Liturgical Preaching,” 262.

⁴⁷ See Congregation for Divine Worship, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* [Instruction On Certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist], The Holy See, March 25, 2004, §66, accessed August 06, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redeptionis-sacramentum_en.html#_ftnref145.

argument that the reservation clause is based on sacred ministers being configured to act in the person of Christ the Head, and these difficulties will be explored in Section 4.6.

The reservation clause takes a strong theological lead from a theology that is heavily Christocentric and focused on the sacred minister as acting in the person of Christ the Head and on ordination. It is ordination that creates a particular relationship with Christ which empowers priests and deacons to act publicly in the name of both Christ and the community in the act of eucharistic worship. An alternative perspective offered in Chapter Five does not suggest such a Christological focus except indirectly and through the priesthood of the bishop.

4.4 John Paul II on Lay Participation in the Priestly Ministry

The papacy of John Paul II, which covers the period being examined in Chapter Four, has been described as “restorationist” and “neo-exclusive” and devoid of dialogue.⁴⁸ The neo-exclusivism/restorationist reaction emphasises the Church’s hierarchical structure. This neo-exclusivism, Mannion notes, is a “reaction to the rise of various forms of a ‘pluralist outlook’”⁴⁹ Pluralism, he notes, is a move away from closed systems and worldviews toward more open, fluid, and dialogical engagement; but this, as Christopher Duraisingh writes, can be seen “as dangerous to the very identity and integrity of the church; therefore, greater and centralized teaching authority and clearer and uniform formulations of truth are seen by some as urgent for the very survival of the church.”⁵⁰ Paul Lakeland argues that John Paul’s “determination to recentralize

⁴⁸ See Richard A. McCormack, “Moral Theology 1940-1989: An Overview,” *Theological Studies* 50 no. 1 (1989).

⁴⁹ Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 45. David Tracy notes that pluralism of theologies “allows each theologian to learn incomparably more about reality by disclosing really different ways of viewing both our common humanity and Christianity.” David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 3.

⁵⁰ Christopher Duraisingh, “Contextual and Catholic: Conditions for the Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics” in Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 45.

authority and reestablish control had particularly negative repercussions for the vision of the lay role in the Church.”⁵¹

It was noted above that an increasing hostility towards lay liturgical preaching pervades the official pronouncements on the subject. The increasingly negative tone in the documents parallels an increasing hostility in the speeches of John Paul II toward any lay ministry that was deemed to encroach on what was regarded as “proper” to the clergy and the realm of “sacred ministry.” Lay liturgical preaching, where it had developed, faced increasing restrictions, as witnessed by the documents noted above, and increasing hostility from the papacy. In Section 4.5 the experience of postconciliar lay liturgical preaching will be outlined but in advance of that John Paul II’s attitude towards what he argues is lay participation in the priestly ministry will be examined.

John Paul II’s identification of the laity with secularity underpins all that follows in his theology of the laity; *Lumen Gentium* 31 provides, for John Paul, a summary of the laity’s mission and ministry. As noted in Chapter Three, John Paul II understood the laity as ontologically secular and so any ministry in service of the Church’s liturgical life – a ministry *ad intra* – was on the basis of necessity – “circumstances can arise in which a shortage of sacred ministers and permanent, objectively verifiable, situations of need or advantage exist that would recommend the admission of the non-ordained faithful to preaching” (*Instruction on Collaboration*, Article 2 §4). However, this cannot “be regarded as an ordinary occurrence nor as an authentic promotion of the laity” (*Instruction on Collaboration*, Article 2 §4; cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 161). In *Christifideles Laici* 23 he writes, “the exercise of such tasks does not make pastors of the lay faithful: in fact, a person is not a minister simply in performing a task, but through sacramental ordination. Only the Sacrament of orders gives the ordained

⁵¹ Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, 117.

minister a particular participation in the office of Christ, the Shepherd and Head, and in his Eternal Priesthood.” For John Paul II, the only authentic promotion of the laity is their mission in the temporal sphere. The concept of the laity as ontologically secular and engaging in temporal tasks is so engrained in official thinking that Joseph Ratzinger (1927-2022) can say they risk losing their identity as laypeople in the Church if they engage in pastoral activities “proper” to the priest. Writing in *L’Osservatore Romano*, he notes that a layperson who exercises pastoral duties “proper” to the priest, with the exception of celebrating Mass and sacramental confession, “is in fact no longer a true lay person and has lost his true identity in the life and mission of the Church.”⁵² He does not elaborate on why he thinks any function apart from presiding at the Eucharist or hearing confessions belong properly to priests. The ministries deemed to derive from ordination and those from baptism are not agreed and, as scholars such as Osborne, Himes, and Gaillardetz note, a clear boundary between what the ordained did and the laity did cannot be drawn: “it is extremely difficult, I believe impossible to establish a list of functions that have always and everywhere throughout the history of the Church been the exclusive preserve of the ordained.”⁵³

The positive presentation of the laity’s mission and ministry *ad extra* in *Christifideles Laici* contrasts with the negative portrayal of them when looking at the question of ecclesial ministry *ad intra* – matters pertaining to the Church’s governance and ministerial structures – and what is perceived as ministry proper to the clergy. *Christifideles Laici* 23 speaks of “a facile yet abusive recourse to a presumed situation of emergency;” “the arbitrary interpretation of the concept of supply; and “the

⁵² See Joseph Ratzinger, “Unity of the Church’s Mission Involves Diversity of Ministries,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, April 29, 1998, 18. See also Joseph Ratzinger, “Who is the Lay Person?” *Origins* 17 no. 19 (1987), 344.

⁵³ Michael Himes “Lay Ministries and Ordained Ministries,” in *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry through the Wisdom of the Past*, ed. Richard W. Miller II (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Press, 2005), 83.

clericalization of the laity.” In summary, John Paul states: “the various ministries, offices and roles that the lay faithful can legitimately fulfil in the liturgy, in the transmission of the faith, and in the pastoral structure of the Church, ought to be exercised *in conformity to their specific lay vocation*, which is different from that of the sacred ministry” (*Christifideles Laici* 23).

At a 1994 Symposium on “The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry” organised by the Congregation for Clergy, John Paul spoke on “the topic of the possible sharing of the lay faithful in certain concrete aspects of the specific pastoral ministry of priests.” He begins by speaking of “missionary communion” which he defines, quoting *Christifideles Laici* 20, as:

analogous to that of a living and functioning body...characterized by a diversity and a complementarity of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities. Because of this diversity and complementarity every member of the lay faithful is seen in relation to the whole body and offers a totally unique contribution on behalf of the whole body.⁵⁴

This missionary communion is compromised if the laity believe they have a mission *ad intra*, as this will take them away from their proper sphere of activity, namely, the temporal order, which will consequently not be leavened with the values of the gospel. As previously acknowledged, the majority of initiated Christians will realize their vocation in the temporal sphere, but not because they are laity, but because that is where they hear God’s call for them to serve the gospel, and so embrace their lay status in that context. Those initiated Christians who feel called to serve the Church *ad intra* will not compromise the Church’s mission in the temporal sphere.

The laity’s place and function in the Church is “hierarchically structured by the Holy Spirit through his [sic] sacramental gifts,” and so their collaboration in the mission proper to the clergy “must be properly applied so as not to fall into the ambiguity of

⁵⁴ John Paul II, “Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry,” §1.

considering as ordinary and normal solutions that were meant for extraordinary situations in which priests were lacking or in short supply.”⁵⁵ The difficulties, John Paul believes, arises from what he calls “the danel of a certain ideology,”⁵⁶ He believes that “the particular gift of each of the church's members must be wisely and carefully acknowledged, safeguarded, promoted, discerned and coordinated, without confusing roles, functions or theological and canonical status. Otherwise, the body of Christ is not built up nor does its mission of salvation correctly develop.”⁵⁷ For John Paul II, the safeguarding, promoting, and coordination of particular gifts is within the context of a recognized state of life in the Church, each with clearly defined tasks.

Is this theological reasoning sound for today’s needs and context? When John Paul speaks of the “clericalization of the laity,” it is based on a presupposition that identifies certain activities as “proper” to the clergy because of the historic identification of such activities with the clergy. He takes refuge in claiming that these proper tasks of the clergy are willed by Christ and the Holy Spirit:

we cannot offer the lay faithful experiences and ways of participating in the pastoral ministry of priests that would in any way or to any degree entail a theoretical or practical misconception of the unchangeable differences willed by Christ and the Holy Spirit for the good of the church: the diversity of vocations and states of life, the diversity of ministries, charisms and responsibilities. There is no ‘original or priority right’ to share in the church's life and mission that could eliminate these differences, since every right arises from the duty of accepting the church as a gift that God himself has conceived in advance.⁵⁸

This ahistorical view suggests that ecclesiastical structures exist independent of historical cultural conditioning. Osborne notes: “histories of Christian ministry have been viewed with some apprehension; certain aspects of these studies have been seen by a few as threatening.... This apprehension, even a sense of threat, arises because a

⁵⁵ John Paul II, *Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry*, §2.

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry*, §2.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry*, §3.

⁵⁸ John Paul II, *Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry*, §4.

reinterpretation of the history of the Christian ministry might at times call into question current ecclesiastical structures.”⁵⁹

John Paul does not deny that the term “ministry” applies to what the laity do. The term can be applied to what a priest does by virtue of ordination and what a layperson does by virtue of baptism and by deputation. However, he believes the term only receives its “full univocal meaning” with the ordained. He fears the use of the term ministry in relation to the activity of laypeople represents an “undue aspiration to the ‘ordained ministry’ and [a] progressive erosion of its specific nature.”⁶⁰ He believes that language such as an indiscriminate use of the term “ministry” or “pastoral” has the capacity to obscure the essential distinction between the ordained priesthood and the baptismal priesthood, which is the priest as a “sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the head and shepherd.”⁶¹ Elissa Rinere has studied how the use of the term minister and ministry has changed in the documents of Vatican II and in canon law. The Council used the terms ‘minister’ and ‘ministry’ nineteen times to describe the activity of lay people while the Code uses the term of laity in only seven canons. She writes:

the code, by its careful application of the word "ministry" to lay activity, has given it a meaning which differs from the conciliar meaning. In the code, ‘ministry’ is a fulfillment of the hierarchical *munera* only. Laity may be brought into it by hierarchical invitation, but there is no ministry which belongs to the laity through baptism. There is no ministry which is fulfilled in the secular sphere, and there is no ministry which laity carry out on their own initiative.”⁶² She asks, “What is ministry? Is it the conciliar entity of the continuing action of God in the world, or is it the canonical entity of the action of the ordained within the Church.”⁶³

For John Paul II, laypeople can never be pastors, nor substitute for the shepherd, because they do not share in Christ’s priesthood considered as Head. Their work is never properly pastoral:

⁵⁹ Osborne, *Priesthood*, 30.

⁶⁰ John Paul II, *Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry*, §4.

⁶¹ John Paul II, *Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry*, §4.

⁶² Rinere, “Conciliar and Canonical Applications of ‘Ministry’ to the Laity,” 219.

⁶³ Rinere, “Conciliar and Canonical Applications of ‘Ministry’ to the Laity,” 219.

a person can be a shepherd only if he is also a head...the 'figure of the shepherd' is one and indivisible, and can never be replaced by other members of the flock: Hence the services and ministries performed by the lay faithful are never, properly speaking, pastoral, not even when they supply for certain actions and certain concerns of the shepherd.⁶⁴

The 1994 *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* stated: "pastoral, in fact, refers both to the *potestas docendi et sanctificandi*, and to the *potestas regendi*."⁶⁵ John Paul notes that it is essential that laypeople who are asked to supply certain functions recognize that the basis for this supply is their baptism. He writes:

The laity's every ecclesial action or function—including those for which the pastors ask them to stand in, where possible—is rooted ontologically in their 'common' participation in Christ's priesthood and not in an 'ontological' participation (either temporary or partial) in the ordained ministry proper to pastors. Therefore, it is clear that if the pastors entrust them, in an extraordinary way, with some tasks ordinarily and properly connected with the pastoral ministry, but not requiring the proper character of orders, lay people should know that these tasks are existentially rooted in their baptismal ministry and nowhere else.⁶⁶

John Paul II does not explain why he thinks the laity would not understand the ministerial tasks they supply for as rooted in their baptism and confirmation. Any confusion is probably the consequence of a failure to link the call to ministry with Christian initiation. A question not answered is: if something does not require the proper character of orders, why is it ordinarily and properly connected with priestly ministry?

The consistent need for the Roman authorities to return to this question of lay liturgical preaching, whether in speeches, post-synodal apostolic exhortations or instructions, raises the question of the reception of the law. This cannot be examined here in detail, but the following should be noted. The purpose of law is to be a "force for

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry*, §4.

⁶⁵ Congregation for Clergy, "Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests," The Holy See, March 31, 1994, §19, accessed August 17, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc_con_ccclergy_doc_31011994_directory_en.html.

