

## QUESTION 64

### The Causes of the Sacraments

Next we have to consider the causes of the sacraments, whether by way of authoring them or by way of administering them (*sive per auctoritatem sive per ministerium*). And on this topic there are ten questions: (1) Does God alone act interiorly in the sacraments? (2) Does the institution of the sacraments come from God alone? (3) What sort of power does Christ have in the sacraments? (4) Was He able to communicate that power to others? (5) Does the power of administering the sacraments belong to evil individuals? (6) Do evil individuals sin by dispensing the sacraments? (7) Can angels be ministers of the sacraments? (8) Is the intention of the minister required in the sacraments? (9) Is correct faith required here in such a way that a non-believer is unable to confer a sacrament? (10) Is an upright intention required [in the minister of a sacrament]?

#### Article 1

##### Does God alone, or the minister as well, act interiorly to bring about the effect of a sacrament?

It seems that not only God, but the minister as well, acts interiorly to bring about the effect of a sacrament (*non solus Deus, sed etiam minister, interiorius operetur ad effectum sacramenti*):

**Objection 1:** The interior effect of a sacrament is that a man is purged of sins and illuminated by grace. But as is clear from Dionysius in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, chap. 5, “purging, illuminating, and perfecting” belong to the Church’s ministers. Therefore, it seems that not only God, but the Church’s ministers as well, act to bring about the effect of a sacrament.

**Objection 2:** In the conferral of the sacraments a certain selection of prayers are offered up. But the prayers of the righteous are more acceptable to God than the prayers of anyone else—this according to John 9:31 (“If anyone is a worshiper of God and does God’s will, God listens to him”). Therefore, it seems that he who receives a sacrament from a good minister receives a greater sacramental effect. So, then, the minister, and not just God, does something to bring about the interior effect.

**Objection 3:** A man is more worthy than an inanimate entity. But an inanimate entity does something to bring about an interior effect; for instance, as Augustine says in *Super Ioannem*, “Water touches the body and cleanses the heart.” Therefore, a man, and not just God, does something to bring about the interior effect of a sacrament.

**But contrary to this:** Romans 8:33 says, “It is God who justifies.” Therefore, since justification is the interior effect of all the sacraments, it seems that God alone brings about the interior effect of a sacrament.

**I respond:** There are two ways in which a given effect can be brought about: in the manner of a *principal agent*, and in the manner of an *instrument*.

Thus, in the first way God alone brings about the interior effect of a sacrament, both because (a) God alone penetrates the soul in which the sacrament’s effect takes place, and nothing can act immediately where it does not exist; and also because (b), as was established in the Second Part (*ST* 1-2, q. 112, a. 1), grace, which is an interior effect of a sacrament, is from God alone, and, likewise, the character, which is an interior effect of some of the sacraments, is an instrumental power that flows from the principal agent, which is God.

However, in the second way a man is able to bring about the interior effect of a sacrament (*homo potest operari ad interiorem effectum sacramenti*) insofar as he acts in the manner of a minister. For the notion of a minister is the same as the notion of an instrument (*eadem ratio est ministri et instrumenti*), since the action of each of them is applied exteriorly and yet causes an interior effect by the power of the

principal agent, which is God.

**Reply to objection 1:** Purgation, insofar as it is attributed the Church's minister, is not a purgation from sin; instead, deacons are said to purge insofar as they either drive those who are unclean from the assembly of the faithful or dispose them by holy admonitions for receiving the sacraments.

Similarly, priests, too, are said to illuminate the holy people not by infusing grace, but by conferring the sacraments of grace, as is clear from Dionysius in the same place.

**Reply to objection 2:** The prayers that are said in the conferral of the sacraments are proposed to God not on behalf of a particular person but on behalf of the whole Church, the prayers of which are worthy to be heard by God—this according to Matthew 18:19 (“If two of you agree on earth about anything at all for which they ask, it shall be done for them by my Father”). Yet there is nothing to prevent the devotion of a morally upright man from bringing this about.

Still, the effect of a sacrament is brought about not by the prayer of the Church or of a minister, but instead by the merits of the passion of Christ, whose power, as has been explained (q. 62, a. 5), operates in the sacraments. Hence, the effect of a sacrament is not given in a better way by a better minister. Still, through the devotion of the minister something in addition can be effected for the one who receives the sacrament—and yet it is not the minister who effects this, but instead he prays for it to be done by God.

**Reply to objection 3:** As has been explained, inanimate entities bring about an interior effect only instrumentally. And, similarly, as has been explained, men bring about a sacramental effect only in the manner of a minister.

## Article 2

### Do the sacraments exist only by divine institution?

It seems that it is not the case that the sacraments exist only by divine institution (*sacramenta non sint solum ex institutione divina*):

**Objection 1:** Those things that are divinely instituted are handed down to us in Sacred Scripture. But no mention is made in Sacred Scripture of certain things that are done in the sacraments—for instance, concerning the chrism with which men are confirmed, and the oil with which priests are anointed, and many other things, both words and deeds, which we make use of in the sacraments. Therefore, it is not the case that the sacraments exist only by divine institution.

