

# Jesuits, The Ministerial Priesthood, and Eucharistic Concelebration

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*Post-conciliar developments on the meaning of the ministerial priesthood and its relationship to the priesthood of all the baptized make concelebration less than ideal. The norms of the church often do not keep pace with such developments. Furthermore, the church needs to re-examine the theology behind other practices, such as the offering of Mass intentions, that encourage concelebration.*

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In an essay entitled “Concelebration: A Problem of Symbolic Roles in the Church,” published over thirty years ago, I argued that daily concelebration by priests was less preferable than simple participation in the Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> Why? Because the post-Vatican II reformed liturgy requires us to re-think how priests are related to the common or baptismal priesthood of the faithful, in line with a renewed understanding of the communal nature of the liturgy. While I stand by that basic thesis, I realize that it must be argued with much more finesse and complexity than I could do at that time.

At the outset, I need to be clear. The subject of this essay is not the practice of concelebration considered without qualification, but rather the practice of concelebrating daily and in a formal way—which is to say, properly vested and saying the eucharistic prayer in a low voice along with the principal celebrant. In a concelebration as the official documentation of the Catholic Church envisions it, the church is clearly

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<sup>1</sup> John F. Baldovin, “Concelebration: A Problem of Symbolic Roles in the Church,” *Worship* 59 (1985): 32–47.

arrayed in its hierarchical form. I certainly would argue that there are occasions on which manifesting the church's hierarchical arrangement is most appropriate—for example, at ordinations, weddings, and funerals—but I do not believe that such a practice is the same as daily concelebration; I leave the profession of vows here as an open question.

Although the Society of Jesus is a clerical order, many of us, me included, would consider manifesting our identity as Jesuits—ordained and non-ordained alike—on a vow day a more powerful witness to our Jesuit brotherhood than distinguishing our ecclesial roles by concelebrating at Mass. This would follow the practice of Franciscans, both ordained and not, whom I have seen processing together as brothers on their vow days. And I also maintain that there are good reasons why many Jesuits and members of other religious orders refrain from daily concelebration.

In any case, this issue of daily concelebration has become a neuralgic and at times divisive one in our Jesuit communities. The question I want to ask is: why is it that so many Jesuits opt for attendance at daily eucharistic celebrations as opposed to concelebrating? To answer this question, I think that we need to reflect first on the profound change and renewal that has taken place in our theology and practice of liturgy in the past fifty years, second on developments in the theology of the Eucharist, and then on how both influence our identity and practice as priests. For this reason, I will be dealing in this essay with some rather sensitive and complex issues, including the nature of the eucharistic sacrifice and the practice of Mass intentions and stipends. As such, I will attempt to look beyond the church's official prescriptions, for I believe that many Jesuits and other religious are operating at least implicitly out of a contemporary theology that raises important questions regarding our official practice.

To be clear, according to the current rules, priests may not, except “in rare and exceptional cases,” participate in the Eucharist *modo laico*—that is, in distinguishing vestments.<sup>2</sup> Thus, they have

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<sup>2</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2002) 114, <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/the-mass/general-instruction-of-the-roman-missal/girm-chapter-4.cfm> (hereafter cited in this essay as GIRM): “For it is preferable that Priests who are present

three choices: concelebration, the individual celebration of Mass, and assisting *in choro*—that is, vested in cassock and surplice and taking a place in the sanctuary.<sup>3</sup> Thus, official church teaching clearly expects priests to participate in the Eucharist according to their “order” in the church. In short, both canon law and liturgical law, the latter as presented in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, urge priests to celebrate the Eucharist daily if possible.<sup>4</sup>

With this in mind, the question arises as to whether Jesuits and other religious who do not follow these prescriptions can defend their practice. It seems to me that there are a number of prior and more fundamental issues that come to bear on this question: the relationship between the ministerial and common priesthood, especially in the celebration of the sacraments; the nature of the Mass as a sacrifice, as well as what that sacrifice effects; and the meaning of Mass intentions and stipends. Of course, these are profound questions; but I would maintain that even if I cannot do them justice here, we cannot avoid them if we want to understand what is at stake when priests refrain from concelebration.

And so, after a brief recap of the history of concelebration and of the reasoning that led the fathers at Vatican II to introduce presbyteral concelebration into the church’s practice, I will discuss some of the most pertinent issues from ecclesiology, the theology of the priesthood, and eucharistic theology relating to the question of daily concelebration.

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at a celebration of the Eucharist, unless excused for a just reason, should usually exercise the function proper to their Order and hence take part as concelebrants, wearing sacred vestments. Otherwise, they wear their proper choir dress or a surplice over a cassock.” See also Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament, *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (March 25, 2004), 128, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20040423\\_redemptionis-sacramentum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html), which adds: “It is not fitting, except in rare and exceptional cases and with reasonable cause, for them to participate at Mass, as regards to externals, in the manner of the lay faithful.”

<sup>3</sup> Here and elsewhere in this essay, the verb *assist*, when referring to a person at Mass, means “to attend” rather than “to give support or help.” And when referring to a priest, it implies that he is not concelebrating. —Ed. note.

<sup>4</sup> Canons 904, 912; *GIRM* 114. Section three, below, deals with the recommendation for daily celebration by priests.