⁶⁶ John Paul II, *Address to Symposium on the Participation of the Laity in the Priestly Ministry*, §5.

life that helps sustain and nourish the community.”⁶⁷ However, what is conceived conceptual may, when implemented, have the opposite effect. As Orsy notes, rather than serve justice or order in the community law may in the concrete create injustice and disorder.⁶⁸ He writes: “a law theoretically attractive may turn out to be concretely destructive of vital values. There is no one resolution of such a situation: the ‘implementers’ and the legislator must work together to find the right course of action, which may vary from the prudent toleration of inaction to the revoking of legislation.”⁶⁹

If, as the Second Vatican Council taught, the faithful must build up the Church through reception of the law, then the faithful have the right to know the reason for a particular law, and the good intended.⁷⁰ Not outlining the reasons for a law is a failure to recognise a responsibility towards those expected to receive it and implement it. Orsy writes: “the task of the People is to listen to the voice of the legislator with care, loyalty, and respect; they must keep in mind that they are members of a ‘hierarchical communion.’ Once the law is brought to their notice, they must enter into the process of reception.”⁷¹ Orsy holds that the community of faith, through reception of laws, is making a judgement on what it believes “good for the community here and now.”⁷²

Lumen Gentium 12 speaks of the divine assistance given to the People of God to help them with the process of reception and help them form practical judgments as to how a norm should be applied to life in the community. Reception involves: 1) noting the norm; 2) coming to understand its purpose and the value it intends to uphold or promote. This second movement should reveal the inner meaning of the law; and 3) assenting to the law expressed as peace and harmony or a disharmony after the law

⁶⁷ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 56.

⁶⁸ See Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 55.

⁶⁹ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 68.

⁷⁰ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 57.

⁷¹ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 63.

⁷² Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 62.

meets the conscience of the individual. Cases of disharmony must be resolved but “in exceptional cases there may not even be a doubt: the conscience responds to the law with a blunt *no*; then the process of reception stalls.”⁷³ Consequently, conflict develops. An existential sign that norms are not being well received is when “the process of reception triggers restlessness, discontent, even resistance – in a well-informed, intelligent, and responsible community.”⁷⁴ On the other hand, successful reception is not manifested in obedience to the law per se but in how the Spirit’s gifts are bearing fruit in the new circumstance occasioned by the new law. Do norms that deny suitably called, qualified, and commissioned laypeople to preach homilies in the Eucharist hinder the Spirit’s gifts from bearing fruit? Do norms that remain centered on a two-tier ecclesiology, with clearly predetermined roles, respond to the pastoral needs and mission of the Church today? Do they deny the “liberating experience” of wise law?⁷⁵

At a 2022 symposium entitled “For a Fundamental Theology of Priesthood,” organised in 2022 by the Congregation for Bishops, Pope Francis made a very different type of warning to that of John Paul II: “seeking established ways of doing things, very often anchored in the past, that ‘guarantee’ a sort of protection from risks, sheltering us in the world or a society that no longer exists (if it ever did), as if this determined order could quell the conflicts that history sets before us. That is the crisis of going backwards in order to find shelter.”⁷⁶ Chapter Five will take up the challenge of Francis with regard to the ministry of liturgical preaching. In advance of that the actual experience of lay liturgical preaching in the American context and its circumscription will be examined.

⁷³ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 66.

⁷⁴ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 69.

⁷⁵ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 69.

⁷⁶ Francis, “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis: International Theological Symposium on the Priesthood,” The Holy See, February 17, 2022, accessed January 19, 2023, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2022/february/documents/20220217-simposio-teologia-sacerdozio.html>.

4.5 The Experience of Lay Liturgical Preaching in the Postconciliar Era.⁷⁷

Despite the hostile official climate, what was the postconciliar experience of lay liturgical preaching? In the early postconciliar years, some bishops established programs in their dioceses to support lay preaching in the liturgy, not only as a response to pastoral necessity amid declining numbers of priests, but as an authentic conciliar development. Matthew Clark, Bishop of Rochester, New York (1979-2012), in his pastoral letter *The Fire in the Thornbush* noted the Spirit's role in distributing the charism of prophecy for the upbuilding of the church.⁷⁸ He writes: "It is entirely possible that the Spirit of God is even now granting to the Church at large and to our local church true prophets, men and women through whom the Spirit of God will inspire and renew us...all of us – bishop and housewife, priest and lay person, monk and religious woman – can and must be open to in advent among us."⁷⁹ He noted that ecclesiastical authorities "must be extremely careful not to make premature, unprayerful judgments and so to 'extinguish the Spirit.'"⁸⁰

In the diocese of San Antonio, Texas, Archbishop Patrick Flores (1979-2004), following a diocese-wide consultation process, established the Catholic Lay Preaching Guild. The Guild was a diocesan wide body of itinerant lay preachers who preached in various settings, including the Eucharist, at the invitation of the local pastor. Having shown demonstrable knowledge and skills, guild members were commissioned by the

⁷⁷ There is no sustained Irish experiment with lay liturgical preaching. In 1987 the Irish Bishops issued the following decree on lay preaching in the liturgy: "In accordance with the prescription of Can. 766, the Irish Episcopal Conference, while stressing that the homily at any Mass may be given only by a priest or deacon (cf. Can. 767 §1), hereby decrees that in the circumstances of this country it may in some particular cases be advantageous (*though rarely, if ever, necessary*) to allow a lay person to preach in a church or oratory, provided permission is given by the diocesan Bishop, even by way of general regulation" (italics added). See Irish Bishops Conference, "Decree No. 7: The Permission for Lay Persons to Preach," *Intercom*, December 1987/January 1988, accessed January 05, 2021, https://www.catholicbishops.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/DECREE-87_88.pdf.

⁷⁸ Matthew Clark, "The Fire in the Thornbush: A Pastoral Letter on Women in the Church," Diocese of Rochester, April 29, 1982, § 69, accessed January 05, 2021, https://www.dor.org/tasks/sites/home/assets/File/PROOFED%20Fire_in_the_Thornbush.pdf.

⁷⁹ Clark, *The Fire in the Thornbush*, § 68.

⁸⁰ Clark, *The Fire in the Thornbush*, § 68.

bishop.⁸¹ In the diocese of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and the diocese of Rochester, New York, which had parishes with non-resident pastors, lay preaching became identified for the most part, but not exclusively, with professional lay pastoral workers. Archbishop Rembrandt Weakland's (1977-2002) revised "Norms for Preaching in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee" (1994) governs what he understood to be a time of transition marked by the laity "shar[ing] a greater role in the ministry of preaching."⁸² He identifies two reasons for this greater role: firstly, an expanded role in pastoral ministry linked to the decrease in the number of clergy, and secondly, "the growing competency of lay persons in this ministry."⁸³ Weakland saw laypeople preaching in their capacity as parish directors and so their preaching ministry is linked directly with their pastoral ministry: "Lay parish directors are authorized to preach at the time of their appointment to that office by the Archbishop. Under normal circumstances the responsibility for preaching at Eucharist is shared between the assisting priest and the parish director."⁸⁴

Likewise, in Rochester, the majority of lay liturgical preaching was carried out by people (mostly women) who served in diocesan and parish leadership and pastoral roles.⁸⁵ While having lay pastoral ministers as preachers ensured theological and pastoral formation, it in effect created a new class of lay professionals effectively excluding other laity from the liturgical preaching ministry in those places. Patricia Hughes Baumer warned: "It would be unfortunate, however, if lay preaching came to be understood only as preaching by unordained yet professional ministers, women or men. If that were the case, this ministry could lead to one more source of alienation

⁸¹ Patricia Hughes Baumer, "The Need for Lay Preaching," 1.

⁸² Rembert Weakland, "Norms for Preaching in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee," Diocese of Milwaukee, September 22, 1994, 3-5, accessed January 20, 2021, PDF of the norms received from Ms. Shelly Taylor, Director of Archives and records Management, Archdiocese of Milwaukee via email.

⁸³ Weakland, "Norms for Preaching in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee," 2-3.

⁸⁴ Weakland, "Norms for Preaching in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee," 3.

⁸⁵ Christine Schenk, "Why are we silencing women (and lay) preachers?" *National Catholic Reporter*, August 28, 2014, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/simply-spirit/why-are-we-silencing-women-and-lay-preachers>.

separating full time pastoral professionals from other baptized members of the community.”⁸⁶ Thus ministry would no longer be divided along a clerical-lay divide but a professional-nonprofessional pastoral divide.

In the diocese of Saint Paul & Minneapolis, Minnesota, lay preaching was parish based. Lay preachers were formed in, commissioned by, and preached to their own community of faith. Maria Wiering sets the scene:

Father Terry Rassmussen, pastor of St. Joseph Church in New Hope, finished the reading, closed the Book of the Gospels and stepped away from the ambo. From the congregation, Ginny Untiedt stepped forward. Clad in a white robe, Untiedt bowed as Father Rassmussen laid his hands on her head and blessed her. She walked to the ambo and began preaching.⁸⁷

The liturgical setting is the Eucharist; this preaching is not a response to pastoral need understood as a shortage of clergy. The preacher steps forward from the congregation. Her robe marks her out from the congregation – this is no free pulpit. She is blessed by the presider, which is a public affirmation of her ministry and authorization; the presider delegates her to speak to the liturgical assembly. Visiting another parish in the diocese, Wiering noted how lay preachers prepare for their ministry: they gathered weekly to read, pray, and discuss the Scripture text for the following Sunday. The coordinator of liturgy provided additional material to help with Scripture reflection and planning.⁸⁸

The norms and guidelines governing lay liturgical preaching including that in the Eucharist respected canon law’s reservation of the eucharistic homily to priests and deacons. Such lay preaching was never spoken of as a homily in the norms issued by the

⁸⁶ Patricia Hughes Baumer, “The Selection of Lay Preaching Candidates,” *Partners in Preaching* (1999), 1, accessed March 15, 2021, <http://www.godswordmanyvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/preachingneed.pdf>.

⁸⁷ Maria Wiering, “Directive from Archbishop Flynn ends lay preaching at Mass,” *National Catholic Reporter*, May 13, 2008, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/directive-archbishop-flynn-ends-lay-preaching-mass>; See also David Andreatta, “Catholic diocese upends custom on homilies,” *Democrat & Chronicle*, July 19, 2014, accessed August 10, 2021, <https://eu.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2014/07/19/catholic-diocese-upends-custom-homilies/12863357/>.

⁸⁸ Wiering, “Directive from Archbishop Flynn ends lay preaching at Mass.”

dioceses represented above. The Milwaukee norms expressly state that “this preaching is not called a homily.”⁸⁹ Bishop Clark’s *Fire in the Thornbush* speaks of lay preaching in the Mass in terms of “sharing,”⁹⁰ Christine Schenk’s reflection on the Rochester experience noted, “the women carefully observed the letter of canon law by preaching ‘in dialogue with’ the priest and describing their gospel insights as ‘reflections’ rather than homilies, since church law says only the ordained can preach a homily at Mass.”⁹¹ William Healey of the San Antonio diocesan Lay Catholic Preaching Guild noted: “homilies are reserved for priests and deacons and we do not give homilies. The precise distinction we leave for lawyers.”⁹²

These programs are now part of the preaching history of those dioceses, and they ceased through the course of the early 2000s, as the bishops who established them retired and were replaced by bishops less inclined to support lay liturgical preaching. The 2004 Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* was used by those who opposed the practice of lay preaching in the Mass, such as Archbishop Harry Flynn of Saint Paul & Minneapolis (1995-2008) and Bishop Salvatore Matano of Rochester (2012-), to end the long-established practice of lay preaching in the Eucharist in their dioceses.⁹³

It was noted previously that the language of the *Instruction on Collaboration* is quite nuanced, speaking of the “homily” in the Eucharist, and not “preaching” per se: “all previous norms which may have admitted the non-ordained faithful to preaching the homily during the Holy Eucharist are to be considered abrogated by canon 767 § 1” (*Instruction on Collaboration* Article 3 §1). Whether there were any actual norms that allowed for the preaching of eucharistic homilies by laypeople that needed to be

⁸⁹ Weakland, “Norms for Preaching in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee,” 1.

⁹⁰ Clark, *The Fire in the Thornbush* §§ 64-65.

⁹¹ Schenk, “Why are we silencing women (and lay) preachers?”

⁹² William V. Healey, “A Catholic Lay Preaching Guild: Assessing the Experience of the Guild in San Diego,” *Priests & People* 4 no. 10 (November 1990), 416 in Baumer, “The Need for Lay Preaching” 5.

⁹³ See Wiering, “Directive from Archbishop Flynn ends lay preaching at Mass.”

abrogated is a legitimate question. The review above shows how scrupulously the word was avoided in diocesan literature and practice. Likewise, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 65 begins by repeating *Instruction on Collaboration* Article 3 §1, and then adds, “This practice is reprobated, so that it cannot be permitted to attain the force of custom” (*Redemptionis Sacramentum* 65). A practice that is reprobated cannot attain the force of law on the basis of custom. This is important because can. 27 notes that “custom is the best interpreter of law.”⁹⁴ However, more impactful upon the practice of lay preaching in the Eucharist was *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 66, which prohibited the admission of laypersons to “preach” in the Mass. This is a much broader prohibition than that of the *Instruction on Collaboration*’s probation on the “homily” and represents a change in what was allowed and affirmed in such texts as *Pueros Baptizatos*.

However, these changes, through the medium of an instruction, raise a question regarding canonical procedure. As *Redemptionis Sacramentum* is an instruction, it does not have the authority to promulgate new laws, abrogate, or reprobate laws of the universal Church or local Church approved by the Holy See. Instructions are particular legal instruments whose purpose is to remind those with responsible for implementing the law, such as bishops, diocesan vicars, and major religious superiors (See Can. 34 §1; cf. Can. 392), of their obligations and what the law states.⁹⁵ Thus *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 2’s claim, “to establish certain norms by which those earlier ones are explained,” and the fact that it is addressed to “priests, deacons and all the lay Christian faithful,” does not make canonical sense. Huels speaks of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*’s “general vigilantism” over “episcopal vigilance.”⁹⁶

⁹⁴ For a discussion of reprobation and its canonical significance see John M. Huels, “Title II: Custom [23-28], 86-94.