**Objection 2:** The sacraments are certain signs. But realities that can be sensed signify certain things *naturally*. Nor can it be claimed that God is pleased with certain significations and not others, since He approves of everything that He has made (Genesis 1:31). But it seems to be proper to the demons to be enticed toward something by signs; for in *De Civitate Dei* 21 Augustine says, “The demons are enticed ... by creatures, which were created not by them but by God, and they are enticed by different delights corresponding to their own diversity—not in the way that animals are enticed by food, but in the way that spirits are enticed by signs.” Therefore, it seems that the sacraments do not need to exist by divine institution.

**Objection 3:** The apostles acted in the place of God in earthly matters; hence, in 2 Corinthians 2:10 the Apostle says, “What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, was for your sake, in the person of Christ”—that is, as if Christ Himself had done the forgiving. Therefore, it seems that the apostles, along with their successors, can institute new sacraments.

**But contrary to this:** He who institutes something is the one who gives it its strength and power, as is clear in the case of those who institute laws. But as clear from what has been said (a. 1 and q. 62,

a. 1), the power of the sacraments is from God alone. Therefore, only God can institute a sacrament.

**I respond:** As is clear from what was said above (a. 1 and q. 62, a. 1), the sacraments act as an instrumental cause of spiritual effects (*instrumentaliter operantur ad spirituales effectus*). But an instrument has its power from the principal agent.

Now there are two agents with respect to a sacrament, viz., the one who institutes the sacrament and the one who administers the sacrament by applying it to induce the effect. But the power of the sacrament cannot come from the one who administers the sacrament, since he is operating only in the manner of a minister. Hence, it follows that the sacrament's power comes from the one who instituted the sacrament. Therefore, since the power of a sacrament comes only from God, it follows that God alone is the institutor of the sacraments.

**Reply to objection 1:** The things instituted by men that are done in the sacraments are necessary not for the sacrament, but instead for a certain solemnity which is added to the sacraments in order to stir up devotion and reverence in those who are receiving the sacraments. By contrast, those things that are necessary for a sacrament have been instituted by Christ Himself, who is God and man.

And even though not all things have been handed down in the Scriptures, the Church nonetheless has them from the habitual tradition of the apostles (*ex familiari apostolorum traditione*); as the Apostle puts it in 1 Corinthians 11:34, "The rest I shall set in order when I come."

**Reply to objection 2:** Entities that can be sensed have by their nature a certain aptitude for signifying spiritual effects, but this aptitude is fixed on a specific signification by divine institution. And this is what Hugh of St. Victor means by saying that "a sacrament signifies by being instituted."

However, God chooses certain entities for sacramental significations over others not because His affection is confined to them, but in order that their signification might be more appropriate.

**Reply to objection 3:** The apostles and their successors are vicars of God with respect to the governance of the Church that has been instituted through the Faith and the sacraments of the Faith. Hence, just as they are not permitted to set up another Church, so they are not permitted to hand on another Faith or to institute other sacraments; instead, Christ's Church is said to have been built by the sacraments "which flowed from the side of Christ while He was hanging on the cross."

### Article 3

#### Did Christ as a man have the power to bring about the interior effect of the sacraments?

It seems that Christ as a man had the power to bring about the interior effect of the sacraments:

**Objection 1:** As John 1:33 has it, John the Baptist says, "He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He upon whom you will see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him, He it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" But to baptize with the Holy Spirit is to confer interiorly the grace of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Holy Spirit descended on Christ as a man and not as God, since it is in this way that He Himself gives the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it seems that Christ as a man had the power to cause the interior effect of the sacraments.

**Objection 2:** In Matthew 9:6 our Lord says, "That you may know that the Son of Man has the power on earth of forgiving sins, ..." But the remission of sins is the interior effect of a sacrament. Therefore, it seems that Christ as a man brings about the interior effect of the sacraments.

**Objection 3:** The institution of the sacraments belongs to the one who brings about the interior effect of a sacrament as a principal agent. But it is clear that Christ instituted the sacraments. Therefore,

it is He who brings about the effect of the sacraments interiorly.

**Objection 4:** No one can confer the effect of a sacrament without the sacrament unless he brings about the sacrament's effect by his own power. But Christ conferred the effect of a sacrament without the sacrament, as is clear in the case of Magdalene, to whom He said, "Your sins are forgiven you" (Luke 7:48). Therefore, it seems that Christ as a man brings about the interior effect of a sacrament.

**Objection 5:** The principal agent with respect to the interior effect is that in the power of which the sacraments operate. But the sacraments have their power from Christ's passion and by the invocation of His name—this according to 1 Corinthians 1:13 ("Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"). Therefore, Christ as a man brings about the interior effect of a sacrament.