## I. Why Did Vatican II (Re-)Introduce Concelebration?

Please note that the title of this section reads “(re-)introduce,” since prior to Vatican II, concelebration—in the sense of verbal co-consecration—was unusual in the church’s eucharistic practice. This is certainly true for the first seven centuries, in which we have evidence—for example, in the third-century *Apostolic Tradition*—of only bishops and presbyters concelebrating, in the sense of extending their hands during the eucharistic prayer. We also have evidence of bishops ceding parts of the prayer to a visiting bishop or sharing it among presbyters.<sup>5</sup> From the eighth century on, however, there is evidence that presbyters and bishops concelebrated verbally with the pope on certain feast days.

Still, by the thirteenth century, concelebration was practiced as co-consecration only at the ordination of priests and by a newly-ordained bishop with the one who ordained him. But even then, the practice raised some questions. For instance, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) asks how it is that several priests can participate in one eucharistic consecration. The question is whether one of the concelebrants can consecrate by finishing the formula “this is my body” before the others.<sup>6</sup> He responds, on the basis of the church’s practice at priestly ordination—what today we would call the *lex orandi* or “rule of prayer”—and the authority of Pope Innocent III (1160–1216), that the ordaining bishop and the newly-ordained priests all should direct their intention to the same moment of consecration.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in the twentieth century, permission was sometimes given for “synchronized” masses at which one priest would celebrate at the main altar and other priests would celebrate separately but in a synchronized fashion at side altars.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For a survey of this evidence, see Jean C. McGowan, *Concelebration: Sign of the Unity of the Church* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 23–53; and Archdale King, *Concelebration in the Christian Church* (London: Mowbray, 1966), 65–68.

<sup>6</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [ST] 3, q. 82, a. 2. Thomas’s teacher, Albert the Great (1193–1280), himself opposed concelebration on the grounds that one of the concelebrants might confect the Eucharist before the principal celebrant. On this point, see Pierre Journel, *The Rite of Concelebration of the Mass and of Communion under Both Species* (New York: Desclée De Brouwer, 1967), 98.

<sup>7</sup> ST 3, q. 82, a. 2, resp.

<sup>8</sup> See King, *Concelebration*, 60.

There was a vigorous theological debate around the issue of concelebration during the 1940s and 1950s, much of it centering on an article by Karl Rahner (1904–1984) dealing with the relationship between many masses and the one sacrifice.<sup>9</sup> Rahner’s proposal went to the heart of the matter: given the fact that every mass is of infinite value as the representation of Christ’s redemptive sacrifice, how is the effectiveness of a particular mass to be applied?<sup>10</sup> In brief, his solution was that the effectiveness of the Mass depends on the faith and devotion of those who offer it, lay and ordained alike. By Rahner’s logic, a priest celebrating privately could be offering with more faith and devotion than he would by concelebrating. This is an issue with which I deal below, where I draw on the implications of Rahner’s argument as a whole.

For the time being, note that, in a speech entitled *Magnificate Dominum Mecum*, Pius XII vigorously condemned Rahner’s position. According to the pope, one hundred masses celebrated individually by one hundred priests is not the same as a mass at which one hundred priests assist: if they merely assist, then they are “considered to be on the same plane as the lay-members of the faithful.”<sup>11</sup> Rahner responded by distinguishing among four types of concelebration, wherein:

1. the concelebrating priests do not intend to exercise their priestly power and so function only ceremonially;
2. only the principal celebrant says the consecratory words, such that the concelebrating priests exercise their priestly function by offering the Mass but are not co-consecrators;

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<sup>9</sup> Karl Rahner, “Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer: Ein Untersuchung über die rechte Norm der Messhäufigkeit,” in *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 71 (Freiburg: Herder and Herder, 1949), 257–317. This essay was expanded and translated into English as Karl Rahner and Angelus Häussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968).

<sup>10</sup> See Council of Trent, session 22, *Decree on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, chapter 2; Denzinger–Hünemann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum: A Compendium of Creeds, Definitions and Declarations of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 1548. Note too that the effects of the Mass are often referred to as its “fruits,” following the usage of Duns Scotus; on this point, see Rahner and Häussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, 61–87.

<sup>11</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Magnificate Dominum Mecum* (November 2, 1954), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 46 (1954), 666–77, at 669; cited in McGowan, *Concelebration*, 85.

3. the principal celebrant alone pronounces the words, but in the name of the other concelebrants who are in moral union with him; and
4. the concelebrants all pronounce the words with the principal celebrant, each intending to confect the sacrament and so exercising his priestly power.<sup>12</sup>

Vigorous theological discussion continued all the way to the Second Vatican Council, where during the first session the debate over concelebration was mirrored in a speech by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani (1870–1979) lamenting that concelebrated masses meant fewer masses.<sup>13</sup> In the end, the liturgy document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, reads as follows: “Concelebration, whereby the unity of the priesthood is appropriately manifested, has remained in use to this day in the church both in the east and in the west.”<sup>14</sup> It goes on to give the following examples: Holy Thursday at both the Chrism Mass and the Mass of the Lord’s Supper; masses during priests’ conferences and synods; the blessing of an abbot; and, at the bishop’s discretion, the “conventual” Mass of a religious community or the principal masses in churches. The constitution also adds that priests retain their right to celebrate Mass individually and mandates a new rite for concelebration.

Finally, a Vatican instruction issued in 1965 decided the primary theological questions around co-consecration and the ability of a priest to apply a stipend to a concelebrated mass.<sup>15</sup> This teaching required concelebrating priests to say *sotto voce* the part of the eucharistic prayer from the epiclesis until the end of the anamnesis and decreed that those priests could apply a stipended intention once a day, including at a concelebrated mass. I will revisit these issues in part III, below.