⁹⁵ See John M. Huels, “Canonical Observations on *Redemptionis Sacramentum*,” *Worship* 78 no. 5 (Sept 2004), 404-420. *Instruction on Collaboration* was issued *in forma specifica* meaning it had the power of the legislator to change universal and particular law. See John M. Huels, “Interpreting an Instruction Approved *In Forma Specifica*,” *Studia Canonica* 32, no. 1 (1998), 5-46.

⁹⁶ Huels, “Canonical Observations on *Redemptionis Sacramentum*,” 407.

Yet despite this abuse of canonical procedure, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 66 was instrumental in changing lay liturgical preaching practices where it had continued. It was this norm that was used to justify the ending of lay preaching in the eucharistic liturgy in Rochester and Saint Paul & Minneapolis.⁹⁷ Its impact can be seen in the norms for the celebrations of the sacraments established by Bishop Matano for the diocese of Rochester. For Masses at which children are dismissed to have their own separate liturgy of the Word, “a competent adult *may address the children* after the reading of the Gospel in a separate, but not distant room (italics added).”⁹⁸ Matano’s norm identifies *Pueros Baptizatos* 17 as its source but the original text does not speak of “address the children” but rather of “homily.” Nor is there an option given in the norms for laypeople “to speak” after the gospel at Masses for Children as allowed for in *Pueros Baptizatos* 24. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* represents, what Orsy calls, canonical science “drifting toward an exegesis of the texts that would satisfy the Tridentine censors. No wonder the respect for law in the community is not increasing.”⁹⁹ Kevin T. Kelly’s assessment of the text is worth noting because of its pastoral insight: “It seems far from the ‘Spirit of the Council.’ There is little ‘horizontal’ about it, no empathy with those in parish ministry struggling to make the liturgy an inspiring and life-giving experience for people. Its emphasis seems more on control than on ‘service,’ on uniformity rather than on healthy evolutionary ‘change.’”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ See Wiering, “Directive from Archbishop Flynn ends lay preaching at Mass.” See also David Andreatta, “Catholic diocese upends custom on homilies.”

⁹⁸ See Salvatore Matano, “Policies for the Administration of the Sacraments in the Diocese of Rochester,” Diocese of Rochester, September 13, 2014, §2.5, accessed January 28, 2021. <https://oec.dor.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/Sacramental-Policies-Diocese-of-Rochester.pdf>.

⁹⁹ Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, 88.

¹⁰⁰ Kevin T. Kelly, “A Eucharistic Dis-Service – a personal reading of *Redemptionis Sacramentum*,” *The Furrow* 55, no. 7/8 (July-Aug 2004), 398.

4.6 An Analysis of the Reservation of the Eucharistic Homily to Deacons

Can. 767 §1 reserves the homily in the eucharistic liturgy to deacons as well as priests. The theological basis for reserving such homilies to priests and deacons is that by virtue of ordination both are empowered to act *in persona Christi Capitis*. This is distinct from the configuration to Christ that arises from baptism and confirmation. However, the theological basis – configured so as to act in the person of Christ the Head – raises unresolved questions when applied to the deacon.

The identification of the deacon with the eucharistic homily and liturgical preaching is contrary to much of the tradition. For much of their history, deacons were assigned no responsibility in the preaching ministry. Thomas Aquinas did not believe deacons ordinarily should preach. Taking his lead from Matt. 28:29, he understands preaching in relation to the administration of baptism; deacons, outside of emergencies, do not baptize, nor do they preach, either except in the mode of a catechist; teaching and expounding the gospel belongs properly to the bishop. Aquinas writes: “It is the deacon's duty to read the Gospel in church, and to preach it as one catechizing; hence Dionysius says that a deacon's office involves power over the unclean among whom he includes the catechumens. But to teach, i.e., to expound the Gospel, is the proper office of a bishop.”¹⁰¹ The *Roman Catechism* (1566) while noting that deacons preached in the early Church, did not assign them this ministry except in the case of necessity: “in the absence of bishop and priest, he may preach in church; but not from the regular pulpit (*superiore loco*), so as to indicate that this is not his ordinary function.”¹⁰²

It was noted that *Instruction on Collaboration* Article 3 §1 outlined the reasons why the eucharistic homily must be reserved to priests and deacons, namely, the closely

¹⁰¹ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Einsiedeln: Benziger Bros, 1947), Part III, q. 67, a. 1, ad 1.

¹⁰² *The Roman Catechism*, 20, in Gerhard Müller, *Priesthood and Diaconate*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 196-197.

connected functions of teaching and sanctifying. It was also noted that the homily is reserved to priests and deacons because it is part of the liturgy and, as an aspect of liturgy, priests and deacons are charged with a public role of leadership; they act in the person of Christ the Head. Kozlowski writes, “The sacramental basis for an ordained minister to preach the liturgical homily is the reception of the ontologically altering sacrament of orders, the sacrament by which one carries out acts of worship in the name of the Church.”¹⁰³ As was also noted, can. 1008 stated that sacred ministers, including deacons, are by ordination deputed to shepherd the people, and “fulfilling in the person of Christ the Head the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing.” If the entire basis for reserving the eucharistic homily to deacons is their participation in the priesthood of Christ the Head, what is the implication when deacons are no longer considered as acting in the person of Christ the Head?

In 2009, Benedict XVI issued the apostolic letter *Omnium in Mentem* modifying cans. 1008 and 1009. This modification followed on from a 1998 modification of the 1992 catechism. In the original text of the Catechism, §1581, spoke of the effects of ordination: “by ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king” [*Per ordinationem recipitur capacitas agendi tamquam Christi legatus, Capitis Ecclesiae, in eius triplici munere sacerdotis, prophetae et regis*].¹⁰⁴ The reasoning for changing this paragraph was, as Francesco Coccopalmerio writes, “to avoid extending to the grade of deacon the ability to act *in persona Christi Capitis*, which is reserved exclusively to priests and bishops, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith considered it necessary, in the *editio*

¹⁰³ Kozlowski, “The Laity and Liturgical Preaching,” 261.

¹⁰⁴ See “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” The Holy See, October 11, 1992, §1581, accessed January 04, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P4Y.HTM.

typica, to modify the draft of No. 1581.”¹⁰⁵ Consequently, the text was modified to read: “From him [Christ] bishops and priests receive the mission and ability to act in the person of Christ the Head, while deacons receive the power to serve the people of God in the 'diaconship' of the liturgy, the word and charity” [*Ab eo (sc. Christo) Episcopi et presbyteri missionem et facultatem agendi in persona Christi Capitis accipiunt, diaconi vero vim populo Dei serviendi in 'diaconia' liturgiae, verbi et caritatis*]. The impression given by Coccopalmerio is that this identification of the deacon with the person of Christ the Head is unwittingly, and for the first time, set down in the catechism, rather than predating the Catechism, and present in canon law. Neither the English nor Latin edition of the Catechism on the Vatican Website reflect the change.¹⁰⁶ Why the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith decided that the catechism should be the starting point for such a modification rather than a text of greater weight and importance such as the Code cannot be explored here but should be noted.

Benedict XVI noted that John Paul II had ordered the modification of the 1992 catechism “in order better to convey the teaching on deacons found in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council (n.29).”¹⁰⁷ Cans. 1008 and 1009 of the Code were modified to also reflect this reality. Can. 1008 was modified so that what read: “they [bishops, priests, and deacons] are consecrated and deputed to shepherd the people of God, each in accord with his own grade of orders, by fulfilling in the person of Christ the Head the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing” [*consecrantur et deputantur ut, pro suo quisque gradu, in persona Christi Capitis munera docendi, sanctificandi et regendi, Dei populum pascant*] changed to “They

¹⁰⁵ Francesco Coccopalmerio, “On *Omnium in Mentem*: The Basis of the Two Changes,” *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly English edition, 31 March 2010, 6.

¹⁰⁶ See Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1581; see also Latin edition, accessed January 04, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism_lt/p2s2c3a6_lt.htm#III.%20Tres%20sacramenti%20Ordinis%20gradus.

¹⁰⁷ Benedict XVI, *Omnium in Mentem*.

[bishops, priests, and deacons] are thus consecrated and deputed so that, each according to his own grade, they may serve the People of God by a new and specific title.” The original reference to Christ the Head in can. 1008 was removed and inserted into a new clause in can. 1009: “Those who are constituted in the order of the episcopate or the presbyterate receive the mission and capacity to act in the person of Christ the Head, whereas deacons are empowered to serve the People of God in the ministries of the liturgy, the word and charity” [*Qui constituti sunt in ordine episcopatus aut presbyteratus missionem et facultatem agendi in persona Christi Capitis accipiunt, diaconi vero vim populo Dei serviendi in diaconia liturgiae, verbi et caritatis*] (can. 1009 §3).

Kozlowski downplays the significance of this change. He notes that although deacons are not ordained to the priesthood they are, “in some manner configured to Christ in a new way by ordination”¹⁰⁸ He does not explain what “in some manner” means. He notes: “even with these amendments to the Code, the deacon’s sacramental configuration to Christ the priest provides the sacramental basis for the deacon to offer the act of worship that is the homily.”¹⁰⁹ Kozlowski does not explain how this is so. Up to Benedict XVI’s amendment it is a sacramental configuration to Christ the Head. How is the deacon configured sacramentally to Christ? “In some manner” seems an insufficient answer. Because of a deacon’s “in some manner” sacramental configuration to Christ, they can preach the homily. He noted earlier in his argument that deacons were by virtue of ordination, sacramentally configured to Christ the priest in a manner that is essentially different than what occurs at one’s baptism and confirmation but does not explain how, in light of the changes instituted by John Paul II and Benedict XVI,

¹⁰⁸ Kozlowski, “The Laity and Liturgical Preaching,” 262, footnote 76.

¹⁰⁹ Kozlowski, “The Laity and Liturgical Preaching,” 262, footnote 76.

they are now sacramentally configured to Christ.¹¹⁰ If diaconate ordination does not configure deacons to share sacramentally in Christ's priesthood as Head, how do they differ sacramentally from how laypeople share in Christ's priesthood through baptism? With the avenue of configuration to Christ the Head closed off, Kozlowski seems to take the fact of being ordained as the basis for the deacon's authority to preach eucharistic homilies. But is the mere fact of being ordained sufficient? Sacraments are signs, and so ordination to the diaconate is a particular sign. If deacons are not signs of the teaching or sanctifying ministry of Christ, then what are they a sign of?

Tim O'Donnell notes that they are a sacramental representative of the "servant dimension of the Church."¹¹¹ *Lumen Gentium* 29, notes, that the imposition of hands on the deacons is "not for the priesthood but for the ministry." The Congregation for Catholic Education notes of the deacon that "he is a specific sacramental sign, in the Church, of Christ the servant...the Leitmotiv of his spiritual life will therefore be service; his sanctification will consist in making himself a generous and faithful servant of God and men, especially the poorest and most suffering; his ascetic commitment will be directed towards acquiring those virtues necessary for the exercise of his ministry."¹¹²

None of this excludes a liturgical preaching ministry, but this is not the focus of his service to the Church, and it is not disputed that ordination is a call to ministerial service and the conferral of a set of responsibilities to be exercised on behalf of the Christian community. *Lumen Gentium* Chapter 3 emphasises the three tasks of the clergy: to sanctify, to teach, and to govern. However, as the reader moves from Chapters 20-27

¹¹⁰ See Kozlowski, "The Laity and Liturgical Preaching," 262.

¹¹¹ Tim O'Donnell, "Should Deacons Represent Christ the Servant?," *Theological Studies* 78 no. 4 (December 2017), 865.

¹¹² Congregations for Catholic Education and Clergy, "Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons and Directory for the Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons," The Holy See, February 22, 1998, §§ 5, 11, accessed August 13, 2021. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_31031998_directorium-diaconi_en.html.

(the Office of Bishops) through Chapter 28 (Office of Priests), to Chapter 29 (Office of Deacons) these tasks are exercised with increasing limitation. It is clear from the text how the Council Fathers understood the role of the deacon:

to administer baptism solemnly, to be custodian and dispenser of the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the Sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, to officiate at funeral and burial services, and duties related to charity and administration (See *Lumen Gentium* 29).

O'Donnell writes:

for deacons, the scope of the first two tasks is further limited, as sanctifying and teaching become 'the ministry of the liturgy, [and] of the Word' But for the third task we find a complete substitution: governing is replaced by 'charity'...Read within chapter 3 as a whole, the point is clear. Deacons do not govern; instead, they perform works of charity. The substitution serves to stress the importance of this task for deacons, and the fact that its exercise is in some way distinctive of diaconal office.¹¹³

The duties of the deacon as enunciated in *Lumen Gentium* 29 are not specific to deacons and can be carried out by laypeople. *Lumen Gentium* 29 makes no mention of liturgical preaching, let alone preaching the eucharistic homily. Given how important the recovery of the eucharistic homily and liturgical preaching was in the Constitution on the Liturgy it could be assumed that if the bishops wanted deacons to take a central role in preaching eucharistic homilies then they could have stated that in this article. The clergy's task to sanctify and teach becomes in the deacon "to serve in the diaconate of the liturgy [and] of the word," while to govern becomes "charity to the People of God."

O'Donnell concludes:

Deacons clearly have all three tasks to perform, yet what is distinctive about them compared with bishops and priests is a focus, already stressed, on caritative service, placed together now with a qualitatively different, subordinate form of leadership in the church – not governing (*regere*) but administration (*administratio*). This word denotes an organizational role more concerned with implementation than with policy, and where any exercise of leadership over others is limited and performed under supervision.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ O'Donnell, "Should Deacons Represent Christ the Servant?," 862.

