

For the Church and within the Church: Priestly Representation

Some recent articles that have summarized the state of current research on the subject of priestly representation have come to the conclusion that the priest is capable of acting in the person of Christ the Head because he first represents the Church.¹ These articles have drawn from David Coffey's 1997 essay on the common and the ordained priesthood.² The work of Coffey has proved to be an important one for theologians interested in the theology of priestly representation. What has been lacking until now is any study of whether his central claims are well founded.

Coffey's article aimed to develop a pneumatological understanding of the priesthood of Christ, and what Coffey calls the "priesthood of the Church" as a "distinct category" in the interest of reaching a new clarity with regard to the relation of the ordained and the common priesthood.³ In the course of his article, one of the conclusions that Coffey reaches is that there is a priority of the ecclesial to the Christological in the priestly representation of Christ's Headship. To represent Christ as Head is primarily the ability to represent the *totus Christus*, the Head and members.⁴ These conclusions are supported, it seems to me, by two claims Coffey makes in his 1997 essay. These amount to the following: 1) that Vatican II wrongly assumed the ordained priesthood could be understood directly in Christological terms and thus gave the mistaken impression that the common priesthood was understandable first in ecclesiological terms⁵ and 2) that if the ordained priesthood is understood immediately in terms of the Headship of Christ, then the priest appears as above the Church or apart from the Church.⁶ In other words, if the ordained priesthood is understood first in terms of a new configuration to Christ, then the priest is elevated to some position outside of the rest of the Church. As a consequence, the rest of the baptized, though

called priestly and regarded as “members” of Christ, are effectively envisioned as “other” than Christ, i.e., “simply” the Church.

I will limit my criticism to these two central claims and the conclusions that Coffey deduces from them. I maintain that these claims cannot be reconciled with the Council documents and the intentions of the Council fathers as evidenced in the official *Acta*. Furthermore they are not congruent with how recent Church teaching has interpreted Vatican II. With regard to the *Acta*, the work of Sara Butler⁷ and Samuel Aquila⁸ is important for they both show how crucial it is to consult the *Acta* in order to interpret Vatican II’s teaching on the ordained priesthood and priestly representation. The *Acta* of a Council is of prime importance in determining what a Council intended to teach and why it intended to teach what it did.⁹ A careful reading shows that Vatican II affirmed a Christological priority for both the common and the ordained priesthoods while strongly asserting the ecclesiological dimensions of both priesthoods. Far from separating the ordained priesthood from the Church, the Second Vatican Council envisioned it as something for the Church but within the Church -- a visible sign of Christ the Head who fills up his Church with life.

Lay persons are presented in the documents of Vatican II not as passive recipients of Christ’s activity but as active participants in his three-fold office. It is through this participation that the baptized mediate Christ’s gift in their own way. The baptized, united with Christ and made sharers in his priesthood in their own condition, must carry out his three-fold office in the Church and in the world. The priesthood of the baptized is not a matter of simple union with Christ or simple belonging to Christ because the common priesthood is ordered to mission.

This essay will unfold in five parts. First, I will compare the idea that the priest acts *in*

persona Christi capitis because he first acts in the name of the Church with recent Church teaching after Vatican II, especially with regard to *Pastores dabo vobis*, the 1992 post synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II. Second, I will give a brief description of Coffey's position. Third, in the longest part, I will show how Coffey's interpretation of Vatican II's teaching on the ordained priesthood and the common priesthood cannot be sustained. Fourth, I will show that what Vatican II teaches concerning the priest representing the Headship of Christ does not somehow place the priest apart from or above the Church. Last, I will conclude with a summary of my argument and a suggestion for the direction of further research.

I. Priestly representation and Recent Church Teaching

A number of theologians hold that there is a priority of the ecclesial over the Christological in priestly representation.¹⁰ These theologians contend that a priest can act *in persona Christi* because he first acts *in persona ecclesiae*. Without questioning the intentions of these scholars to *sentire cum ecclesiae*, it should be pointed out that recent magisterial teachings -- by both the ordinary universal magisterium¹¹ and the papal magisterium¹² -- have taught the opposite. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "It is because the ministerial priesthood represents Christ that it can represent the Church."¹³ While strongly affirming that reference to the Church is necessary in defining priestly identity *Pastores dabo vobis* teaches that there is a Christological priority in the ordained priesthood. It explains, in its second chapter that "[T]he priest's relation to the Church is inscribed in the very relation which the priest has to Christ, such that the 'sacramental representation' to Christ serves as the basis and inspiration for the relation of the priest to the Church . . . And so the priest, on account of his very nature and sacramental mission, appears in the structure of the Church as a sign of the absolute priority and gratuity of that grace

which is conferred by the risen Christ on the Church”¹⁴ At the same time, one of the strengths of *Pastores dabo vobis* is its statement that the nature and the mission of the ministerial priesthood must be defined in light of the “multiple and rich interconnection of relationships which arise from the Blessed Trinity and are prolonged in the communion of the Church, a sign and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity of all humanity.”¹⁵ In the light of this, it must be admitted that those theologians who are not convinced by the Church’s teaching on the priority of the Christological dimension for priestly representation nevertheless share an important concern with recent magisterial teaching: that the ordained priest is not be understood or seen as existing apart from the Church.¹⁶

Pastores dabo vobis also states that the synod’s summary of the nature and mission of the ordained priesthood -- which the second chapter of *Pastores dabo vobis* itself claims to summarize -- is a faithful presentation of the Second Vatican Council’s teaching.¹⁷ If this is true, it is hard to see how the idea that the priest can act *in persona Christi* because he can first act *in persona ecclesiae* can be reconciled with the conciliar teaching of Vatican II.