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<sup>12</sup> Karl Rahner, “Dogmatische Bemerkungen über die Frage der Konzelebration,” in *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 6 (1955), 81–106; McGowan, 77–107.

<sup>13</sup> Alfredo Ottaviani, *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, session 1, 20–21. For a description of the debate by Mathijs Laberights, see Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak, *The History of Vatican II*, vol. 2 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 129–31.

<sup>14</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (December 4, 1963), 57–58, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html) (hereafter cited as SC).

<sup>15</sup> For a full commentary, see Jounel, *The Rite of Concelebration*, passim.

## II. Issues Regarding Ecclesiology and Ordained Ministry

**P**rofound theological issues underly the question of concelebration. These issues affect, at least implicitly, the practice of not concelebrating that has become common among Jesuits.

Several of these issues relate to ecclesiology in general and specifically to ordained ministry. First, the seventeen documents of Vatican II, four of which are constitutions, do not all bear the same weight. Furthermore, they do not always present a unified vision—for example, the vision of full, conscious, and active liturgical participation that characterized both the constitution on the liturgy (1963) and the constitution on the church (1964) seems to fade from the picture by the time that the council’s last document, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*), was issued in 1965.

As the historian Massimo Faggioli has pointed out, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* promoted a radical rethinking about the Eucharist as the act of the whole church, including the head and members. The document also formed the basis for a new vision of church that begins with liturgy—the *lex orandi* or rule of prayer—rather than juridically with the church’s hierarchical structure. The communion ecclesiology of the constitution on the church then follows from the eucharistic ecclesiology of the liturgy constitution, which proposed a radically new liturgically-based vision of the church.<sup>16</sup> Radically new, that is, with regard to the second millennium of the church’s history; but not with regard to the church of the first millennium.<sup>17</sup> For instance, the council fathers clearly affirmed the essentially communal nature of the liturgy as a major factor in this reclaimed vision of the liturgy.

Among the general norms for reforming the liturgy that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* outlines, we find the following:

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<sup>16</sup> On the importance of the liturgy constitution for the hermeneutics of Vatican II, see Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 13–18.

<sup>17</sup> Often referred to as *ressourcement*, or “going back to the sources”; see Faggioli, *True Reform*, 19–58.

Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the “sacrament of unity,” namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops.

Therefore liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church; they manifest it and have effects upon it; but they concern the individual members of the Church in different ways, according to their differing rank, office, and actual participation.

It is to be stressed that whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, so far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and quasi-private.

This applies with especial force to the celebration of Mass and the administration of the sacraments, even though every Mass has of itself a public and social nature.

In liturgical celebrations each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy. (*SC* 26–28)

One could read the last paragraph as arguing that priests *must* always assist at Mass only as priests. On the other hand, we do not expect all deacons present at a celebration of the Eucharist to serve in their capacity as deacons. For this reason, it seems that we should read the passage more as discouraging priests from doing those things that are appropriate to others—for example, offering the prayer of the faithful—rather than as promoting concelebration, as well as forbidding lay persons from taking on roles assigned to deacons and priests.

In any case, this communal vision of worship from the liturgy document is echoed in chapter 2 of the dogmatic constitution on the church (*Lumen Gentium*), which reads:

Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, *and offer themselves along with It*. Thus both by reason of the offering and through Holy Communion

all take part in this liturgical service, not indeed, all in the same way but each in that way which is proper to himself. Strengthened in Holy Communion by the Body of Christ, they then manifest in a concrete way that unity of the people of God which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most august sacrament.<sup>18</sup>

How one interprets this paragraph has far-reaching implications. In some ways the post-conciliar history of the Catholic Church can be characterized by a division between, on the one hand, those stressing the communality of the offering of the Eucharist; and, on the other hand, those who emphasize the phrase “each in the way which is proper to himself” by differentiating sharply between the role of the priest and that of the rest of the assembly. In my opinion, the desire to highlight the distinctiveness of the priest’s role came in reaction to the large number of departures from the priesthood during the 1960s and 1970s. Many today would support that emphasis because of the dearth of vocations to the priesthood. Finally, there can be little debate that there is a clear differentiation of roles in the liturgy and that the priest is indispensable; the question comes with how these roles relate to one another.

Regarding priests (presbyters), the dogmatic constitution on the church goes on to associate their function directly with that of Christ:

They exercise their sacred function especially in the Eucharistic worship or the celebration of the Mass by which acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming His mystery they unite the prayers of the faithful with the sacrifice of their Head and renew and apply in the sacrifice of the Mass until the coming of the Lord the only sacrifice of the New Testament namely that of Christ offering Himself once for all a spotless Victim to the Father. (*LG* 28)

Then, in chapter 2, “On the People of God,” the document makes an important distinction between the common priesthood that all the

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<sup>18</sup> *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964), 11, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) (hereafter cited as *LG*), my italics.

faithful enjoy by virtue of their baptism, and the ministerial priesthood that some have by virtue of holy orders:

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity. (LG 10)

Here, the document is emphasizing the unity between the baptismal and ministerial forms of Christ's one priesthood. In doing so here and elsewhere in the text, the council affirms the idea of the ministerial priest acting "in the person of Christ" (*in persona Christi*)—a concept since refined and clarified in terms of the priest acting "in the person of Christ the Head" of the church (*in persona Christi Capitis*).<sup>19</sup>

As subsequent theological debates have illustrated, this use of *in persona Christi* begs for more theological reflection than conciliar documents can articulate. For instance, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that "the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood."<sup>20</sup> In this sense, we can say that the common priesthood has a certain primacy over the ordained priesthood. Regardless, surely no one would argue that the ordained ministry exists for itself.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> As, for example, in *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (December 7, 1965), 2, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_presbyterorum-ordinis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html) (hereafter cited as *PO*).