¹¹⁴ O'Donnell, "Should Deacons Represent Christ the Servant?," 862.

The canonical reservation stands in marked contrast with the liturgical rites, which more reflects the role outlined in *Lumen Gentium* 29. The prayer of consecration at the ordination of deacons, taking its lead from Acts 6: 1-5, recalls how the “seven” (Acts does not speak of deacons) were chosen so that the apostles would be freer for prayer and preaching.¹¹⁵ O’Donnell notes that Herbert Vorgrimler, who was a *peritus* at the Council and a strong supporter of the restored permanent diaconate, emphasized the social work aspect of the deacon’s ministry and his public witness rather than sacramental and pastoral responsibilities.¹¹⁶ The deacon does not act in the person of Christ the Head but rather acts through “an ecclesial mediation intrinsic to a deacon’s service, which is carried out by serving a bishop or priest, whether in liturgy or in pastoral and charitable tasks.”¹¹⁷

In the postconciliar period, the Congregation for Divine Worship built up the liturgical ministry of the deacon in the face of the reality of priestly shortage. Marc Caron notes: “As each of the liturgical books were revised following Vatican II, they provided for a deacon as the celebrant for the celebration of baptism, eucharistic benediction, marriage, funerals, the liturgy of the hours, and blessings. In all cases, deacons are directed to preside in exactly the same manner as a priest would.”¹¹⁸ While the deacon could preside over all these liturgies, his is only a substitution role in the absence of a priest as Paul VI’s apostolic letter *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* (1967) make clear.¹¹⁹ The Congregation for Divine Worship, reflecting on a 1974 Pontifical

¹¹⁵ See “Ordination of Deacons, Priests, and Bishops,” in *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, Volume II, trans. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (New York: Pueblo Books, 1979), 57.

¹¹⁶ O’Donnell, “Should Deacons Represent Christ the Servant?,” 863, footnote 39.

¹¹⁷ See O’Donnell, “Should Deacons Represent Christ the Servant?,” 869.

¹¹⁸ See Caron, “The Changing Liturgical Role of the Deacon,” 138-139.

¹¹⁹ See Paul VI, *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* [Apostolic Letter “motu proprio” on Restoring the Permanent Diaconate in the Latin Church], The Holy See, June 18, 1967, §21.4, 7, 8, accessed February 12, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19670618_sacrum-diaconatus.html.

Commission for the Interpretation of the Decrees of Vatican Council II reply to the question of the deacon's powers regarding sacramentals, noted that the deacon's postconciliar role had radically changed: "Admittedly, with the reform of the liturgy profound changes have come about relative to earlier discipline: deacons have been placed on a par ritually with priests [presbyters] in regard to the administration of some of the sacraments and sacramentals."¹²⁰ It added:

It has further been remarked that the expansion of the deacon's powers implies a diminishing of the status of the priest, with a consequent equivalence of functions in the matter being considered. Extending the deacon's faculties runs the risk also of lessening in the eyes of the faithful the sense of the grandeur of the sacerdotal character and even of the value of the sacraments and sacramentals. To limit the expansion of the deacon's faculties would mean a closer adherence to the principle confirmed in the same no. 29 of *Lumen Gentium* that the deacon receives "the laying on of hands not unto the priesthood but only for a ministry of service." Thus it seems advisable to hold to the current canonical and liturgical norms contained in CIC can. 1147 §4 [1917 Code], in *Lumen Gentium* 29, and in the other postconciliar documents, even if there is no objections of a doctrinal nature that might prevent the granting of further faculties to deacons.¹²¹

In the face of a rapidly aging, and numerically declining, number of priests, the deacon's role was being recast as that of a "sacred" minister. In *The Permanent Diaconate: National Directory and Norms for Ireland*, the Irish bishops noted, as one of three reasons for establishing the permanent diaconate, "concern to provide regions where there was a shortage of clergy, with sacred ministers."¹²² A very clearly favoured approach is being enunciated here: a ministry by deacons is preferred to that of laypeople. John Paul II, quoting Paul VI's *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* notes, "the deacon can 'legitimately guide, on behalf of the parish priest or the Bishop, the

¹²⁰ Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of The Decrees of Vatican Council II, "Reply to Query, on the Powers of a Deacon Regarding the Sacramentals and Blessings"(1974), in *Documents on the Liturgy*, 803, footnote R2.

¹²¹ Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of The Decrees of Vatican Council II, "Reply to Query, on the Powers of a Deacon Regarding the Sacramentals and Blessings," 804, footnote R2.

¹²² Irish Episcopal Conference, "The Permanent Diaconate: National Directory and Norms for Ireland," Irish Episcopal Conference, January 01, 2007, §15.1, accessed August 10, 2021, <https://dublindiocese.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/The-Permanent-Diaconate-National-Directory-and-Norms-for-Ireland.pdf>; See also Congregations for Catholic Education and Clergy, *Introduction to the Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*, §2.

dispersed Christian communities.’ It is a missionary function to be carried out in those territories, environments, social classes or groups, where the priest is absent or difficult to find.”¹²³ In the same speech, John Paul notes the essential role of catechists to building up new Christian communities and suggests, “the diaconate order can confirm them in their mission, through a more official consecration and a mandate, which is specifically conferred by the authority of the Church.”¹²⁴ This attitude reflects a second reason outlined by the Irish bishops for establishing the permanent diaconate: strengthening with the grace of diaconal ordination those who already exercise many of the functions of the diaconate.”¹²⁵ The reasons for establishing the permanent diaconate suggest an horizon of understanding rooted in the past that links ministry to holy orders rather than values ministry as a legitimate lay activity that arises from baptism and confirmation.

Despite the Congregation for Divine Worship’s 1974 observation, the deacon’s authority to preach eucharistic homilies was set down in the 1983 Code of Canon Law and, as shown in the *Instruction on Collaboration and Redemptionis Sacramentum*, his role as a sacred minister affirmed. Yet this affirmation sits alongside attempts to emphasize what makes the office distinct from that of the priest, namely, service understood as works of charity. In a series of General Audiences in October 1993 and a 1995 speech to a plenary assembly of the Congregation for Clergy, John Paul

¹²³ John Paul II, “Udienza Generale,” The Holy See, October 13, 1993, §4, accessed February 12, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1993/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19931013.html. Original in Italian. Translation by Raffaella Braga Sorenson.

¹²⁴ John Paul II, “Udienza Generale,” October 13, 1993, §6.

¹²⁵ Irish Episcopal Conference, *The Permanent Diaconate: National Directory*, §15.2. As the diaconate is presently closed to women the net effect of this measure would be to exclude many, particularly women, who carry out the functions of a deacon as extraordinary ministers. A point not lost at a 2014 public gathering to oppose the decision of the bishop of Killaloe to establish the permanent diaconate in the diocese. See Patsy McGarry, “Meeting welcomes delay of male-only diaconate in Killaloe,” *The Irish Times*, September 16, 2014, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/meeting-welcomes-delay-of-male-only-diaconate-in-killaloe-1.1930657>.

emphasized the deacon's distinction from the hierarchical priesthood.¹²⁶ For Caron, John Paul II's identification of the deacon with Christ the servant is the "primary analogue for understanding the diaconate."¹²⁷ Koslowski's "in some manner" sacramental configuration to Christ is in fact a configuration to Christ the servant.¹²⁸

Omnium in Mentum clarifies the distinction between the deacon and the ministerial priesthood. It does not deny deacons the liturgical functions they have come to be identified with, but leaves unanswered the question of the basis of their authority to preach eucharistic homilies. Caron argues that they do so on the basis of their baptismal priesthood:

Deacons exercise the baptismal priesthood in their sanctifying duties since they do not exercise the hierarchical priesthood. Since ordination does not confer the hierarchical priesthood on deacons, the sanctifying functions they do fulfill must arise from the other mode of Christ's own priesthood in the Church: the baptismal priesthood ... This would explain why so many of the sanctifying functions exercised by deacons overlap with the functions of a delegated lay person. Deacons exercise the same common priesthood with the baptized. The deacon's exercise of the common priesthood differs in degree from the exercise of the same common priesthood by the lay faithful. But it does not differ in essence. On the contrary, the exercise of the common priesthood by deacons differs in essence from the exercise of the hierarchical priesthood by presbyters and bishops.¹²⁹

When Caron speaks of the deacon exercising his baptismal priesthood as differing in degree from the delegated layperson, he is reflecting the deacon's preexisting status in the Church's structure and the status ordination gives him over a delegated layperson.

¹²⁶ See John Paul II, "Udienza Generale," The Holy See, October 6, 1993, §3, accessed February 24, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1993/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19931006.html; John Paul II, "Udienza Generale," The Holy See, October 20, 1993, §1, accessed February 12, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/audiences/1993/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_19931020.html; John Paul II, Discorso di Giovanni Paolo II ai partecipanti all'assemblea Plenaria della Congregazione per il Clero," The Holy See, November 13, 1995, §4, accessed February 12, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1995/november/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19951130_cong-clergy.html. Original in Italian. Translation by Raffaella Braga Sorenson.

¹²⁷ See Caron, "The Changing Liturgical Role of the Deacon," 142.

¹²⁸ For a linguistic study of *daikon*- words in the New testament and Greek literature that challenges the emphasis on the deacon as servant whose ministry focus on works of mercy see John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); See also John N. Collins, *Dismantling the Servant Paradigm: Recovering the Forgotten Heritage of Early Christian Ministry* (Chisinau, Moldova: Generis Publishing, 2020).

¹²⁹ Caron, "The Changing Liturgical Role of the Deacon," 151.

He notes that the implications of the increasing clarity around the office of the deacon has yet to be fully realized. Strictly speaking the eucharistic homily should no longer be reserved to deacons as they do not share in Christ's priesthood considered as Head, nor are they a part of the ministerial priesthood. The clear judicial mandate now lacks the clear theological foundation that once underpinned it. If deacons do not act *in persona Christi Capitis*, then what is the basis of their authority to preach? For Caron they must preach on the basis of their baptismal priesthood. To argue on the basis of being "ordained" ignores the purpose for which they were ordained, which for deacons is not, at least in the mind of the Second Vatican Council, to preach eucharistic homilies. The repositioning of the deacon resulting from *Omnium in Mentem* raises questions about the value and purpose of the restored permanent diaconate especially as the diaconate is reserved to men.

4.7 Conclusion

The review of the canonical, liturgical, and theological documents of the magisterium in the postconciliar period reveals the continuing influence of the norms set down in the Congregation for Clergy's 1973 rescript. For the magisterium, necessity and occasional advantage are the basis for the laity's participation in the liturgical preaching ministry because secularity is the key mark of their identity in the Church. In contrast to the laity, the clergy have a sacred ministry, which is proper to them because they have the authority to act in the person of Christ the Head. The Christological strand, as spoken about by Richard Gaillardetz and referenced in Chapter Three, continues to dominate official pronouncements. There is little evidence of the pneumatology strand influencing the magisterium's thinking; the Spirit, through ordination, endows those in holy orders with authority to act in the name of Christ the Head. However, why is it that the homily and not preaching is reserved? It was noted

that *Redemptionis Sacramentum* 66, recognizing this lacuna, closed it off. Skudlarek and Henderson noted that preaching is properly the responsibility of the president of the liturgical assembly. In his role as president of the eucharistic assembly, he both teaches and sanctifies and so expresses these related functions. Does that connection hold true when a concelebrant or a non-concelebrating priest or a deacon preaches? Can two persons act *in persona Christi Capitis* in a particular Eucharist? These remain unresolved questions. If there can be only one person acting *in persona Christi Capitis*, then neither concelebrants nor non-concelebrating priests can preach the eucharistic homily if acting in the person of Christ the Head is the basis for such preaching. If the role of concelebrants and non-concelebrating priests raises issues of theological concern then so much more does the reservation of the eucharistic homily to deacons. The theology that has been central to justifying the deacon's right to preach eucharistic homilies is now acknowledged, but not stated, in effect to have been a mistaken interpretation of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. If deacons do not act *in persona Christi Capitis*, then what is the basis of their authority? Despite the reality of many documents from the magisterium opposing or limiting lay participation in the liturgical preaching, the matter remains profoundly unresolved. The official theological reasoning is incoherent or incomplete and shows a marked dependence on one or two consistently repeated arguments which bear little evidence of been modified in light of the criticism, insights of theologians, or the reality of pastoral need.

In Chapter Five, an alternative framework on which to develop a theology of lay liturgical preaching is proposed, one that is not dependent directly on ordination or on the eucharistic homilist being configured to Christ the Head but draws its inspiration from Rahner's presuppositions of a charismatically creative imagination, a prophetic awareness of the gospel, and a sense of history and draws inspiration from Vatican II's

teaching on the episcopacy to expand the understanding of participation in the sacrament of order as the basis for lay ecclesial ministry.