**But contrary to this:** Augustine says, "In the sacraments the divine power works inwardly in bringing about salvation." But the divine power belongs to Christ insofar as He is God and not insofar as He is a man. Therefore, Christ brings about the interior effect of a sacrament not insofar as He is a man but insofar as He is God.

**I respond:** Christ brings about the interior effect of the sacraments both insofar as He is God and insofar as He is a man, though in different ways. For insofar as He is God, He acts in the sacraments through His authorship, whereas insofar as He is a man, He brings about the interior effects of the sacraments as a meritorious cause (*meritorie*) and as an efficient, though instrumental, cause (*efficienter sed instrumentaliter*). For it has been explained (q. 48, aa. 1 and 6, and q. 49, a. 1) that Christ's passion, which belongs to Him with respect to His human nature, is a cause of our justification as both a meritorious cause and an efficient cause—not, to be sure, in the manner of a principal agent, i.e., through authorship, but in the manner of an instrument, insofar as His human nature is an instrument of His divine nature. This was explained above (q. 13, aa. 2-3 and q. 19, a. 1).

However, as is clear from what was said above (a. 1), since [Christ's human nature] is an instrument conjoined to His divine nature in a person, it has a sort of principality and causality with respect to the extrinsic instruments, i.e., the ministers of the Church and the sacraments themselves. And so just as Christ, insofar as He is God, has the power of *authorship* (*potestatem auctoritatis*) in the sacraments, so, insofar as He is a man, He has the power of a principal minister, i.e., the power of *excelling* (*potestatem excellentiae*). This consists in four things:

First of all, as was explained above (q. 62, a. 5), it consists in His merit, along with the power of His passion, acting in the sacraments.

And since the power of His passion is joined to us through faith—this according to Romans 3:25 ("... whom God set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood)—a faith that we profess by invoking the name of Christ, it follows that, second, the power of excelling that Christ has in the sacraments involves the sacraments being made holy in His name.

And because the sacraments acquire power from their institution, it follows, third, that it pertains to Christ's power of excelling that He who gave the sacraments their power was able to institute the sacraments.

And since a cause does not depend on its effect, but rather vice versa, it pertains to Christ's power of excelling that He was able to confer the effect of the sacraments without the exterior sacrament.

**Reply to all the objections and to the argument for the contrary:** This makes clear the reply to the objections. For, as has been explained, each side of the argument is true in a certain respect (*utraque pars obiectionum vera est secundum aliquid*).

#### Article 4

##### Could Christ have communicated to ministers the power that He had in the sacraments?

It seems that Christ could not have communicated to ministers the power that He had in the sacraments (*Christus potestatem suam quam habuit in sacramentis, non potuerit ministris communicare*):

**Objection 1:** As Augustine argues in *Contra Maximinum*, “If He could have done it but did not do it, then He was envious.” But envy was far from Christ, in whom there exists the supreme fullness of charity. Therefore, since Christ did not communicate His own power to ministers, it seems that He was unable to communicate it.

**Objection 2:** In commenting on John 14:12 (“... and greater than these [works] shall he do”), Augustine says, “I claim again that this, viz., for a man to be made righteous from being wicked (*ex impio iustus fiat*), is a greater work than to create heaven and earth.” But Christ was unable to communicate to His disciples the power to create heaven and earth. Therefore, neither was He able to communicate to them the power to make the wicked righteous. Therefore, since making the wicked righteous is done through the power of Christ that He has in the sacraments, it seems that He could not have communicated the power He has in the sacraments to ministers.

**Objection 3:** It belongs to Christ, insofar as He is the head of the Church, that grace flows from Him to the others—this according to John 1:16 (“Of His fullness we have all received”). But this is something that was not communicable to others, since in that case the Church would be like a monster, having many heads. Therefore, it seems that Christ could not have communicated His power to ministers.

**But contrary to this:** In commenting on John 1:31 (“... I did not know Him”), Augustine says, “[John] did not know the power of baptism that the our Lord Himself was going to have and was going to reserve to Himself.” But John would not have been ignorant of this if such a power were not communicable. Therefore, Christ could have communicated His power to ministers.

**I respond:** As has been explained (a. 1), Christ had two sorts of power in the sacraments:

The one sort of power was the *power of authorship* (*potestas auctoritatis*), which belongs to Him as God. And this sort of power could not have been communicated to any creature, just as the divine essence could not have been communicated to any creature.

The other sort of power that He had was the *power of excelling* (*potestas excellentia*), which belongs to Him as a man. And He could have communicated this sort of power to ministers, viz., by granting them such a fullness of grace that their merit would have brought about the effects of the sacraments, with the result that (a) at the invocation of their names the sacraments would have been made holy, (b) they themselves would have been able to institute sacraments, and (c) they would have been able to confer the effect of the sacraments by a mere command without the rite. For the more powerful a conjoined instrument is, the more it is able to assign its power to a separated instrument, in the way that a hand can do this to a staff.