<sup>20</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1547, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccs\\_archive/catechism/p2s2c3a6.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccs_archive/catechism/p2s2c3a6.htm).

<sup>21</sup> This issue is handled with some delicacy by John Paul II in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the formation of priests, where he insists on the relational nature of the ministerial priesthood and at the same time its character as ontological configuration to the person of Christ. See John Paul II, *Pastores*

Once again, I think that a serious postconciliar division exists between those who emphasize the power that priests receive at their ordination and those who argue that the primary manifestation of Christ's priesthood is that of the baptized who are called to join Christ in offering the world back to the Father. In my opinion, the more we can do to help the people of God to appreciate their priestly service of the Gospel, the better. For this reason, although no one should question the necessity of the ministerial priesthood or its essential difference from that of the common priesthood, it is appropriate that priests express their solidarity with the faithful in addition to carrying out their ministerial duties.<sup>22</sup> This relates directly to the issue of concelebration, in that ordinary Catholics have had such difficulty appreciating the importance of their baptismal priesthood.

Returning to concelebration, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* explains the practice in terms of manifesting the unity of the priesthood. Now, following the line that I have been developing, I would argue that the nature of the assembly as offering the eucharistic sacrifice should take precedence over the role of priests. To phrase this as a question, do priests act in the person of Christ insofar as they act in the person of the church; or do they act in the person of the church insofar as they act in the person of Christ?<sup>23</sup> For my part, I prefer the first formulation. In any case, differing attitudes and practices about con-

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*Dabo Vobis* (March 15, 1992), 16–18, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031992\\_pastores-dabo-vobis.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html). See also Gerald O'Collins, SJ, and Michael Keenan Jones, *Jesus our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 279–84.

<sup>22</sup> I am avoiding the unnecessary opposition so often made between a functional and an ontological understanding of the ministerial priesthood, since a balanced view requires both. It is interesting to note, however, that the council's decree placed the functional aspect first, as in the title itself, "On the Ministry and Life of Priests."

<sup>23</sup> See Edward J. Kilmartin, SJ, "The Catholic Tradition of Eucharistic Theology: Towards the Third Millennium," *Theological Studies* 55 (1994): 405–57; Robert J. Daly, SJ, "Sacrifice Unveiled or Sacrifice Revisited: Trinitarian and Liturgical Perspectives," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 24–42. Kilmartin frequently refers to his own critique of the "average modern Catholic theology of the Eucharist." See the excellent synthesis of Kilmartin's thought on the priesthood and the Eucharist in Edward Hahnenberg, "The Ministerial Priesthood and Liturgical Anamnesis in the Thought of Edward J. Kilmartin, SJ," *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 253–78.

eburation clearly reflect the differing ecclesiologies that have emerged from Vatican II and from theological debates about the ministerial priesthood in the decades following the council.

### III. Specific Issues Regarding the Eucharist

**M**y experience teaching theology has convinced me that all theological topics relate to one another, and the relationship between ecclesiology and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and baptism, offers a case in point. Ultimately, the question can be summarized as, “of which God do we speak?”<sup>24</sup>

On this note, the following issues regarding eucharistic theology are relevant to our discussion: (1) the encouragement of priests to celebrate the Eucharist frequently if not daily; (2) the question of “private mass”; (3) the idea of co-consecration, which in turn relates to (4) how the priest offers the eucharistic sacrifice, and how that offering relates to Mass intentions and stipends; and finally (5) the Mass as a manifestation of the unity of the priesthood. While I do not hope to do these issues justice here, I will suggest what each has to do with concelebration.

#### 1. Daily Celebration of the Eucharist

It is often repeated that the Eucharist is at the center of the priest’s life. I should hope so—not because he is a priest, but because he is a Christian. Indeed, canon law urges priests to celebrate the Eucharist frequently, since “in the mystery of the Eucharistic sacrifice the work of redemption is exercised continually”—but it does not oblige them to do so.<sup>25</sup> Now, does this mean that, as Pius XII asserted, the more masses, the better? Not necessarily. A better interpretation would consider the pas-

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<sup>24</sup> Louis-Marie Chauvet brilliantly demonstrates this point when he insists that we take the cross and Resurrection of Christ as our theological starting points. See Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 158–69.

<sup>25</sup> Canon 904.

toral good of the people, recognizing that priests who refrain from celebrating the Eucharist out of their own predilection and without regard for the needs of the faithful are surely negligent in their duties. On this point, Jesuits should note that the 32nd General Congregation mandated daily participation in the Eucharist for all.<sup>26</sup>

## 2. "Private Mass" vs. Concelebration

Is there such a thing as a private mass? Strictly speaking, every mass, even when celebrated without the assistance of at least one person, is an act of Christ and the whole church. While we cannot deny this, if we consider the meaning of the eucharistic celebration as a whole, we must recognize that a private mass is a far cry from what the Eucharist is intended to be. On this point, consider only St. Paul's treatment of the Eucharist in First Corinthians 11. In short, the Eucharist is a sacrificial banquet, and there is a great difference between dining alone and with others. For this reason, canon law states that "A priest may not celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice without the participation of at least one of the faithful, unless there is a good and reasonable cause for doing so."<sup>27</sup>

Here we find another area in which the insights and values of the constitution on the liturgy conflict with an older sacramental theology. Celebrating alone—or even with a few people—represents a very tenuous theology. For this reason, even allowing for circumstances where a solitary mass may be permitted, regular celebration of masses with few people present constitutes an abuse. I for one find the persistence of this practice in Jesuit communities troubling, since this practice is not in the spirit of the post-Vatican II renewal of the liturgy.