Chapter Five

Beyond “Presuppositions and Horizons of Understanding from the Past” to a New Theological Framework for Lay Participation in the Office of Liturgical Preaching

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sets forth an alternative theological framework for conceiving lay liturgical preaching as an ordinary lay ecclesial ministry. Chapter Four questioned the present theological basis that reserves eucharistic preaching to priests and deacons. While there is a theological coherence – acting *in persona Christi Capitis* – to explain such reservation to priests (particularly priests presiding at the Eucharist), no such coherence applies to deacons, and there is a question of how it relates to concelebrants and non-concelebrating priests in the celebration of a particular Eucharist. When Rahner’s *The Shape of the Church to Come* was examined in Chapter Three, it was noted that he wanted to move beyond what he called “presuppositions and horizons of understanding of the past,” to reflect on the Church in the present with a deep sense of history, a prophetic awareness of the gospel, and with charismatic creative imagination.¹

In Chapter Five an alternative theology is proposed. What is proposed is a theology that bridges the present-day divide between many theologies of laity and ministry and that presented by the magisterium. It is a theological proposal that centers on the Church’s hierarchical structure and not only, does not undermine it, but affirms it. That alternative proposal is built upon two principles, namely, 1) that all ministry is a participation in the priesthood of the bishop whose office is of divine institution and represents the fullness of the sacrament of order and 2) from the fullness of the

¹ See Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 47.

sacrament, conferred on the bishop, the Church, in response to need and theological development, has the authority to regulate ministerial structures as it did in the past when, exercising the power Christ gave to the Church, it established the various degrees of orders. As all ministry is a participation in the priesthood of the bishop, the starting point for the chapter will be a review of the priesthood of the bishop. From that starting point, the Church's authority to reorder the sacrament of order will be examined. This reordering is most clearly seen in Paul VI's *Ministeria Quaedam* (1972), which will be analysed and implications for lay liturgical preaching drawn out. Upon these two foundations, a set of criteria that share many similarities with Barth's criteria for commissioning will be outlined to help the faith community discern who among them should be admitted to the installed ministry of liturgical preaching.

5.2 The Office of *Episkopos* as a part of Revelation and the Fullness of the Sacrament of Order

The starting point of any public ministry in the name of the Church must be the priesthood of the bishop. When Rahner spoke in *The Shape of the Church to Come* of the need for a deep sense of history, prophetic awareness of the Gospel, and charismatically creative imagination," it was within the context of the "episcopal great church."² Thus for Rahner, any reimagining of ministry, such as lay participation in the ministry of liturgical preaching, must be formulated within the context of a Church that is hierarchically ordered on the bishop in whom is the fullness of the sacrament and whose office is of divine institution.³ The necessity of the "episcopal great Church" as the structure through which authority is transferred for the continuity of the gospel is set down in *Lumen Gentium* 20:

² Rahner *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 109

³ See Karl Rahner "The Hierarchical Structure of the Church, with Special Reference to the Episcopate, Article 18-27," trans. Kevin Smyth, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Volume 1, gen. ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (London: Burn & Oates, 1967), 186-230.

That divine mission, entrusted by Christ to the apostles, will last until the end of the world, since the Gospel they are to teach is for all time the source of all life for the Church. And for this reason the apostles, appointed as rulers in this society, took care to appoint successors. For they not only had helpers in their ministry, but also, in order that the mission assigned to them might continue after their death, they passed on to their immediate cooperators, as it were, in the form of a testament, the duty of confirming and finishing the work begun by themselves...They therefore appointed such men [*viros*], and gave them the order that, when they should have died, other approved men [*viri*] would take up their ministry (*Lumen Gentium* 20)

If Jesus' message is to be proclaimed through history, a structure is needed to do so. The paucity of New Testament sources makes it difficult to establish a clear unambiguous transition of authority to the *episkopoi*. It is only in the second century that the term becomes standard to describe a successor of the apostles.⁴ As Seamus Ryan notes, "even though the name 'bishops' may change, yet the Order which they constitute, the content of their ministry, these can never change, since there must always be in the Church successors to the apostles holding the fullness of the sacrament of order, the fullness of the priesthood, the fullness of the ministry."⁵ It is not the particular terminology used by the diverse Christian communities to designate leadership but the fact that the apostles passed on their authority to successors that matters.

For Rahner it is essential that this handing on of authority to the *episkopoi* be understood as part of the constitution of the Church. For him, the episcopal structure rooted in the episcopal college, which succeeded the apostolic college, arises neither from natural law nor from positive ecclesiastical law but rather traces its origin to an ordinance of Christ as founder of the Church and is therefore a permanent feature of its life.⁶ The Church's episcopal structure is not a post-apostolic construct, but a part of the

⁴ For a history of the development of orders and the process of moving towards standardization see Kenan Osborne, *Priesthood*, 40-129.

⁵ Seamus Ryan, "Episcopal Consecration. The Fullness of Order," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1965), 323.

⁶ See Karl Rahner, "Reflection on the Concept 'Ius Divinum' in Catholic Thought," *Theological Investigations*, Volume 5, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 219.

revelation that took place in apostolic time: “If revelation only terminates at the end of the time of the primitive Church, at the end of the apostolic age – and if we must not terminate this time before that – then we have the right and duty to expect also to find revelation of juridical norms during this period, and this during the whole of this period.”⁷ Consequently, the episcopacy is “an irreversible, law-establishing decision of the Church which is in conformity with [its] nature (which corresponds legitimately to that nature) can be regarded as ‘*ius divinum*’ when it took place at the time of the primitive Church.”⁸ *Lumen Gentium* 20 does not take a position vis-à-vis whether the episcopal constitution of the Church followed an explicit command of Jesus or a conclusion drawn from the “permanent, revealed, theological essence of the Church or an irreformable decision of the apostolic Church, still part of the time of the event of revelation, a decision taken as the apostolic age was passing away.”⁹

Can the episcopal college as part of the “*ius divinum*” of the Church be proven historically? Rahner rejects the argument that something cannot be of divine institution if the form in which it exists presently is not found in that form at an earlier time. He accepts that historical criticism can compare one form of a thing alongside another form and thus prove its historical conditioning. However, the historical conditioning of a form does not undermine a claim to that form being of divine institution. This is, Rahner argues, because the historically conditioned form is “only actually real and properly effective in this particular time-determined form in which it appears at a particular time.”¹⁰ In “On the Divine Right of the Episcopate” he writes: “the Church preserves and remains faithful to her Christ-given, permanent nature precisely by continually expressing it in a temporally conditioned form, in her *ius humanum* and in its practical

⁷ Rahner, “Reflection on the Concept of *Ius Divinum*,” 233.

⁸ Rahner, “Reflection on the Concept of *Ius Divinum*,” 230-231.

⁹ See Karl Rahner “The Hierarchical Structure of the Church,” 191.

¹⁰ Rahner, “Reflection on the Concept of *Ius Divinum*,” 221.

application according to the needs of the time.”¹¹ This means that “the divine rights of the episcopate is not (materially, at least) bound to any absolutely fixed form as its realization in the concrete.”¹² If the essence of the bishop is to be “a true shepherd called to feed and guide the flock entrusted to him,” then realizing that in the concrete must change in light of changing pastoral circumstances and contexts.¹³ Kenan Osborne has outlined how the Church’s theological self-understanding of the bishop has changed over time, and notes that this has an implication for the laity and their ministry in the Church: “if the historical and theological definitions of bishops and priests have changed, then their relationship to lay ministers has also changed. A clear boundary between what only a bishop and priest does in sacramental life and what a layperson might do is not that clear.”¹⁴

To establish the divine institution of the office of the bishop, Rahner begins not from the divine institution of the individual bishop but that of the whole episcopacy – the *ius divinum* of the whole episcopate is the basis of the *ius divinum* of individual bishops.¹⁵ The basis of the *ius divinum* of the episcopacy is the foundation by Christ of the apostolic college.¹⁶ Rahner writes: “If Christ’s community was to be governed, according to his will, by the apostolic college united under Peter, if the Church was to last until the end of time, then the apostolic college must have a successor. [There] is no institution to be seen in the ancient Church which could even lay claim to such a succession except the episcopal body.”¹⁷

¹¹ Karl Rahner, “On the Divine Right of the Episcopate” in Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Episcopate and the Primacy*, trans. Kenneth Barker, Patrick Kearns, Robert Ochs, and Richard Strachan (London: Nelson, 1962), 65. Originally published as *Episkopat und Primat* (1961).

¹² Rahner, “On the Divine Right of the Episcopate,” 74.

¹³ Declan Marmion, “Karl Rahner, Vatican II, and the Shape of the Church,” *Theological Studies* 78 no. 1 (2017), 36.

¹⁴ Osborne, “Envisioning a Theology of Ordained and Lay Ministry, 209.

¹⁵ See Rahner, “On the Divine Right of the Episcopate,” 72.

¹⁶ Rahner, “The Episcopate and the Primacy,” 21.

¹⁷ See Rahner, “On the Divine Right of the Episcopate,” 88.

Rahner notes that in *Lumen Gentium* 20 the Council “teaches” [*docet*] that bishops succeed the apostles by divine institution. This, he says, is asserted by the Council as a fact without setting out to prove it. The use of “teaches” is less forceful a term than earlier drafts of *Lumen Gentium* had used.¹⁸ He notes that by its use the bishops were not intending a “(new) *ex cathedra* definition”¹⁹ Their intention was to affirm that the office of bishop “is not an element of purely human and variable Church law, in the sense that the post-apostolic Church might have also given itself a non-episcopal constitution...the episcopal constitution did not come into force except as part of the event of revelation which took place in apostolic times.”²⁰

Thus the office of the bishop cannot be regarded as “a presupposition or horizon of understanding from the past,” a dispensable structure. Rather, it remains the essential and abiding element of the Church’s ministerial structure. For Rahner, the episcopal college is an essential structure to preserve and transmit the apostolic tradition. Bishops are successors to the apostles; they teach, they sanctify, they govern (see *Lumen Gentium* 21): “Therefore, the Sacred Council teaches that bishops by divine institution have succeeded to the place of the apostles, as shepherds of the Church [*Proinde docet Sacra Synodus Episcopos ex divina institutione in locum Apostolorum successisse tamquam Ecclesiae pastores*]” (*Lumen Gentium* 20).

If the episcopacy is of divine institution, a question remains regarding the other two grades of the hierarchy, namely, priests and deacons: Are these offices, while a grade of the sacrament of order, of divine institution, part of the *ius divinum*, offices given during the time of revelation, and so a permanent feature of the Church’s life? For Rahner they are of divine origin in as much as they participate in the bishop’s office, which is of

¹⁸ See Rahner “The Hierarchical Structure of the Church,” 191.

¹⁹ Rahner “The Hierarchical Structure of the Church,” 191.

²⁰ Rahner “The Hierarchical Structure of the Church,” 191.

divine origin.²¹ However, he notes that the Council left the question open. *Lumen Gentium* 28, when speaking of priests, affirms that “ecclesiastical ministry is divinely instituted [*ministerium ecclesiasticum divinitus institutum*] and exercised at different levels by those “who from antiquity have been called bishops, priest, and deacons” [*quiam ab antiquo Episcopi, Presbyteri, Diaconi vocantur*] (*Lumen Gentium* 28). The language is nuanced. It is “ministry” that is spoken of as divinely instituted and the different grades as being of great antiquity. The Council, as Rahner notes, “avoided the historical questions of the origins of ecclesiastical offices.”²² He writes:

the text of the Council had to leave open the details of the historical genesis of the office of priest and deacon and the other degrees of Orders. A decision as to which degree of Orders was immediately instituted by Christ, and hence of divine right as directly established by Christ, and which degrees were not, could not be expected from the Council. With regard to the hierarchical distribution of Church offices, it is left an open question whether Christ gave only ‘general’ authorization or a ‘particular’ one.²³

Seamus Ryan writes:

as far as the historical evidence goes, the indications would rather seem to be that in the distribution of the ministry there is no question of the early Church, or the Church in later ages, being bound by any fixed direction of Christ... It is always conceivable that the Church, in answer to the concrete needs of a different time and place, could make a new departmental subdivision of her [sic] ministry. It would be simply an application of that power with which Christ has endowed his Church over the sacraments, and which was exercised in the beginning in setting up the triple ministry which still exists today.²⁴

Alongside the affirmation of the divine institution of the office of bishop, the Council taught that the priesthood of the bishop represents the fullness of the sacrament of order.

Lumen Gentium 21 affirms:

The Sacred Council teaches [*Docet autem Sancta Synodus*] that by Episcopal consecration the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred, that fullness of power [*episcopali consecratione plenitudinem conferri sacramenti Ordinis*] ... the supreme power of the sacred ministry [*sacri ministerii summa nuncupatur*]. Episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the

²¹ See Rahner “The Hierarchical Structure of the Church,” 192.

²² Rahner “The Hierarchical Structure of the Church,” 218.

²³ Rahner “The Hierarchical Structure of the Church,” 218.

²⁴ Ryan, “Episcopal Consecration: The Fullness of Order,” 301.

office of teaching and of governing, which, however, of its very nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college [*Episcopalis autem consecratio, cum munere sanctificandi, munera quoque confert docendi et regendi, quae tamen natura sua non nisi in hierarchica communione cum Collegii Capite et membris exerceri possunt*] (*Lumen Gentium* 21).

Lumen Gentium 21 affirms: 1) the episcopacy represents the fullness of the sacrament; 2) it is the supreme power of the sacred ministry; 3) episcopal consecration confers not only a sanctifying office but that of teacher and ruler; and 4) episcopal power is only exercised within the context of the episcopal college. This teaching of the Council overturned seven hundred years of Western theology, which from the seventh to the fourteenth century had identified the priesthood as the full expression of the sacrament of order with the episcopate being neither a sacrament nor an *ordo* but an office of jurisdiction.²⁵ However, Vatican II affirmed that episcopal ordination represents the highest grade of the hierarchy, not simply as a matter of jurisdiction but sacramentally, and it is through sacramental consecration, and not a juridical mandate, that the bishop receives his authority to teach and govern. As *Lumen Gentium* 21 states:

For from the tradition, which is expressed especially in liturgical rites and in the practice of both the Church of the East and of the West, it is clear that, by means of the imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred, and the sacred character so impressed, that bishops in an eminent and visible way sustain the roles of Christ Himself as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His person [*Episcopi, eminenti ac adspectabili modo, ipsius Christi Magistri, Pastoris et Pontificis partes sustineant et in Eius persona agant*].