**Reply to objection 1:** It was not out of envy that Christ refrained from communicating His power of excelling to ministers; instead, it was for the sake of the good of the faithful, lest they should put their hope in a [mere] man, and lest there should be diverse sacraments, whereby divisions would arise within the Church—such as occurred among those who said, “I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas” (1 Corinthians 1:12).

**Reply to objection 2:** This objection goes through with respect to the *power of authorship*, which belongs to Christ insofar as He is God—even though the *power of excelling* could also be called authorship in comparison to other ministers. Hence, a Gloss on 1 Corinthians 1:12 (“Is Christ divided?”)

says, “He could have given the authorship of baptism to those on whom He conferred ministry.”

**Reply to objection 3:** It was in order to avoid the incongruity of there being many heads of the Church that Christ willed not to communicate His power of excelling to ministers.

Still, even if He had communicated this power, He Himself would have been a head in the principal way, and the others would have been heads in a secondary way.

## Article 5

### Can the sacraments be conferred by evil ministers?

It seems that the sacraments cannot be conferred by evil ministers (*per malos ministros sacramenta conferri non possint*):

**Objection 1:** The sacraments of the New Law are ordered toward the cleansing of sin and the conferral of grace. But since evil individuals are unclean, they cannot cleanse others of sin—this according to Ecclesiasticus 34:4 (“Who will be cleansed by someone unclean?”). And, again, since they do not have grace, it does not seem that they can confer grace, since no one gives what he does not have. Therefore, it seems not to be the case that the sacraments can be conferred by those who are evil.

**Objection 2:** As has been explained (a. 3 and q. 62, a. 5), the entire power of the sacraments flows from Christ. But evil individuals are cut off from Christ because they do not have charity, through which the members are united to the head—this according to John 4:16 (“Whoever remains in charity remains in God and God in him”). Therefore, it seems that the sacraments cannot be conferred by evil individuals.

**Objection 3:** If something is lacking from among those things that have to exist in the sacraments, then the sacrament is not brought to completion, e.g., if it lacks the necessary form or matter. But the appropriate minister of a sacrament is one who lacks the stain of sin—this according to Leviticus 21:17-18 (“If a man among your descendants throughout their generation has a stain, he shall not offer bread to your God, nor shall he approach to minister to Him”). Therefore, it seems that if the minister is evil, nothing will be effected in the sacrament.

**But contrary to this:** In commenting on John 1:33 (“He upon whom you will see the Spirit ...”), Augustine says, “John did not know the power of baptism that the our Lord Himself was going to have and was going to reserve to Himself, but he did know that the ministry would certainly pass to both good and evil men ... What is an evil minister to you, where the Lord is good?”

**I respond:** As has been explained (a. 1), the ministers of the Church operate as instruments in the sacraments, given that the meaning of ‘minister’ is in some way the same as the meaning of ‘instrument’. And as was explained above (q. 62, aa. 1 and 4), an instrument [as such] acts not by its own form, but by the power of that by which it is moved. And so whatever form or power an instrument might itself have, over and beyond what is necessary for its role as an instrument, is incidental to it insofar as it is an instrument; for instance, a physician’s body, which is the instrument of a soul that possesses the [medical] art, may itself be either healthy or sick, and a pipe through which water passes may itself be made of either silver or lead. Hence, the ministers of the Church can confer the sacraments even if they are evil.

**Reply to objection 1:** The ministers of the Church do not by their own power either cleanse the sins of those who approach the sacraments or confer grace; instead, Christ does this by His own power through them as through instruments. And so the effect follows in those who receive the sacraments not in such a way that they become similar to the ministers, but in such a way that they are configured to Christ (*non secundum similitudinem ministrorum sed secundum configurationem ad Christum*).

**Reply to objection 2:** Through charity the members of Christ are united to their head in the sense of receiving life from Him; for as 1 John 3:14 says, “He who does not love (*qui non diligit*) abides in death.” Now an individual can act through an instrument that lacks life and is separated from him as regards bodily union, as long as it is conjoined through some sort of movement; for instance, a craftsman acts in one way with his hand and in another way with the hatchet. So, then, Christ acts in the sacraments both by means of evil individuals as with instruments that lack life and by means of good individuals as by means of living members [of His own body].

**Reply to objection 3:** There are two senses in which something ‘ought to be the case’ with respect to a sacrament.

In one way, in the sense of being *necessary* for the sacrament. So if this sort of thing is lacking, then the sacrament is not brought to completion (*non perficitur*)—as, for instance, if the required form or the required matter is lacking.

In the second way, something ‘ought to be the case’ with respect to a sacrament in the sense of being *appropriate* for the sacrament. And it is in this sense that it ought to be the case that the ministers of the sacraments are good individuals.