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<sup>26</sup> *Complementary Norm 227, 2; The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, ed. John W. Padberg, SJ (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 259. See also the letter of Fr. General Peter Hans Kolvenbach (1928–2016) to All Major Superiors, "The Eucharist," February 15, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Canon 906; see also *GIRM* 254.

### 3. Co-Consecration

In his 1949 essay and the book he published later with Angelus Häussling, OSB, Karl Rahner took up the issue of the multiplication of masses. In the book, he addresses the issues of private masses and concelebration versus assistance at Mass. Although he was willing to admit that, in terms of the priest's private prayer, a mass celebrated alone might result in with more "faith and devotion"—an important phrase for him—than one celebrated in the presence of others, there are other issues at stake, including the essentially communal nature of the liturgy.<sup>28</sup> He also pointed out that in some instances, the church restricts the multiplication of masses—for example, on Holy Thursday. This fine insight ought to be applied much more broadly.

Furthermore, Rahner argued against the idea that only verbal co-consecration constitutes concelebration.<sup>29</sup> Without going into detail here, let it suffice to note that concelebration consisting simply of priests extending their hands over the offerings seems to have been church practice for the first seven centuries.<sup>30</sup> He goes on to argue that the theory, which Duns Scotus (1266–1308) developed in the fourteenth century, of the fruits of the Mass has no theological foundation. From this, Rahner argued further that a priest might simply assist at Mass with greater faith and devotion than if he were concelebrating.<sup>31</sup>

How, then, did the church decide to insist on verbal consecration as opposed to simple gestures or even to vested participation at the altar? It is not easy to say. As noted above, until the eighth century verbal co-consecration does not seem to have been the practice in the West, and it has never been the practice in the Christian East.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Rahner and Häussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, 91–96.

<sup>29</sup> Rahner and Häussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, 109.

<sup>30</sup> See McGowan, *Concelebration*, 24–30; and King, *Concelebration*, 18–25.

<sup>31</sup> Rahner and Häussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*, 109–14.

<sup>32</sup> See King, *Concelebration*, 102–15. In any case, there has long been a debate in the Christian East regarding a "moment of consecration." Many Eastern theologians consider the epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Spirit to be the moment when the transformation happens.

And, thus, there seems to be no clear theological reason why concelebration requires verbal co-consecration.

From one perspective, co-consecration insures that priests satisfy their obligation from accepting Mass stipends. On the other hand, only one mass—one sacrifice—is being celebrated. From this, it seems to follow that priests might assist at Mass *modo laico* and still offer an intention, just as any Jesuit—lay or ordained—is bound to do.<sup>33</sup> Of course, a priest always remains a priest; but he need not manifest this identity at every mass. Yet precisely this rationale seems to operate in the ordinary practice of many religious communities.

Moreover, the notion of co-consecration involving the saying of certain formulae (e.g., epiclesis, institution narrative, and anamnesis) needs to be re-thought in light of a growing consensus among theologians that the eucharistic prayer as a whole is consecratory. Church teaching has in fact acknowledged as much in declaring valid the Anaphora of Addai and Mari, which is a eucharistic prayer of the Assyrian Church or Church of the East, although it contains no explicit institution narrative.<sup>34</sup>

On this same note, some Jesuits ignore the directions given for concelebration that require priests to join *sotto voce* in the prayers from the epiclesis until the end of the anamnesis and second epiclesis (e.g., in Eucharistic Prayer III, up to and including the words “one Body, one Spirit in Christ”). The problem is that simply reciting the words of institution takes them out of their context within the prayer and runs the risk of reducing them to a magical formula.

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<sup>33</sup> See the *Manual for the Juridical Practice of the Society of Jesus* (Rome: Curia of the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, 1997), 303–07.

<sup>34</sup> Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, “Guidelines for Admission to the Eucharist between the Chaldean Church and the Assyrian Church of the East” (July 20, 2001), [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_20011025\\_chiesa-caldea-assira\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20011025_chiesa-caldea-assira_en.html). For an analysis of this question, see Robert F. Taft, “Mass Without the Consecration? The Historic Agreement on the Eucharist between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East Promulgated 26 October 2001,” *Worship* 77 (2003): 482–509.

I hasten to add, however, that our current rubrics give the impression that only the institution narrative really matters.<sup>35</sup>

#### 4. Mass Intentions and Offerings

Since at least the third century, the Eucharist has been offered with particular intentions in mind. In fact, it has been argued that the success of Christianity has related in part to how Christians honored their dead, especially in the cemeteries.<sup>36</sup> But in the early church, this offering did not detract from the offering made by any and all of the faithful. M. Francis Mannion has argued that the migration of Christianity north of the Alps introduced a new sense of economy into the Eucharist, whereby sacred actions became reified and a restrictive notion of offering came into play.<sup>37</sup>

In this context, the offering went from being inclusive to exclusive with regard to the intention of the donor, and a money value was attributed to it. Of course, the church has never taught that one can buy or pay for a sacrament. Indeed, all such offerings are made as free-will donations for the support of the church in general and especially for the priest. While in theory this makes sense, in practice it is difficult for people not to imagine that they are paying for a mass to be said. Even the common though unofficial use of the word *stipend* connotes a payment. Here, the Protestant Reformers were responding to real abuses.