This teaching of the Council represents a return to the understanding of the early Church, which saw episcopal ordination as conferring, not simply the power of sanctifying, but also that of teaching and governing. Rahner writes: “In the Constitution on the Church the bishop appears...as *the* pastor of his [Christ’s] church without further qualifications.: in *him* is to be found the fullness of all sacred authority, *he* preaches, *he*

²⁵ Seamus Ryan, “Episcopal Consecration,” 297.

teaches, *he* sanctifies, and *he* guides the Church's people entrusted to him."²⁶ The bishop acts in the person of Christ as teacher, sanctifier, and ruler. Ryan notes Vatican II's indebtedness to renewed contact with Eastern theology, which never separated order and jurisdiction, sacrament and law. He writes: "There it is precisely the sacrament which is seen as conferring not only the power of order but of jurisdiction too; it is his episcopal consecration, not some unrelated external *missio canonica*, which makes the bishop a teacher and ruler in the Church."²⁷ The consecratory prayers of the early liturgical texts emphasized the receipt of the Spirit for leadership and teaching and not just sanctifying.²⁸ Ryan writes,

In these words the Council Fathers are giving precise theological expression to something which has always been a part of the life and practice of the Church from the beginning. The bishop alone holds the fullness of the sacrament of Order because he alone is commissioned by God for the fullness of the ministry in the Church as a successor of the apostles"²⁹

or, in the words of Rahner, "the whole official action of the Church in the transmission of truth and grace is concentrated in him."³⁰

The bishop's ministry does not replace the activity of Christ but, as Rahner notes, "makes it sacramentally and historically tangible."³¹ Through the ministry of the bishop, Christ acts: "He [Christ] is not absent from the gathering of His high priests, but above all [*sed imprimis*] through their excellent service He [Christ] is preaching the word of God to all nations, and constantly administering the sacraments of faith...He directs and guides the People of the New Testament in their pilgrimage toward eternal happiness" (*Lumen Gentium* 21). Episcopal consecration confers the grace of the Holy Spirit, which

²⁶ Karl Rahner, "Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II," *Theological Investigations* Volume 6, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 366. Italics in original.

²⁷ Seamus Ryan, "Episcopal Consecration: From Trent to Vatican II," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1966), 134.

²⁸ See Ryan, "Episcopal Consecration: The Fullness of Order," 306-308.

²⁹ Ryan, "Episcopal Consecration: The Fullness of Order," 323. See also

³⁰ Rahner, "Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II," 366.

³¹ Rahner "The Hierarchical Structure of the Church," 192

creates the sacramental character that confers the threefold office of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling.

If the sacrament of order is represented in its fullness in the bishop, then the office of priests and deacons is only a partial participation in the sacrament; through their consecration, priests and deacons receive a part of the sacrament. Their *ordo* does not exist independently of the bishop but is dependent upon him. Ryan writes: “this is the position which the bishops hold today; the episcopal order stands at the head of the hierarchy of order consecrated and commissioned by God for the fullness of the ministry of the Church; it is only in relation to this fullness that the other orders of presbyterate and diaconate can be defined as so many subordinate, dependent and limited participations.”³² Susan K. Wood notes that a priest’s “claim as guarantor of apostolicity is tied to his relationship with his bishop.”³³

The language of Vatican II reflects the new sacramental appreciation of the bishop as the fullness of order: priests are spoken of as “their helpers” [*adiutoribus*] (*Lumen Gentium* 20); “cooperators” [*cooperatores*] (*Lumen Gentium* 28);³⁴ and those to whom the bishops’ ministry has been handed down “in a lesser degree” [*subordinato gradu*] as “co-workers” [*cooperatores*] (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2). The subordinate role of the priest and his dependence on the bishop is heavily emphasized in the texts: “the presbyter is essentially defined as his co-operator also sacramentally consecrated for this triple ministry, though only as a minister ‘secundi ordinis’[sic].”³⁵ Deacons, *Lumen Gentium* 29 notes, are at the lower level of the hierarchy [*in gradu inferiori hierarchiae*]

³² Ryan, “Episcopal Consecration: The Fullness of Order,” 323.

³³ Susan K. Wood, “Presbyteral Identity within Parish Identity,” in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, 187.

³⁴ The sentence reads, “*Presbyteri, ordinis Episcopalis providi cooperatores eiusque adiutorium et organum, ad Populo Dei inserviendum vocati, unum presbyterium cum suo Episcopo constituunt, diversis quidem officiis mancipatum,*” which makes it difficult to see where the term “prudent” in the English translation comes from.

³⁵ Ryan, “Episcopal Consecration: The Fullness of Order,” 324.

and are not ordained “unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service” [*non ad sacerdotium, sed ad ministerium*]. Rahner notes a twofold purpose in this expression: “it is intended firstly to counter the exaggerated claims of the diaconate and its trespass on the functions of the priest which had led to its practical suppression in antiquity and the early Middle Ages in the Western Church,” and secondly, to speak more positively of the deacon’s service to the People of God.³⁶

If priestly authority and ministry is dependent on participation in the priesthood of the bishop, the question is: can the bishop call others who are not going to be ordained priests or deacons to share in his priesthood, for the purpose of sharing a particular aspect of his threefold office with a particular community of faith? For Rahner and Ryan the answer is yes, because for them the Church has the authority to reorder the sacrament of order. In *The Episcopate and the Primacy* (1962), Rahner states: “My conviction is that the Church, even as to *potestas ordinis*, can distribute the sacred powers present in [the church] by the will of the founder, in that measure which [the Church] finds appropriate at any given time.”³⁷ Ryan writes: “the Church, in answer to the concrete needs of a different time and place, could make a new departmental subdivision of her [sic] ministry. It would be simply an application of that power with which Christ has endowed his Church over the sacraments, and which was exercised in the beginning in setting up the triple ministry which still exists today.”³⁸ He quotes Yves Congar who “suggests that Christ left the sacrament of Order – with all that it involves of ministry, grace, character, power – to the Church in a global manner, leaving it to [the Church] to regulate and organize the manner of conferring of the sacrament.”³⁹ The

³⁶ Rahner “The Hierarchical Structure of the Church,” 228.

³⁷ Karl Rahner, “On the Divine Right of the Episcopate,” 69, footnote 4.

³⁸ Ryan, “Episcopal Consecration: The Fullness of Order,” 301-302.

³⁹ Yves Congar, “Faits problèmes et reflexions à propos du pouvoir d’Ordre et des rapports entre le presbytérat et l’èpiscopat,” *Maison Dieu* (1948), 125-126 in Ryan, “Episcopal Consecration: The Fullness of Order,” 301.

evolution of the ministry of the priesthood and diaconate, the creation of minor orders, and the changing functions associated with different grades of the hierarchy, through history, and conditioned by history, affirms that statement. If Rahner and Ryan are correct and the *potestas ordinis* can be distributed in a measure appropriate to a given time and need, and all ministry is sharing in the ministry of the bishop, then a reimagining of ministerial structures is not only possible but appropriate. Ryan writes:

It is always possible that the Church may be empowered by her divine founder to make a new departmental division of her ministry in answer to the special pastoral needs of a future era. But no matter what the Church may decide to do in the future - to keep the existing degrees of the hierarchy (which seems most likely and which may be normative) or to institute a new pattern in her dispensation of the sacrament, there will always be one order which will remain unchanged and its powers undiminished. For there must always be successors of the apostles who hold the fullness of the sacrament of Order as it has been instituted by Christ.⁴⁰

Sandra Schneiders notes: “the real question is not whether such or such a thing was done or not done by Jesus or the early Church but why. Only if we can establish that something was done or taught for sound theological reasons that continue to obtain today can a practice and teaching enshrined in the New Testament be considered normative for us.”⁴¹ Arguing “no” to a particular development from the text of Scripture, is not sufficient, for as Jessie Rogers notes: “the lack of a precedent should not rule out a particular development because the Church’s understanding of the gospel and its application grows under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”⁴²

5.3 Reimagining Liturgical Ministry: Paul VI’s *Ministeria Quaedam*

As noted above, the Church has the power given to it by Christ to regulate the sacrament of order in response to pastoral need. Throughout the course of Church

⁴⁰ Ryan, “Episcopal Consecration: The Fullness of Order,” 323.

⁴¹ Schneiders, “New Testament Foundations for Preaching by the Non-Ordained,” 63.

⁴² Jessie Rogers, “Women in Church Leadership Roles – Biblical Perspectives,” *The Furrow* 69, no. 7/8 (July-Aug 2018), 407. See also United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Priest and Sacred Scripture*, ed. Eugene H. Maly (Washington, D.C: United States Catholic Conference Publishing Office, 197), 3-4.

history, other orders in addition to the priesthood and the diaconate were developed in response to specific liturgical and pastoral need. Some of these such as deaconess and virgin were suppressed.⁴³ Over time, orders (exorcist, lector, acolyte, and subdeacon) became identified with the journey toward priestly ordination and ceased being conferred on laymen. Tonsure (porter), while strictly not an order, marked the entrance into the clerical state – a juridical rather than sacramental state – and preceded reception of the first order. The Council of Trent legislated for the restoration of minor orders but this was not pursued after the Council.⁴⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* did not address them specifically, though the declarations of the Preparatory Commission had emphasized them and when *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 76 called for the reform of the ceremonies and texts of the ordination rites, minor orders would have been understood to be included.⁴⁵

However, despite having no practical impact on the liturgical and pastoral life of the Church, they were never abolished. They remained a reminder that liturgical ministry was never simply the preserve of bishops, priests or deacons, even if for all practical purposes the minor orders had vanished from the Church’s ministerial life.

In what follows the changes to minor orders instituted by Paul VI in *Ministeria Quaedam* will be the basis for reflecting on how to incorporate a “ministry of lay liturgical preaching” into the Church’s ministerial structures; a ministry that shares in, and is dependent on, the priesthood on the bishop.

Ministeria Quaedam was part of the postconciliar overhaul of the liturgy required by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. While limited in its impact, *Ministeria Quaedam*’s importance lies perhaps in the pathways it opened but didn’t travel. Nine changes will

⁴³ See Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses: An Historical Study*, trans. K.D. Whitehead (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 226-238. Originally published as *Les Diaconesses: Essai Historique* (1982).

⁴⁴ See *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Sess. 23, ref., Ch. 17.

⁴⁵ See Jungmann, “The Constitution on the Liturgy,” 54.

be noted: some of historical interest and others of relevance to the formation of a ministry of liturgical preaching in the present. Tonsure, along with the minor orders of exorcist and subdeacon, was abolished. Whereas traditionally one entered the clerical state on the reception of tonsure, Paul VI decreed that reception into the clerical state accompanied diaconate ordination. With its abolition, the subdeacon's duties were divided between lectors and acolytes.

The term “minor order” was to be replaced with that of “ministries” [*ministeria*]. This change of terminology created a clear separation between the three higher grades of order and the other liturgical/ministerial functions. The origin of *ordos* in the Church was examined in Section 3.5. and it was noted there that the *ordo* consisted of a specific group who were increasingly seen as distinct from the wider body of Christians. The terminology of “ministries” changes the focus from the person to the function. What matters is less who they are as a group within the community, but what they do for the community. When the text speaks of ministries being open to lay Christians, it does not mean both men and women – lector and acolyte were “reserved to men” [*viris reservatur*], but that they were no longer to be considered part of the journey toward priestly ordination, or as the text notes, “no longer to be considered as reserved to candidates for the sacrament of orders.” The implication here is that these orders are not a part of the sacrament of order but exist alongside it in some possibly nebulous relationship with the sacrament of order. Can. 230 §1 codified *Ministeria Quaedam*'s regulations on the lector and acolyte, “lay men [*Viri laici*]...can be given the stable ministry of lector and acolyte.” This contrasts with can. 230 §§2-3, which allowed laypeople [*Laici*] to “receive temporary assignments [*ex temporanea deputatione*] ...even though they are not lectors or acolytes.” In *Spiritus Domini* (2021), Pope Francis, modified can. 230 §1 to extend these ministries to women changing the text

from *viri laici* to simply *laici*.⁴⁶ *Ministeria Quaedam* also modified how “ministries” were to be conferred – by “institution” [*institutio*] and not “ordination” [*ordinatio*]. The term ordination was to be limited to the liturgical rites associated with institution into the three major orders.

Perhaps most important for present purposes is Paul VI’s invitation to local episcopal conferences to request other ministries be instituted, if deemed necessary or useful [*necessariam vel utilissimam*]. Paul gives the example of the ministry of the catechist as a new permanently installed ministry that an episcopal conference could request of the Holy See to recognize. An example of such a new ministry was that of the *mokambi* (plural: *bakambi*) of the Diocese of Kinshasa. The origin of the *mokambi* arose from formation courses organised from 1963 by the Kinshasa Higher Institute of Religious Science to form laypeople for participation and leadership in parish life.⁴⁷ In 1975 Cardinal Joseph Malula (1917-1989), faced with a rapid numerical expansion of the diocese and a shortage of priests, established a number of parishes assigned to the laity with a resident layman (the role was gender-specific), organizing and directing the parish, in conjunction with a non-resident priest.⁴⁸ While Raymond Moloney uses the term “Lay pastors”, the term “lay leader” [*responsible laic*] is used in the documentation.⁴⁹ In the absence of the pastor, the *mokambi* oversaw the pastoral and liturgical life of a particular community within the larger parish entity, and provided

⁴⁶ See Francis, *Spiritus Domini* [Apostolic Letter “motu proprio” Modifying Canon 230 §1 of the Code of Canon Law Regarding access of Women to the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte], The Holy See, January 10, 2021, accessed September 15, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20210110_spiritus-domini.html.