## Article 6

### Do evil individuals commit a sin in administering the sacraments?

It seems that evil individuals do not commit a sin in administering the sacraments (*mali ministrantes sacramenta non peccent*):

**Objection 1:** Just as one ministers to God in the sacraments, so, too, one ministers to God through the works of charity; hence, Hebrews 13:16 says, “Do not forget about kindness and sharing, since God favors such sacrifices.” But evil individuals do not sin if they minister to God with works of charity; at the very least, they should be advised to do so—this according to Daniel 4:24 (“May my counsel please the king: break off your sins with good works”). Therefore, it seems that evil individuals do not sin in administering the sacraments.

**Objection 2:** Whoever shares with someone in his sin is likewise guilty of sin—this according to Romans 1:32 (“It is not only he who commits a sin that is deserving of death, but also he who consents to those who are acting”). But if evil ministers sinned in administering the sacraments, then those who received the sacraments from them would share in the sin. Therefore, they themselves would likewise sin. But this seems absurd.

**Objection 3:** It seems that no one is in a dilemma (*nullus videtur esse perplexus*), because in such a case a man would be forced to give up hope, in the sense that he would not be able to avoid sin. But if evil individuals sinned by dispensing the sacraments, then they would be in a dilemma (*essent perplexi*), since in some cases they would sin if they did not dispensed the sacraments, e.g., when necessity weighed down on them because of their office; for 1 Corinthians 9:16 says, “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel, since necessity weighs me down.” Again, sometimes this occurs because of danger, e.g., if a child who is in danger of dying is presented to a sinner for baptism. Therefore, it seems that evil individuals do not sin in administering the sacraments.

**But contrary to this:** In *Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, chap. 1 Dionysius says, “It is wrong for evil individuals to even touch the symbols,” i.e., the sacramental signs. And in *Epistola ad Demophilum* he says, “It seems audacious for such a man”—viz., a sinner—“to lay his hands on priestly things; he is neither afraid nor ashamed to carry out divine deeds that exceed his worthiness, thinking that God is

ignorant of what he himself has realized about himself. He plans to deceive Him whom he falsely calls by the name ‘Father’, and he dares to pronounce, in the person of Christ, unclean disgraces—I will not call them ‘prayers’—over the divine signs.”

**I respond:** As is clear from the Philosopher in the *Ethics*, an individual, in acting, commits a sin by the fact that “he fails to act as he ought to.” Now it has been explained (a. 5) that it is appropriate for the ministers of the sacraments to be morally upright, since these ministers should be conformed to the Lord—this according to Leviticus 19:2 (“You shall be holy, because I am holy”) and Ecclesiasticus 10:2 (“As the magistrate of the people is, so also are his ministers”). And so there is no doubt that evil individuals who present themselves as ministers of God and of the Church commit a sin in dispensing the sacraments. And because, on the part of the sinful man himself, this sin involves irreverence to God and an act of contaminating holy things—even though the holy things cannot be contaminated in their own right—it follows that such a sin is by its genus a mortal sin.

**Reply to objection 1:** The works of charity are not made holy by any consecration; instead, they themselves involve the holiness of justice as certain parts of justice. And so if a man who presents himself to God as a minister in acts of charity is righteous, he will be sanctified more amply, whereas if he is a sinner, he will thereby be disposed toward sanctity.

By contrast, the sacraments have in themselves a certain holiness through a mystical consecration. And the reason why the holiness of justice is a prerequisite in a minister is in order that he might be suited for his ministry. And so he acts incongruously and commits a sin if he approaches this sort of ministry while being in a state of sin.

**Reply to objection 2:** One who approaches the sacraments receives the sacrament from a minister of the Church not insofar as that minister is such-and-such a person, but insofar as he is a minister of the Church. And so as long as the minister is maintained by the Church in his ministry, one who receives a sacrament from him does not share in his sin but instead shares in the Church, which presents that individual as a minister.

By contrast, if that minister were not being maintained by the Church—for instance, if he were defrocked (*degradatur*) or excommunicated or suspended—then anyone who received a sacrament from him would commit a sin, since he would share in his sin.

**Reply to objection 3:** An individual who is in the state of mortal sin is not in a dilemma absolutely speaking if dispensing the sacraments weighs down on him because of his office, since he is able to repent of his sin and to minister licitly. On the other hand, it is not problematic for him to be in a dilemma under a certain presupposition, viz., that he wills to remain in his sin.

However, in an emergency (*in articulo necessitatis*) he would not commit a sin by dispensing baptism in a case in which even a lay person could dispense it. For it is clear in such a case that he is not presenting himself as a minister of the Church, but is instead coming to the aid of someone suffering from an urgent need. However, things are different in the case of the other sacraments, which, as will become clear below (q. 65, aa. 3 and 4, and q. 67, a. 3), do not have as great an urgency as baptism has.

## Article 7

### Can angels administer the sacraments?

It seems that angels can administer the sacraments (*angeli possent sacramenta ministrare*):

**Objection 1:** Whatever a lower minister is capable of, a higher minister is capable of as well; for instance, whatever a deacon can do, a priest can also do, but not vice versa. But as is clear from

Dionysius in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, angels are higher ministers in the hierarchical order than any men at all are. Therefore, since men can administer the sacraments, it seems that, *a fortiori*, angels can as well.