And so, while remembering individuals at the Eucharist has been a constant practice in the church, this offering of intentions was not restrictive until the Middle Ages, when Christianity adapted to a new social and cultural milieu. This is not to say that a parish community should not announce an intention at any given mass; but we

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<sup>35</sup> In passing, note that the rubrics make the extension of both hands at the epiclesis mandatory, whereas the gesture of pointing to the gifts during the words of institution is optional.

<sup>36</sup> See Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity, AD 200–400* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> See M. Francis Mannion, “Stipends and Eucharistic Praxis,” *Worship* 57 (1983): 194–214.

need to consider how best to articulate this. It seems to me that there is a big difference between saying “I am offering this mass for N.,” and “today we are remembering in a special way N.” In other words, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are not offering the Mass for anything other than for the glory of God and the salvation of the world.<sup>38</sup> Which is to say that the offering of a mass, whether by a layperson or by a priest, regardless of whether a monetary offering has been made, cannot be thought of in terms of a transaction. Rather, our constant and healthy Christian instinct has been that to have a certain intention in mind is a salutary way of remembering the person before God. Theologically, we cannot say more.

In addition, the reintroduction of the universal prayer or general intercessions to the eucharistic liturgy should raise questions about limiting the intentions for a mass. For example, if Mrs. Smith is in attendance and praying for the repose of her late husband, I fail to see any difference in the value of a particular Mass offering, except that the priest may voice the intention aloud on behalf of the church. From this perspective, while a priest has a moral and canonical obligation to remember at a mass an intention for which a monetary offering has been received for that mass, this does not mean that the priest’s intention has any more value than the intention of anyone else at the celebration.<sup>39</sup> All we can safely say when a priest has offered a mass for a donor’s intention is that he has offered that mass for that intention.

All the same, under current church discipline, if I have received a monetary offering for a mass, or if my superiors have asked me to apply that intention to a given mass, then I have an obligation either to preside at or to concelebrate that mass. For Jesuits, the *Complementary Norms* explicate these rules.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> As the French order of Mass puts so well in its response to the invitation, “pray, brothers and sisters”: “for the glory of God and the salvation of the world” (*Pour la gloire de Dieu et le salut du monde*).

<sup>39</sup> See canons 945–58, especially canons 947, 949; John Huels, “Stipends in the New Code of Canon Law,” *Worship* 57 (1983): 215–24.

<sup>40</sup> CN 184; ed. Padberg, 243. See too the *Manual for the Juridical Practice of the Society of Jesus*, 165–67.

Of course, the whole issue of stipends is complex. On one level, it relates to the welfare of priests and of religious orders—an issue to consider carefully, but no excuse for misleading people as to what they are “getting” when they make a monetary offering for an intention. Finally, at the very least we should not regard the effects of the Eucharist as a pie that can be cut into so many pieces. Instead, Catholic doctrine teaches that the sacrifice of Christ is of infinite value; but, as Rahner argued, how we relate to that value is a matter of our faith and devotion.

### 5. Unity of the Priesthood and Unity of the Assembly

The rationale that both Vatican II and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* give for (re)introducing eucharistic concelebration is the manifestation of the unity of the priesthood. Certainly, this unity is a positive value, apparent in such occasions as celebrations of a diocesan presbyterate with its bishop. But the unexpressed motivation for this policy was the elimination of private masses.<sup>41</sup> Note, however, that private masses have not been eliminated altogether, perhaps from a resistance to or ignorance of the theological issues discussed above. Furthermore, I have no doubt that concelebration has been a positive advance over the offering of private masses. Still, I feel the need to ask whether individual priests have a *right* to concelebrate, especially given that the diocesan bishop is to regulate concelebration, from which it follows that permission to concelebrate can be restricted.

On the other hand, it seems to me that the issues that I have treated in this article—for example, the communal nature of the liturgy, the relationship between liturgy and ecclesiology, the sacramental activity of the priest and his identity, daily celebration, private masses, and Mass intentions—can help us to appreciate how the practice of so many Jesuits and so many Jesuit communities has developed over the past fifty years. As examples of how practice and

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<sup>41</sup> Goffredo Boselli, “Concelebración eucarística y ministerio de los presbiteros,” in *Jesuitas, Sacerdocio y Liturgia: III Congreso de la Asociación Internacional Jungmann para Jesuitas y Liturgia. Abadía de Montserrat-Cataluña, España. Junio 23–28 de 2008* (Mexico City: Obra Nacional de la Buena Prensa, 2010), 77–94.

official directives developed after Vatican II, I would point to the celebration of Mass *versus populum*, the giving of communion to the faithful under both kinds, and the celebration of the sacraments entirely in the vernacular. And by the same token, I would argue that, in order to appreciate more fully the celebration of the Eucharist as a communal act of the people of God in Christ, it would be better to refrain from regular—which is to say, daily—concelebration.