⁴⁷ See Raymond Moloney, “The Lay Pastors of Kinshasa: A Challenge from Africa,” *The Furrow* 40 no. 4 (April 1989), 215-216.

⁴⁸ The wife of the *mokambi* was expected to help her husband in his public role and is expected to part take in the three-year formation course required of the pastor. See Moloney, “The Lay Pastors of Kinshasa,” 217.

⁴⁹ See Commission des ministères laïcs, “Rôle et Fonctions du Mokambi (Responsable Laïc) de Paroisse,” Archidiocèse de Kinshasa, 1985, accessed June 05, 2024, https://books.google.ie/books/about/R%C3%B4le_et_fonctions_du_mokambi_responsabl.html?id=sHs9AAAAAYAAJ&redir_esc=y.

unity and cohesion for a whole series of parish ministries. The *mokambi* model presupposes cooperation between priest and lay pastor, and as a model, is reflected in can. 517 §2 of the 1983 Code.

In addition to his organizational role the *mokambi* was also responsible for explaining the word of God. While this is more likely a reference to catechesis and overseeing the parish's catechists, it should not presume to exclude preaching in non-eucharistic liturgies as, in the absence of the Eucharist, weekly worship would focus on a liturgy of the word. This responsibility toward the word of God is stated directly in the Prayer of Installation. The bishop prays: "that he take care of this Church, that he take care of the tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament, that he preside over the prayers of the faithful and explain to them the Word of God."⁵⁰ The *mokambi* was not a permanent salaried position. Cardinal Malula did not want to see developed a "lay-clericalism."⁵¹ When Moloney asked why the *mokambi* is not ordained to the permanent diaconate he was told that their importance was as laymen working among the laity,

to be ordained deacon would mean being classified among the clergy, and so his work would lose a lot of its sign-value and impact. One of the important themes running through the literature on the lay pastors...is the idea that they are to be 'a prophetic sign,' challenging the whole people of God to take up their responsibilities in the mission of the Church.⁵²

This being a prophetic sign does not mean they are not installed in their office by episcopal authority. The ministry of the *mokambi* represents a new permanent installed ministry responding to pastoral need. The bishop publicly installs them in their office, which both signals their commissioning and their dependent status. They are not installed solely by juridical mandate but by a liturgical rite, in which the bishop

⁵⁰ See Moloney, "The Lay Pastors of Kinshasa," 217.

⁵¹ See Marco Moerschbacher, "The Pastoral Renewal of Cardinal Malula – Implementation of the Church's Mission in *L'Héritage du Discours Théologique Négro-African: Mélanges en l'honneur de Professeur Oscar Bimwenyi-Kweshi*, ed. Kalamba Nsapo & Bilolo Mubabinge (Munich, Freising, Kinshasa: African University Studies, 2011), 336.

⁵² Moloney, "The Lay Pastors of Kinshasa," 219-220.

authorizes them for a particular set of functions; these are his responsibilities, delegated by him to another, for the sake of the proclamation of the gospel.

However, a valid question remains: despite their long existence and service, were they regarded as a legitimate ministry in their own right or just a temporary substitute measure in the absence of priests or permanent deacons? Marco Moerschbacher notes that by 1999 the number of *mokambi* had reduced from 17 at the time of Cardinal Malula's death in 1989 to just 9 in 1999. Moerschbacher writes, "even though a new manual has been edited in 1999, one might doubt whether the present *ordinarius* is happy with his lay ministers."⁵³ If the bishop was not personally opposed to such ministry, he may still have felt hamstrung by the general 1990s attitude toward such ministry, as was noted in the speeches and instructions analysed in Chapter Four.

The impact of *Ministeria Quaedam* was limited. The warrant for its reforms was the Council's call to restore the liturgy, and the plurality of ministries and ministers that were once part of the liturgical tradition, and to adapt those traditions to contemporary needs (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 21). However, in practice the ministries of lector and acolyte continued to be conferred on seminarians, while in parishes these functions continued to be carried out by extraordinary ministers, mostly women, who could not be instituted into these ministries, until Francis' 2021 reform. Winfried Haunerland, while approving of the purpose of *Ministeria Quaedam*, is critical of it. He notes that the list of ministries, exorcist, confessor, subdeacon, lector, deaconess, acolyte correspond to different liturgical and non-liturgical functions that were real functions in the life of the community at one time but by the time of the publication of *Ministeria Quaedam* were either obsolete or the function didn't correspond in a real way to the office bestowed. He writes: "it would be more realistic to develop a reform which emerges from the

⁵³ Moerschbacher, "The Pastoral Renewal of Cardinal Malula," 336.

permanent ministries which are actually being given to men and women in the church today. Those active men and women delineate the new *ministeria*, proceeding as they do from concrete profiles of what these ministers do.”⁵⁴ The preservation of lector and acolyte reflect their association with word and altar, which continue to have real meaning for the life of the community in the present. In the end *Ministeria Quaedam* represents a “a step supporting an experience of continuity”, but Haunerland warns: “at the same time, essential continuity and tradition should not find their perdurance only in particular ministries which have a name and definition but in the fact that the church has always known, outside of ordained ministry, non-ordained ministries which it could develop and order according to the potentiality and necessity of a particular time.”⁵⁵

5.4 The Criteria for a Ministry of Lay Liturgical Preaching

What follows are a set of criteria on which to construct a ministry of lay liturgical preaching. These criteria are the basis on which an initiated Christian would be called forth to participate in an installed permanent ministry of liturgical preaching. It is a charismatic and creative response to the Church’s need for liturgical preachers. What is proposed is not an emergency and temporary measure based on necessity. What follows presupposes the normative sacramental structure of the Church and does not intend to undermine that structure. The task of the magisterium is, as Haunerland notes,

to react to both exaggerations and to fruitful developments in a sensible way so that the sacramental basic structure of the normative structure of offices are not endangered, even by those of goodwill. It is an equally important task, however, for them to recognize meaningful developments in local churches around the world and so to further diversity in unity.⁵⁶

As John O’Malley notes: “creativity, which is radically opposed to slavish imitation, implies both utilization of the past and rejection of the past. The outcomes of creativity,

⁵⁴ Winfried Haunerland, “The Heirs of the Clergy? The New Pastoral Ministries and the Reform of the Minor Orders,” trans. Thomas F. O’Meara, *Worship* 75 no. 4 (July 2001), 311.

⁵⁵ Haunerland, “The Heirs of the Clergy?,” 311.

⁵⁶ Haunerland, “The Heirs of the Clergy?,” 318.

in any case, is something *new*.”⁵⁷ The creation of a ministry of liturgical preaching is a fruitful development in keeping with the Council’s teaching on baptism as a consecration for mission and the freedom of the Spirit to allot charisms for building up the kingdom. Such a development is not contrary to the structure of the sacrament of order as all ministry, whether ordained or not, is a participation in the ministry of the bishop: “If holy orders is the sacrament of ministry whose forms evolved in the Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in function of historical circumstances then the Church, guided by the Spirit, may restructure sacramental ministry in order ever to respond to contemporary needs.”⁵⁸

Taking all ministry as a participation in the ministry of the bishop and the Church’s authority to regulate ministry and the sacrament of order, additional criteria are required upon which to proceed to the creation of a ministry of lay liturgical preaching and determine who can be and should be appointed to the ministry of liturgical preaching.

The first criterion is that baptism is a consecration for mission. In Chapter Two it was noted that through baptism and confirmation the Christian participates in “visible ecclesial acts.”⁵⁹ Baptism results in the right and duty to participate in the Church’s sacramental life, but that confirmation confers on a Christian the commission to take their place in the “public life and work of the Church, actively and visibly sharing in Christ’s work of sending the Spirit.”⁶⁰ Baptism, as Yves Congar noted, is a “consecration *for* something.”⁶¹ However, determining what the “*for*” is for each Christian requires more than baptism. As was noted earlier, “the sacrament of initiation, baptism-confirmation-eucharist, is an initiation primarily into the church, *in ecclesiam*,

⁵⁷ O’Malley, “Reform, Historical Consciousness and Vatican II’s Aggiornamento,” 600.

⁵⁸ Donald C. Maldari, “A Reconstruction of the Ministries of the Sacrament of Holy Orders,” *Horizons* 34 no. 2 (2007), 239.

⁵⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 162.

⁶⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, 164.

⁶¹ Yves Congar, “The Laity,” 241. Italics in original.

not into the secular world, *in saeculum*. The sacrament of initiation gives each one a positioning in the church itself.”⁶²

If baptism is the basis of one’s discipleship, then the undertaking of an ordered ministry in the service of the community of faith involves “all of the following: (a) a personal call, (b) ecclesial discernment and recognition of a genuine charism, (c) formation appropriate to the demands of the ministry, (d) some authorization by community leadership, and some ritualization as a prayer for the assistance of the Holy Spirit and a sending forth on behalf of the community.”⁶³ These measures are very similar to those criteria for commissioning outlined by Barth in Chapter One and are common whether a Christian is discerning a call to priesthood, diaconate, or a ministry of liturgical preaching. What follows will analyse each of these criteria.

All ministry must begin with a sense of being called. The mature Christian knows he or she has each been given a mission, a particular task they are called to do so as to build up the Kingdom of God. The Decree on the Laity notes: “in the organism of the living body no member plays a purely passive part, sharing in the life of the body it shares at the same time in its activity” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2). According to Mark McIntosh, the “most fundamental prerequisite” for Christian life is a “willingness to renounce personal calculations and make oneself available for the mission in life that God intends one to enjoy.”⁶⁴ For Hans Urs von Balthasar, the Johannine motif of “doing the will of him who sent me” (John 4:34) is central to Jesus’ self-understanding, as it should be to ours. This Christological obedience and openness of the Son to the Father’s mission can only be understood if we see both obedience and mission in Trinitarian

⁶² Osborne, *Ministry*, 539.

⁶³ Richard R. Gaillardetz, “The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion,” in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, 36.

⁶⁴ Mark McIntosh, *Christology from Within: Spirituality and Incarnation in Hans Urs Von Balthasar*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 59.

terms. The Son's obedience and mission is a constitutive element of the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. Christ's earthly mission happens within the framework of Trinitarian relations. The procession of the Son from the Father and his eternal return to the Father continues through his earthly life. In *A Theology of History* Von Balthasar speaks of the Father's act of generation as "not an outpouring into emptiness but terminates in the begotten fruit."⁶⁵ This relationship is "the eternal source from which he lives and derives his energy."⁶⁶ This pattern is to be repeated in the life of the Christian who, through his or her relationship with Christ, is called to bear fruit. Von Balthasar speaks of this desiring in terms of a "boundless readiness to be used."⁶⁷ When Christians live out their call, they imitate Christ who, having received his mission from the Father, does not his own will but that of the Father (see Jn. 12:49). This suggests that those called to serve, and endowed with a charismatic gift, are called to serve the community of faith; the charism is given for the sake of others.

Ministerial structures must be informed by the Spirit's charismatic activity; "the Church, which the Spirit guides in the way of all truth, and which [the Spirit] unified in communion and in works of ministry, [the Spirit] both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with [the spirit's] fruits" (*Lumen Gentium* 4). The decree on the laity noted: "From the acceptance of these charisms, including those which are more elementary, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of men [*hominum*] and the building up of the Church, in the freedom of the Holy Spirit who 'breathes where [the Spirit] wills' (John 3:8)" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 3; see also *Lumen Gentium* 4, 12).

⁶⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 30-31.

⁶⁶ John O'Donnell, "Hans Urs von Balthasar: The Form of his Theology", *Communio* 16 (Fall, 1989), 462.

⁶⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Vocation", *Communio* 37 (spring, 2010), 115-116.

A pneumatological approach is essential to moderate the Christological motifs that presently underpin much of the theology of ministry especially ordained ministry.⁶⁸ As Aloys Grillmeier notes, “the Church must cease to be afraid of charisms.”⁶⁹ Yves Congar writes that “one of the most important ways in which the Holy Spirit has been restored to the pneumatological ecclesiology of the Council was in the sphere of charisms.”⁷⁰ Grillmeier writes: “If the Holy Spirit were not constantly impelling the Church to find new forms of life, the Church would not be the developing organism which it is.”⁷¹ Very importantly he adds: “the value of charisms is not to be measured by their power to astound, but by their usefulness for the People of God.”⁷² However, the decree notes that the use of a charism entails a process of discernment by the community of faith. Congar notes that “a new theology, or rather a new programme of ‘ministries,’ giving the Church a new face that is quite different from the one that the earlier pyramidal and clerical ecclesiology presented, has developed since the Second Vatican Council on the basis of these charism used for the common good and the building up of the Church.”⁷³ This right and duty to use them in the Church does not imperil the form of government established and preserved by the Spirit as the right and duty of use them is dependent on the episcopal great Church, discernment by the community, and commissioning by the bishop.

The episcopal great Church has the right and duty to test the claim, made by a member of the community, that they have a call and a charism. The community has a particular responsibility to discern someone’s call. Susan Wood notes: “a person must

⁶⁸ See Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, 136.

⁶⁹ Grillmeier, “The People of God,” 166. See also Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element of the Church*, trans. W. J. O’Hara (London: Burns & Oates, 1964), 48.

⁷⁰ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Volume 1, trans. David Smith (Chestnut Ridge, PA: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2013), 170).