**Objection 2:** As Matthew 22:30 explains, holy men become like the angels in heaven. But some saints who are in heaven are able to administer the sacraments, since, as has been explained (q. 63, a. 5), a sacramental character is indelible. Therefore, it seems that angels can likewise minister in sacred matters.

**Objection 3:** As was explained above (q. 8, a. 7), the devil is the head of evil individuals, and evil individuals are his members. But the sacraments can be dispensed by evil individuals. Therefore, it seems that they can likewise be dispensed by demons.

**But contrary to this:** Hebrews 5:1 says, “Every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in those things that pertain to God.” But good and bad angels are not from among men. Therefore, they are not appointed as ministers in those things that pertain to God, i.e., in the sacraments.

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 3 and q. 62, a. 5), the entire power of the sacraments flows from Christ’s passion, which belongs to Christ as a man. Men are conformed by nature to Him, but not the angels; instead, given His passion, He is said to be “a little lower than the angels,” as is clear from Hebrews 2:9. And this is why it belongs to men—and not to the angels—to dispense the sacraments and to minister in them.

Note, however, that just as God does not tie His own power to the sacraments in such a way that He cannot confer the effects of the sacraments without the sacraments, so, too, He does not tie His own power to the ministers of the Church in such a way that He cannot grant the angels the power of ministering in the sacraments. And since the good angels are the messengers of truth, if any sacramental ministry were performed by the good angels, it would have to be held to be acceptable (*esset ratum habendum*), because it ought to be clear that this is being done by the divine will—in the way that certain church buildings are said to have been consecrated by the ministry of the angels. By contrast, if demons, who are “mendacious spirits,” were to perform a sacramental ministry, it should not be held to be acceptable.

**Reply to objection 1:** What men do in a lower manner, viz., through sacraments which can be sensed and which are proportioned to their natures, the angels do as higher ministers, viz., by invisibly “purging, illuminating, and perfecting.”

**Reply to objection 2:** The saints who are in heaven are similar to the angels with respect to their participation in glory, but not with respect to the condition of their nature or, as a result, with respect to the sacraments.

**Reply to objection 3:** It is not the case that evil men have the ability to administer the sacraments *because* they are members of the devil through their malice. And so it does not follow that the devil, who is their head, *a fortiori* has the ability to administer the sacraments.

## Article 8

### Is the minister’s intention required for bringing a sacrament to completion?

It seems that the minister’s intention is not required for bringing a sacrament to completion (*intentio ministri non requiratur ad perfectionem sacramenti*):

**Objection 1:** A minister operates in a sacrament as an instrumental cause. But an action is brought to completion not by the intention of the instrument, but by the intention of the principal agent.

Therefore, the minister's intention is not required for bringing a sacrament to completion.

**Objection 2:** Someone else's intention cannot be known to a man. Therefore, if the minister's intention were required for bringing a sacrament to completion, then it could not be known to a man approaching a sacrament that he had in fact received the sacrament. And so he would not be able to have certitude with respect to salvation (*certitudinem salutis*)—especially because, as will be explained below (q. 65, a. 4), some sacraments are necessary for salvation.

**Objection 3:** A man cannot have an intention with respect to something that he is not paying attention to. But sometimes those who are administering a sacrament are thinking about other things and not paying attention to what they are saying or doing. Therefore, according to [the position that the minister's intention is required], the sacrament is not brought to completion in the absence of such an intention.

**But contrary to this:** Things that fall outside of one's intention are incidental (*sunt casualia*). But this must not be said about the operation of the sacraments. Therefore, the sacraments require the minister's intention.

**I respond:** When some one thing is tending toward many things, there has to be something through which it is fixed upon some unitary thing, if that thing is supposed to be effected. But those things that are done in the sacraments can be done in diverse ways; for instance, washing with water, which is what is done in baptism, can be ordered both toward bodily cleansing and toward bodily health, as well as toward play and many other things of this sort. And so it has to be fixed upon some unitary thing, viz., on the sacramental effect, by the intention of the one doing the washing. And this intention is expressed by the words that are recited in the sacrament, e.g., when [the minister] says, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, etc."

**Reply to objection 1:** A non-living instrument does not have any act of intending with respect to the effect, but in place of an intention there is the movement through which it is moved by the principal agent. By contrast, a living instrument such as a minister is not only moved but also in a certain sense moves himself, insofar as, by his own will, he moves his members to act. And so what is required is an intention on the part of the minister by which he subjects himself to the principal agent, so that, more specifically, he intends to do what Christ is doing and what the Church is doing.

**Reply to objection 2:** There are two opinions about this matter:

Some claim that a mental act of intending (*mentalis intentio*) is required in the minister, and that if it is absent, then the sacrament is not brought to completion. However, this absence, in the case of children who do not have the intention of approaching the sacrament, is made up for by Christ, who baptizes them interiorly. On the other hand, in the case of adults, since they intend to receive the sacraments, their faith and devotion make up for the absence [of an act of intending in the minister].