II. Coffey on the Priority of Priestly Representation

Coffey, on the other hand, is of the opinion that Vatican II left us with the mistaken impression that the ordained priesthood is Christological, while the common priesthood, rooted in baptism and communicating an orientation to worship, is ecclesiological.¹⁸ Coffey makes this claim on the basis of what he thinks are the pneumatological and ecclesiological dimensions of the common and ordained priesthood. He argues that *Presbyterorum ordinis*,¹⁹ no.2 which speaks of the priest as acting the person of Christ the Head, “assumes” that the ordained priesthood should be understood immediately in Christological terms. Subsequent magisterial documents are said to

make the same assumption as well.²⁰ However, according to Coffey deeper reflection shows that this assumption is mistaken. The Headship of Christ is an ecclesial function and can only be exercised in the Church. In Coffey's words: ". . . therefore statements about it, even one invoking Christ the priest, whether they be magisterial or simply theological are directly ecclesiological and only indirectly Christological."²¹ Similarly, Coffey says that the common priesthood is directly ecclesiological and indirectly Christological because the common priesthood "is that of the members of the Mystical Body" and the Mystical Body is the Church.²² Each priesthood "possesses properly an ecclesiological nature"²³ because "they exist and operate as God's gifts to the Church,"²⁴ albeit as different and distinct gifts. Both forms of priesthood, however, do have "Christ's priesthood as their ontological ground."²⁵

Coffey urges that we should understand the common priesthood as "a dynamism of faith, of divine sonship or daughterhood," and the ordained priesthood as "a charism, of official witness, which the common priesthood is not."²⁶ On the other hand, Vatican II was not able to reconcile the two priesthoods in the person of Christ owing to what Coffey believes was an incomplete pneumatological understanding of the priesthood of Christ. The upshot of this in the eyes of Coffey is that the Council clung to the understanding that the ordained priesthood refers immediately to the Headship of Christ and this did "nothing to correct the popular perception of the priest as above the Church rather than as part of it."²⁷ For Coffey, only on the foundation of a sound pneumatology is it possible to reconcile the common priesthood and ordained priesthood and describe their intrinsic relation. Thus, on the basis of the anointing of the Spirit of Sonship, the common priesthood is said to be a "dynamism of incorporation into the Church" and the ordained priesthood is a particular charism.²⁸ Therefore, Coffey's describes the intrinsic relation

between the ordained priesthood and common priesthood as “the relation of sharing in Christ’s Headship over against simple union with him through faith, or the relation of official witness (apostolic leadership) in the Church over against simple belonging to it through faith and baptism.”²⁹ Coffey insists that sharing in the Headship of Christ is a gift for the Church and is not exercised above the Church and must be seen as directly ecclesiological.

III. Priority of Priestly Representation: The documents of Vatican II.

Having described Coffey’s interpretation of Vatican II, I will now examine two of his primary claims.

a) Did Vatican II assume that the ordained priesthood should be understood directly in Christological terms, thus, giving the impression that the common priesthood was directly ecclesiological?

First of all, the doctrine that the ordained priesthood is understandable first in Christological terms was something fairly well thought out by the Council fathers who very clearly intended to teach it. It was not a matter of Vatican II making an assumption. The conciliar texts and the *Acta* show that the fathers regarded the common priesthood and the ordained priesthood as directly Christological. Both priesthoods, according to Vatican II, participate in Christ’s priesthood, mission, and triple office. The problem that faced the fathers at Vatican II was how to specify and identify the difference between the common priesthood and the ordained priesthood given the fact that both were presented as directly Christological. The Council fathers addressed this problem by specifying the differentiation of roles and functions between the two priesthoods. The diverse roles and functions are rooted in a particular sharing in Christ’s life, or, to put it differently, in a particular ontological participation in Christ’s life. The distinction that is made between the two

priesthoods in LG 10 -- that they differ essentially and not only in degree -- should not be isolated from the explanation of it that is given in chapters III and IV.