## Conclusion

To be clear, I freely admit that canon 902 of the Code of Canon Law permits priests to concelebrate except in cases where they should celebrate a particular mass for the good of the faithful. Now, whether it is *advisable* for priests to concelebrate at a daily community mass is another question. Granted, daily concelebration is, in fact, the practice of many good Jesuits and other priests. However, I hope that this essay will help my brother Jesuits to see the deeper issues here, for which reason I affirm that, for the most part, it is better not to concelebrate on a daily basis.

Again, I understand that many of the theological issues that I have raised are controversial; but I do not think that we can afford to avoid discussing them. The Society has always held the celebration of the Eucharist to be central to its life and well-being, and we know well the devotion with which St. Ignatius himself celebrated Mass. But he was a man of his time, celebrating according to the best practices and theology of his day.<sup>42</sup> And we should do likewise.

Finally, I do not see the point of either forbidding or requiring priests to concelebrate. Because daily concelebration is a significant aspect of priestly ministry and identity for many Jesuits, they should, in the absence of some compelling pastoral reason, be allowed to do so. On the other hand, I hope that Jesuits will ask themselves whether these reasons are generally persuasive. As always, dialogue on these

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<sup>42</sup> See Robert F. Taft, SJ, "Jesuit Liturgy—An Oxymoron?" *Worship* 84 (2010): 38–70.

issues helps; and we should be talking to one another rather than hovering in silos. To quote the old Latin adage, *In necessariis, unitas; in dubiis, libertas; sed in omnibus, caritas*: in essential matters, unity; in unessential matters, freedom; but in all things, love.

## Fr. Conn's Response to Fr. Baldovin

The single-most gratifying experience of my eleven years serving at the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College was twice team-teaching the Rites Practicum with my long-term friend Fr. John Baldovin. Perhaps because of our well-known disagreement on the question of concelebration, our students were pleasantly surprised to see how consistently he and I were on the same page as regards our understanding and interpretation of the church's sacred rites, especially the celebration of the Eucharist. In other contexts, as well, Fr. Baldovin has great respect for the discipline of canon law and often consults me on matters of mutual interest, as I do him. He has been an exemplary and valued colleague.

After reading several times his contribution to this issue of *STUDIES*, I am confirmed in my belief that canon law and theology are different though intersecting disciplines. As I learned nearly fifty years ago from my legendary canon law professor at Woodstock College, the late Fr. John Reed (1913–1979) canon law is only as good as the theology that grounds it. And so, in my many years of teaching canon law at various levels and places, I have always tried to help my students understand how canonical norms protect and foster theological—and especially ecclesiological—values. That is not always easy, perhaps because those values are more fluid than the norms.

Now, I agree with many of the points that Fr. Baldovin raises in his piece. Perhaps the most important of these is the interplay between the universal priesthood of all the baptized and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained, and that the latter is at the service of the former. I also agree that not all the faithful fully appreciate their priestly dignity and responsibility. I further agree that it is incum-

bent on the church's ordained ministers to help their fellow believers grow in their rightful role in the eucharistic assembly.

But I fail to see how priests adopting the role of the lay faithful at Mass achieves this objective. Rather, I believe that solidarity among the people of God at the Eucharist is fostered by each of the members carrying out his or her own role, as the liturgy document asks (SC 28). For this reason, I do not find compelling Fr. Baldovin's argument that there is not a special role for more than one or two deacons at Mass, since the rite of Mass specifically provides a role for all priests—namely, concelebration.

On this point, it would be interesting for Jesuits and other religious to ask themselves and to share with each other the reasons why they choose to participate at Mass as they do. Is daily Mass part of their ordinary spiritual life? What are the reasons why some choose or desire to concelebrate, while others do not? Then, are these answers proper to understandings of the charism of different institutes? And what does the Jesuit charism have to contribute to such reflection?

I would answer that I desire to share in the Eucharist both as an ordained priest, and according to the norms that the church has established. I concede that canon law's use of the jussive subjunctive in calling for priests' frequent celebration and strongly commending daily celebration is less than the imposition of a strict legal obligation (c. 904). But the sources of the canon do not at all propose participating at Mass in the manner of the lay faithful as a regular option for priests. I would add to my answer that I do not want to draw attention to myself at Mass but rather to do in the least ostentatious way permissible what the church does and requires.

As I said in my own contribution, I acknowledge that there is not an absolute right for a priest to concelebrate, and I would not impose my own desire in a situation where, with or without good reason, concelebration is not welcome. So burdensome is the practice of demanding letters of good standing, which far exceed the simple requirement of canon 903, that it undoes the presumptive right or obligation to concelebrate that a priest may feel.

Fr. Baldovin and I agree on three more points. First, even if the notion of the “special fruit” attached to the intention of a priest who celebrates or concelebrates may not be theologically strong, it is a matter of strict justice that when someone has accepted an offering for a priest to apply a mass to a specific intention, that priest has the obligation to celebrate or concelebrate that mass for that intention. The law of the Society could, I suppose, mitigate the manner whereby the monthly required intentions and suffrages for our deceased members are satisfied. However, I, for one, would be saddened at the loss of an old and noble practice.

A second point of convergence is our shared antipathy for the individual Mass—that is, for masses celebrated alone or with at least one other. The theology of the Eucharist expressed in various conciliar documents favors communal celebration of the Eucharist, even though canon law guarantees a right to individual celebration (c. 902). With this in mind, from my perspective, disfavor for individual celebration ought to favor an individual Jesuit's option to concelebrate in a communal setting.