Now this could be a satisfactory reply with respect to the ultimate effect (*ad ultimum effectum*), which is justification from one's sins, but with respect to an effect that is both a reality and a sacrament (*quantum ad effectum qui est res et sacramentum*), i.e., with respect to a character, it does not seem that [the absence of an act of intending in the minister] can be made up for by the devotion of the one who is approaching the sacrament, since a character is never imprinted except by means of a [completed] sacrament.

And so others have given a better reply, viz., that the minister of a sacrament acts in the person of the whole Church, whose minister he is, and that what is expressed in the words that are uttered is the intention of the Church, and that this is sufficient to bring the sacrament to completion—unless the contrary is expressed outwardly by the minister and by the recipient of the sacrament.

**Reply to objection 3:** Even though a minister who is thinking about something else does not have an *actual* intention, he nonetheless has an *habitual* intention, and this is sufficient for bringing the

sacrament to completion—as, for instance, if, when a priest is getting ready to baptize, he intends to do to the one to be baptized what the Church is doing to him. Hence, if, afterwards, in the very exercise of the act his thoughts are carried away to other things, the sacrament is brought to completion in virtue of the first intention.

Still, the minister of a sacrament ought to take diligent care to actually pay attention. But this is not placed totally within a man's power, since even when he makes a great effort to pay attention, he unintentionally begins to think of other things—this according to Psalm 39:13 (“My heart has deserted me”).

### Article 9

#### Is the minister's faith necessary for a sacrament?

It seems that the minister's faith necessary for a sacrament (*fides ministri sit de necessitate sacramenti*):

**Objection 1:** As has been explained (a. 8), a minister's intention is necessary for bringing a sacrament to completion. But as Augustine puts it in *Contra Julianum*, “Faith directs one's intention.” Therefore, if faith were lacking in the minister, the sacrament would not be brought to completion.

**Objection 2:** If a minister of the Eucharist does not have genuine faith, it seems that he is a heretic. For in *Epistola Contra Haereticos* Cyprian says, “Everything whatsoever that heretics do is carnal and inane and false, so that none of the things that they do should meet with our approval.” And in *Epistola ad Leonem Augustum* Pope Leo says, “It is clear that, because of an incredibly cruel and immature act of insanity, the light of all the heavenly sacraments is extinguished in the see of Alexandria. The offering of the sacrifice has been discontinued, the chrism is lacking sanctification, and the mysteries have all fled at the parricidal hands of the impious.” Therefore, genuine faith on the part of the minister is necessary for a sacrament.

**Objection 3:** Those who do not have genuine faith seem to be separated from the Church by excommunication. For 2 John, verse 10, says, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or say ‘welcome’ to him.” And Titus 3:10 says, “Avoid a heretical man after a first and a second admonition.” But it seems that an individual who has been excommunicated cannot confer a sacrament of the Church, since he is separated from the Church, and it is to the Church's ministry that the dispensing of the sacraments belongs. Therefore, it seems that genuine faith on the part of the minister is necessary for a sacrament.

**But contrary to this:** In *Contra Petilianum Donatistam* Augustine says, “Remember that the habits of evil [ministers] do not pose an obstacle to God's sacraments by rendering them either non-existent or less holy.”

**I respond:** As was explained above (a. 5), because a minister acts as an instrumental cause in the sacraments, he acts not in his own power, but in the power of Christ. Now just as charity belongs to a man's own power, so, too, does faith. Hence, just as it is not required for the completion of a sacrament that the minister exist in charity, but instead, as was explained above (a. 5), even sinners can confer the sacraments, so neither is his faith required, but instead a non-believer can provide a genuine sacrament, as long as the other things necessary for a sacrament are present.

**Reply to objection 1:** It can happen that an individual suffers from a lack of faith with respect to something else and not with respect to the genuineness of the sacrament that he is dispensing—as, for instance, if someone were to believe that oaths are in every case illicit, and yet believed that baptism is

efficacious for salvation. In such a case the lack of faith does not prevent his intending to confer the sacrament. On the other hand, if he suffers from a lack of faith with respect to the very sacrament that he is conferring, then even if he believes that no interior effect follows from what is done exteriorly in the sacrament, he is nonetheless not ignorant that the Catholic Church intends to offer a sacrament through things of the sort that are being done exteriorly. Hence, despite his lack of faith, he can intend to do what the Church is doing, even though he thinks that it amounts to nothing. And this sort of intention is sufficient for a sacrament, since, as was explained above (a. 8, ad 2), the minister of a sacrament acts in the person of the whole Church, and it is the faith of the Church that supplies what is lacking in the faith of the minister.