⁷¹ Grillmeier, “The People of God,” 165-166.

⁷² Grillmeier, “The People of God,” 166.

⁷³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Volume 1, 170.

be called by both God and the ecclesial community. These are not two separate calls unrelated to each other, for God calls through the discernment of the community.”⁷⁴ However, discernment is, in the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* 12, reserved to “those who preside over the Church and to whose special competence it belongs” and this is proper because, the one called will share in the priesthood and ministry of the bishop, and their call is ecclesial, and not independent of the community. However, experience teaches, that bishops can make such determinations regarding charisms, on the basis of their own theological and ecclesiological presuppositions, and so reject the possibility that the Spirit is calling particular laypeople to serve a ministry of liturgical preaching. Many lay Christians who desire to be active in ministry and feel called to particular forms of service, are blocked by these theological and ecclesiological presuppositions, which identify particular ministries such as liturgical preaching as proper to the ordained ministry and dependent on ordination. Bishop Matano’s attitude toward lay preaching in the diocese of Rochester and his circumscription of the activity contrasts with the attitude of his predecessor. How to preserve lay ministry as bishops change is a challenge and that cannot be examined here. Marginalization leads to resentment and departure from the community.

Gaillardetz’s third criterion necessary for service to the community of faith is formation appropriate to the particular ministry. Barth noted that theological formation is essential for anyone who seeks to be commissioned to preach in the name of the Church; “the Church cannot responsibly grant anyone the right to proclaim the Word without a theological education.”⁷⁵ In addition there needs to be the ability to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:2). The capacity to distil Scripture, theology, and liturgy into a

⁷⁴ Susan K. Wood, “A Theology of Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministers,” *In the Name of the Church: Vocation and Authorization of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, ed. William J. Cahoy (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), 100.

⁷⁵ Barth, *Homiletics*, 68.

liturgical homily, is a good indicator of a charismatic gift being present; “anytime anybody is enabled by anyone else or anything else to be more loving, more intelligent, freer, more responsible, more generous, more open, more insightful, more creative, that is the work of the Spirit.”⁷⁶

Gaillardetz’s final criterion is “authorization by community leadership and some ritualization as a prayer for the assistance of the Holy Spirit and sending forth on behalf of the community. Section 5.2. noted that all ministry is a participation in the priesthood of the bishop. This is made clear by the conciliar references to priests and deacons (see *Lumen Gentium* 28, 29). This would also be true of any permanent installed ministry the Church established. Legitimacy – that a particular individual has the right to do so – and authority – that a particular individual has the power given to him or her – comes from an act of commissioning presided over by the bishop, which invites the recipient into sharing in an aspect of the bishop’s priesthood. In the case of a ministry of liturgical preaching, the liturgical preacher would share in the bishop’s prophetic office.

Hauerland writes: “We need to show the ministries’ connection with the bearers of sacramental office. That connection flows not just from a juridical act but from an event in liturgical celebration which illustrates the visible symbol of the sacramental and spiritual character of the church.”⁷⁷ The Church has always marked ordination to minor orders and continues to do so even if these liturgies are now called installations rather than ordinations. Installation serves as a public recognition that one is called and commissioned to exercise a ministry in the name of the Church.

A permanent installed ministry of liturgical preaching would require an installation rite to publicly affirm the commissioning of individuals to the task. Any rite created to

⁷⁶ Michael Himes, “Panel Discussion,” *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry through the Wisdom of the Past*, ed. Richard W. Miller II (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Press, 2005), 93.

⁷⁷ Hauerland, “The Heirs of the Clergy?,” 319.

publicly institute and commission a person into the ministry of liturgical preaching would include those present for the conferral of other rites whether ministries or orders namely: 1) calling of candidates, which marks the recognition of the community that they have a vocation and a charism to the ministry being conferred; 2) a homily by the bishop who speaks to about the ministry and its service in the life of the Church reminding the candidates of the obligation they are taking on; 3) the invitation to prayer, which invites the community to pray for the person about to receive the ministry; 4) the prayer of the bishop asking God's blessing on the minister; and 5) the institution into the ministry by receiving symbols that reflect their ministry.⁷⁸

A question that must be noted but cannot be answered here is the degree to which those installed into the permanent ministry of liturgical preaching (or any installed and permanent ministry established by the Church) receive the sacrament of order. If their installation, which is a liturgical act, brings about a participation in the bishop's priesthood, then something of the sacrament must be conferred as it is when priests and deacons are ordained.

What of the importance for ministry of being able to act in the person of Christ the Head? It is essential to the coherency of the magisterium's postconciliar theology of ministry and the basis for restricting lay ecclesial ministry. Rather than argue that ecclesial ministers must be empowered to act in the person of Christ the Head, an alternative perspective may be to borrow from Rahner, who noted that the priesthood and the diaconate are of divine origin, in as much as they participate in an office of divine origin. Taking a similar approach it could be argued, for those who believe that the capacity to act in the person of Christ the Head is essential to the public exercise of ministry, that installed and commissioned lay liturgical preachers, when they preach, act

⁷⁸ See *The Rites of the Catholic Church*, Volume II, 12-17, 39-43.

in the person of Christ the Head, because of the fact that they participate in an office that is empowered to act in such a way. Thus acting in such a way is not tied to their office, as it were by right, but by a privilege arising from their relationship to the bishop's priesthood.

5.5 Conclusion

Chapter Five explored an alternative theological basis on which liturgical preaching could be entrusted to the laity as a proper ministerial activity and not simply as a response to necessity. The bases of such an alternative theological framework were the principles that all ministry is a participation in the priesthood of the bishop who represents the fullness of the sacrament of order, and secondly, the authority of the Church to regulate ecclesial ministerial structures. Upon these two foundations, an additional set of criteria were set down to determine how a particular layperson – there is no free pulpit proposed – is admitted into the permanent installed ministry of liturgical preaching: baptism as a consecration for mission and the basis of one's status in the Church and not the secular realm; personal call; charismatic gift; discernment by the community; theological formation; and installation by ritual. What is proposed specifically with regard to lay liturgical preaching can be applied to cover other areas of the community's pastoral and liturgical life and bring more people into active rather than passive participation in the Church. The theological proposal outlined finds its resonance in Rahner's call to reflect on the Church in the present with a deep sense of history, a prophetic awareness of the gospel, and with charismatically creative imagination. While radical from the perspective of what is deemed possible by the magisterial texts of today, it is approach rooted in the Church's sacramental and hierarchical nature. It looks back into the tradition for models of liturgical ministry and adapted these to the pastoral needs of the present – it is a new way of doing ministry by

a recovery and expansion of an old way of doing ministry as Jungmann notes, “a real community service before it was clericalized.”⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” 35-36

General Conclusion

Chapter Five's theological framework for a ministry of lay liturgical preaching, as a permanently installed ministry in the Church, is new way – by way of the tradition – of thinking, not simply about who could be called to the ministry of liturgical preaching, but about ministry in general. As was noted previously, changes to the status of one group in the Church, impacts upon other groups in the Church.¹ Forming a permanently installed ministry of liturgical preaching would impact upon the role priests and deacons play in the ministerial life of the community of faith.

Vatican II repositioned the bishop. The postconciliar era repositioned the deacon, identifying him with liturgy and sacred ministry and reserving the eucharistic homily to him. The postconciliar deacon was identified with acting in the person of Christ the Head. Then *Omnium in Mentum* was promulgated. It decreed that deacons do not act in the person of Christ the Head nor are they part of the ministerial priesthood. Consequently, Marc Caron notes that deacons minister through their baptismal configuration to Christ, which is why a delegated layperson can carry out all the tasks identified with deacons. As Caron notes, the laity differ in degree from the deacon, not in essence.² In canonical and legal terms, *Omnium in Mentum* changed the deacon's position in the Church, yet in practice little has changed; the eucharistic homily continues to remain reserved to deacons even though the basis of this reservation was the fact that they act in the person of Christ the Head. Either the right to preach eucharistic homilies must be removed from deacons or laypeople can be admitted into the office. John Kozlowski's attempts to minimise the impact of *Omnium in Mentum*

¹ See Rahner *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 109 and Osborne, "Envisioning a Theology of Ordained and Lay Ministry," 215.

² Caron, "The Changing Liturgical Role of the Deacon," 151.

seems disingenuous, suggesting as he does that a deacon's "in some manner configuration" to Christ, arising from diaconate ordination, was a sufficient basis for allowing a deacon to preach eucharistic homilies even though that configuration was not to the person of Christ the Head.³ Deacons, it was noted, are configured to Christ the Servant and are a sign of the servant dimension of Christ's mission.

The implications of *Omnium in Mentem* have not been reflected upon. Perhaps concern to ensure "sacred" ministers is informing how matters proceed – or rather, are not addressed theologically. As can be seen in the Irish context, there has been a substantial drive to establish the permanent diaconate and perhaps the need for these ministers to have "street credibility" means the impact of *Omnium in Mentem* is quietly passed over. The ministerial credibility of the deacon has been built up through the postconciliar era and heavily contrasted with the laity's ministry in the secular realm or as a supply due to absent clergy. One of the challenges facing lay ministry, particularly lay liturgical ministry, is establishing it as a legitimate activity for laypeople in the eyes of laypeople (and many clergy) who have been schooled to see liturgical ministry as the domain of clergy. If the ecclesiastical authorities want to reserve preaching, and in particular liturgical preaching, to the clergy, then the capacity to preach meaningfully to a congregation must be a determining factor in calling an individual to ordination.

Instruction on Collaboration 3 §1 noted that that the right to preach bears no relationship to preaching ability or theological preparation and is an insult to the congregation gathered to hear God's word opened and explained. If a candidate for holy orders cannot preach then he should not be ordained, and perhaps the lack of capacity to preach should be taken as a mark that they are not called to the ordained ministry. These matters remain profoundly unresolved at the level of ecclesiology, and ministry.

³ See Kozlowski, "The Laity and Liturgical Preaching," 262, footnote 76.

This thesis offers a solution, moving away as it does from the Christological emphasis on the minister acting in the person of Christ the Head and focussing instead on ministry in terms of relationship with the bishop and participation in his priesthood. The emphasis is on participation in a grade of the hierarchy whose office is of divine origin and represents the fullness of the sacrament, namely the bishop, who “in an eminent and visible way sustain[s] the roles of Christ Himself as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His person” (*Lumen Gentium* 21), is offered as the key presupposition for ministry whether priestly, diaconal, or lay. From this starting point, a set of criteria was offered to help the community discern who should be called and presented to the bishop for installation and commissioning: personal call; charismatic gift; community discernment; formation; and installation by liturgical act.⁴

Adopting such an approach would radically alter ministry in the Church and move beyond the presuppositions and horizons of understanding from the past that identify particular ministerial responsibilities with particular categories of the faithful and would result in Rahner’s declericalized Church. This is not a Church free of clergy, but a Church which recognizes that the Spirit will blow where it will, calling forth new structures necessary to ensure the continued proclamation of the gospel. Ministry would follow from the carefully discerned reflection on the actual needs of a particular Church as to what ministries are needed to proclaim the gospel, followed by the discerned reflection of the mature Christian and the faith community as to who is called to provide for those needs. Ministry would not be the preserve of one or two people especially set aside, be it a cleric or a professional lay pastoral worker.

However, this approach demands that the community take increasing ownership of their community of faith, listen carefully to God’s call for them, and learn the skills of

⁴ See Gaillardetz, “The Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry within an Ordered Communion,” 36.

discernment, so as to identify from their ranks who is called to what ministry, and then present such persons to the bishop, for him to confirm by an act of ritual installation and commissioning. This demands work on the part of the community and is a threat to the status quo and to priestly identity.

The synodal process that is presently being undertaken calls on the Church to listen, dialogue, and discern: “a Church which listens, which realizes that ‘listening is more than simply hearing’. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the College of Bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other and listening to the Holy Spirit, ‘the Spirit of truth’ (Jn 14:17).”⁵ The Church charged with teaching can only do so if it is listening to what the People of God are saying and carefully observing how they are receiving the law. The challenge of the present-day demands, as noted previously, a charismatically creative imagination based on a sense of history and a prophetic awareness of the gospel.⁶ The alternative is to seek refuge in old certainties and old presuppositions, which may have served the Church well at a different moment but which experience tells us is not solving the pastoral challenges of the present.

In the parishes of the diocese of Saint Paul & Minneapolis, the diocese of Rochester, and with the Preaching Guild of the diocese San Antonio, something new was happening. Perhaps the bishops of Saint Paul & Minneapolis, Rochester, and San Antonio, who ended the tradition of lay liturgical preaching in their respective dioceses, would have been more supportive of the practice of lay liturgical preaching if they understood the practice as a participation in their own episcopal authority and flowing from that authority, and if they had been open to new forms of ministerial life beyond a

⁵ See Francis, *Address at Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops*.

⁶ See Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, 47.

set of presuppositions belonging to a preconciliar age and focused on a false dichotomy between classes of faithful. Pope Francis noted to those gathered at the opening of the 2015 Synod of Bishops on the Family their responsibility to “open oneself up to the Holy Spirit with apostolic courage, with evangelical humility and confident, trusting prayer, in order that [the Spirit] guide us, enlighten us and make us keep before our eyes, not our personal opinions, but with faith in God, fidelity to the Magisterium, the good of the Church and the *salus animarum*.”⁷ It is hoped that the approach taken in answering the thesis question and the answer arrived at, reflects that responsibility.

⁷ Francis, “Introductory remarks by his Holiness Pope Francis,” The Holy See, October 05, 2105, accessed January 03, 2025, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151005_padri-sinodali.html.

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