Fr. Baldovin puts the third point of agreement this way: “I do not see the point of either forbidding or requiring priests to concelebrate.”<sup>1</sup> I agree; but the reader might detect in this statement a tone of half-heartedness, and one that is not likely to go away soon among those who share Fr. Baldovin's perspective. Granted, Fr. Baldovin is persuaded in his opposition to daily concelebration by theological reasons—notably, his inclination to favor the commonality of the universal and ministerial priesthoods—and he is willing to act on his theological position. But for my part, I am at peace with the coexistence of the commonality and divergence of the two priesthoods and am persuaded to follow the norms that the church has established in the Code of Canon Law and in the liturgical books, unless and until a competent authority changes them.

Finally, I do not believe we Jesuits as members of a religious community have adequately considered or discussed this matter

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 35, above.

among ourselves, and I applaud the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality for its willingness to engage it and to do so in a fraternal spirit. In the meantime, our practice should be characterized by mutual respect, perhaps with special care for those who hold the minority view, lest they feel marginalized or even foolish in their convictions and choices. *In omnibus, caritas*, indeed!

## Fr. Baldovin's Response to Fr. Conn

I am happy to respond to Fr. Jim Conn's very well-written essay on Jesuits and concelebration. It's important to note at the outset that this conversation has been going on between us for a number of years and that we remain good friends. In fact, as Fr. Conn mentions in his response to my own essay, we very happily team-taught a course on liturgical presiding for two years. Despite our differences—which are significant—we regard one another highly, and I think that's a good example of what being "friends in the Lord" means.

I freely grant Fr. Conn's main thesis that the church's directives expect priests to celebrate/preside at the Eucharist frequently and preferably daily. I also grant that, according to the directives, if priests do not preside or concelebrate, then they should attend dressed in cassock and surplice.

However, the fact that most of us Jesuits do not even own a cassock or a surplice indicates that our approach to the priesthood and to the liturgical/sacramental life of the church differs from what the documents clearly expect. The burden of my article is to ask why this difference and to give some theological and pastoral reflection to that question. My premise is that, in its teaching about the ministerial priesthood, the church has not been consistent with Vatican II's revolutionary understanding of the full, conscious, and active participation required of all the faithful. I have no doubt that many Jesuits will disagree with this assessment; but I am certainly not alone in making it. Understanding the ministry and life of presbyters—to use the title and vocabulary of the council's document on the priesthood—remains a neuralgic issue

in the church, especially with so many questions being raised presently, in the wake of the sex abuse crisis and its mishandling.

For my part, I contend that, at an existential level, many if not most Jesuits neither concelebrate nor assist at Mass in choir dress, because they are at least implicitly in agreement with the vision of full, conscious, and active participation that I mentioned above. Furthermore, in my experience, most Jesuits attend or celebrate daily Mass primarily as an act of devotion; and I suggest that it might be helpful for us to move forward in our understanding of the Eucharist as more than this.

To be clear, I do not want to downplay the value of devotion; but again, much more is going on at the Eucharist, which is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery: the passion, death, and Resurrection of the Lord. That celebration has profound implications for the world itself and for the way in which all of us—Jesuit and lay alike—live our lives. As the prayer over the offerings for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time and for the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper puts it so strikingly, "Grant us, O Lord, we pray, that we may participate worthily in these mysteries, for *whenever the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated the work of our redemption is accomplished*" (my italics). It takes me about fifteen weeks to flesh that out in my course on eucharistic theology. Which is to say that one major issue is to contextualize our own personal devotion within the broader context of the Eucharist considered as a whole.

Here, I think it's useful to take care how we regard St. Ignatius's obvious devotion at his daily private mass. For example, note the distinction that Jesuit scholar Robert Taft makes between what pertains to Ignatius and what is Ignatian.<sup>1</sup> As Fr. Taft points out, the attitude toward the liturgy in Ignatius's time was vastly different from the attitude today, which is far more conscious of the communitarian and evangelical orientation of our worship. In other words, to be Ignatian is not to be an Ignatian fundamentalist. And far from it, since he was such an exemplary man of his times.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Taft, "Jesuit Liturgy—An Oxymoron?" *Worship* 84 (2010): 38–70, at 42–49.

This brings me to a second observation, which for Jesuits in general and especially for those who are ordained priests is even more significant, and this involves the question of Mass intentions. As every attentive Jesuit knows, the Society expects all Jesuits, ordained or not, to offer Mass each month for a variety of intentions, as well as to offer Mass for our brothers who have died. But I contend that we need to re-evaluate the manner in which we fulfill this expectation. Granted, as I mention in my essay, there exists a venerable tradition, stretching back at least to the second century, of Christians praying for the dead. And so, to “offer Mass” presumably means that we would lift up, at a particular liturgy, a specific intention for which someone may have made a monetary offering. But I do want to raise the question, with which no one as far as I know has dealt dogmatically, of whether the priest *qua* priest is doing anything more than what the church is doing and what individuals are doing when they pray for someone or something at the Eucharist.

Lastly, since Fr. Conn raises the specter of giving scandal to diocesan priests and bishops, I wonder if we are not so much provoking scandal as raising challenging questions for a church that continues to grow in its understanding of the relation of ministerial priests to the rest of the baptized.

In any case, these are the deeper questions of theology, spirituality, and piety that in my opinion underlie the practice of many good Jesuits as regards concelebration. I hope that Fr. Conn and I both have been able to further the conversation.