**Reply to objection 2:** Among heretics, some do not preserve the form prescribed by the Church in conferring the sacraments. And heretics of this sort confer neither the *sacrament* nor the *reality of the sacrament* (*neque sacramentum conferunt neque rem sacramenti*).

By contrast, other heretics do, to be sure, confer the *sacrament*, but they do *not* confer the *reality of the sacrament*. And I say this for a case in which they are manifestly cut off from the Church. For an individual commits a sin by the very fact that he receives sacraments from them, and he is thereby prevented from obtaining the effect of a sacrament. Hence, in *De Fide ad Petrum* Augustine says, “Believe firmly, and have no doubt at all, that for those who have been baptized outside the Church, if they do not come back to the Church, disaster is heaped upon their baptism.” And it is in this way that Pope Leo is claiming that “the light of the sacraments has been extinguished in the see of Alexandria”—not with respect to the *sacrament itself*, but with respect to the *reality of the sacrament*.

Now Cyprian believed that heretics did not confer the sacrament, either, but on this point his opinion is not adhered to. Hence, Augustine says, “The martyr Cyprian, who refused to recognize baptism conferred among heretics or schismatics, accumulated so many merits, up to the triumph of martyrdom, that the shadow of this mistake was dispelled by the light of the charity in which he excelled, and if anything needed to be removed, it was cut away by the pruning knife of his suffering.”

**Reply to objection 3:** The power to administer sacraments involves a spiritual character which, as is clear from what was said above (q. 63, a. 3), is indelible. And so an individual does not lose the power to confer a sacrament by the fact that he is suspended or excommunicated by the Church, or even if he is defrocked (*ab Ecclesia suspenditur vel excommunicatur, vel etiam degradatur*); instead, what he loses is the permission (*licentiam*) to make use of this power. And so he does, to be sure, confer the sacrament, and yet he commits a sin by conferring it.

And the same thing holds for an individual who receives a sacrament from him, and so such an individual does not receive the reality of the sacrament (*non percipit rem sacramenti*)—unless, perhaps, he is excused by ignorance.

## Article 10

### Is an upright intention on the part of the minister required for bringing a sacrament to completion?

It seems that an upright intention on the part of the minister is required for bringing a sacrament to completion (*intentio recta ministri requiratur ad perfectionem sacramenti*):

**Objection 1:** As is clear from what was said above (a. 8, ad 1), the minister’s intention should conform to the Church’s intention. But the Church’s intention is always upright. Therefore, an upright intention on the part of the minister is necessarily required for bringing a sacrament to completion.

**Objection 2:** A perverse intention seems to be worse than a playful intention. But a playful

intention destroys a sacrament—as, for instance, if an individual were to baptize someone not seriously, but jokingly. Therefore, *a fortiori*, a perverse intention would ruin a sacrament—as, for instance, if an individual baptized someone in order to later kill him.

**Objection 3:** A perverse intention makes the whole work evil—this according to Luke 11:34 (“If your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness”). But as Augustine says in *Contra Petilianum*, “Christ’s sacraments cannot be defiled by evil men.” Therefore, it seems that if there is a perverse intention on the part of the minister, then in such a case there is not a genuine sacrament.

**But contrary to this:** A perverse intention involves the minister’s badness. But the badness of the minister does not destroy a sacrament. Therefore, neither does a perverse intention.

**I respond:** There are two ways in which a minister’s intention can be perverted:

(a) In one way, with respect to the *sacrament itself*—as, for instance, when the individual does not intend to confer the sacrament, but intends to do something in a delusive way. And this sort of perversity destroys the genuineness of the sacrament, especially when the individual manifests his intention in an outward manner.

(b) In the second way, a minister’s intention can be perverted with respect to *what follows upon the sacrament*—as, for instance, if a priest intended to baptize a woman in order to abuse her, or if he intended to confect the body of Christ in order to use it for sorcery. And since what is prior does not depend on what is posterior, it follows that a perverse intention of this sort does not destroy the genuineness of the sacrament, though the minister himself commits a grave sin because of an intention of this sort.

**Reply to objection 1:** The Church’s intention is upright both with respect to bringing the sacrament to completion and with respect to the use of the sacrament. But the first sort of rectitude brings the sacrament to completion, whereas the second sort of rectitude contributes to one’s merit.

And so a minister who conforms his intention to the Church with respect to the first sort of rectitude, but not with respect to the second sort, brings the sacrament to completion, but this is not meritorious for him (*sed non est sibi meritum*).

**Reply to objection 2:** A humorous or playful intention excludes the first sort of rectitude of intention, through which a sacrament is brought to completion. And so the two arguments are not similar.

**Reply to objection 3:** A perverse intention perverts the work of the one who has that intention, but not the work of anyone else. And so what a minister does in the sacraments because of his perverse intention is perverted insofar as it is *his* work, but not insofar as it is the work of *Christ*, whose minister he is. This is similar to a case in which the minister of some man delivers alms to the poor with a perverse intention, whereas it was with an upright intention that his master had commanded him to deliver the alms.