I begin with the common priesthood and the explanation of it in chapter IV of *Lumen gentium*.³⁰ Careful observation paid to this chapter will show that the Council fathers clearly taught that the common priesthood was directly Christological. If we read LG 10 together with the explanation of the state of the laity in chapter IV, then, it is difficult to maintain the idea that the common priesthood in the teaching of Vatican II was somehow vague and not firmly anchored in a Christological framework and that it implied that the common priesthood should be understood first in ecclesiological terms. LG 34, teaches that “the supreme and eternal Priest, Christ Jesus, wills to continue his witness and service through the laity too, vivifying them in His Spirit and unceasingly urges them on to every good and perfect work.”³¹ Thanks to the outpouring of the Spirit, in baptism, the laity share in the mission of Christ as priest, prophet, and king. The lay faithful’s activity in this threefold office is possible because of their profound union with Christ. It is telling that LG 34, 35, 36 affirm that Christ continues his priestly, prophetic, and royal witness and service through the laity. Thus Christ himself continues his priesthood through the spiritual sacrifices of the laity who consecrate the world to God. In LG 36 Christ is said to “fulfill” (*adimplet*) his prophetic office not only through the hierarchy who teach in his name but also through the laity who witness and proclaim the Gospel in word and action. The Lord, LG 36 teaches, desires to spread his kingdom through the laity who must “learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation and how to relate it the praise of God.” The laity is said to be charged with the responsibility of working to permeate the world with the Spirit of Christ and with conforming the conditions and institutions of the world to the norms of justice.

There can be no doubt here that Vatican II understood that the laity, anointed by the power of the Spirit, act because of their union with Christ, the priest. He alone is the origin of the lay faithful's priestly activity.³²

Coffey objects that even if we can conclude that through their common priesthood the lay faithful act because of their union with Christ, "this would still not be readily recognized as a Christological reference, since in the body-metaphor that it implies only the Head was identified as Christ, and therefore the members almost by definition would be other than him."³³ He also contends that even if LG did teach that the common priesthood was a participation in the priesthood of Christ, this was not sufficient to place the common priesthood into a Christological framework. According to Coffey this was due to a failure to put forth a model for the common priesthood comparable to that of the ordained priest who acts in the person of Christ the Head.

In reply, it should be pointed out that the head-body symbol must read in its context and should not be abstracted from the careful presentation in chapters III and IV about the differentiation of the two forms of priesthood. It does not do justice to the text of LG to simply assert that it taught that the common priesthood is a participation in the priesthood of Christ. The teaching of the Council is more explanatory than that because it clearly spells out in chapter IV that Christ acts through the lay members of His Body because he continues his life, his mission and his threefold office through them. This should never be forgotten or put aside when we speak of lay members of Christ's Body. The Christological framework of the common priesthood in the teaching of LG is evident. True, the laity does not share in the Headship of Christ, but this does not mean because that the lay members do not share *this way* in Christ's life that they are almost by definition other than Christ. It is because the lay members, by the power of the Spirit, are

conformed and likened to Christ in baptism that they can be the mystical and historical extension of his Body. The conception of the Church as the Body of Christ, Head and members must be understood in the light of LG's repeated affirmation, especially in chapters III and IV, that there is a differentiation of roles in the building up of Christ's body and in the continuation of Christ's mission.

I conclude that a careful reading of the texts of LG cannot sustain the interpretation that Vatican II presented the common priesthood as directly ecclesiological and only indirectly Christological. Close attention to the relevant passages of LG reveals that the Council fathers taught that the common priesthood is directly Christological, having its origin in Christ, in its own distinct way. The baptized are active participants in Christ's three-fold office. United with Christ and made partakers of his priesthood, the baptized actively carry out his three-fold office in the Church and especially in the world where they mediate Christ's gifts. It is not sufficient to describe the common priesthood as a matter of simple union with Christ or simple belonging to him because the priesthood of the baptized is ordered to Christ's mission.

What about the other part of Coffey's claim that Vatican II "assumed" that the ordained priesthood should be understood directly in Christological terms? He claims that this is especially true with regard to the texts on Christ's Headship and with ordained priesthood in the documents of Vatican II.³⁴ I believe that the texts on Headship in the documents of Vatican II should not be read in isolation from what is said about the ordained priesthood being rooted in Christ. Contrary to Coffey's views, it is not the case that the texts on Headship "assume" that the ordained priesthood is directly Christological because these texts, such as LG 28 and PO 2, are grounded upon with what is taught in the entire third chapter of *Lumen gentium* especially in nos. 18, 19,

20, 21. In these passages, the ordained priesthood is presented, step by step, as rooted in a unique participation in the priesthood of Christ or, in other words, as “directly Christological.”

According to LG 18, “Jesus Christ, the eternal Shepherd, established His holy Church by sending forth the apostles as He Himself had been sent by the Father (cf. Jn 20:21). He willed that their successors, namely the bishops, should be shepherds in His Church . . .”

LG 20 asserts that whoever listens to them listens to Christ. LG 21 explains that the bishops possess the fullness of the ordained priesthood and that “In the bishops, therefore, for whom priests are assistants, the Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme High Priest, is present in the midst of those who believe.” Thanks to their ordination, bishops exercise the triple office of Christ in *eius persona*. Moreover, LG 21 states “[I]t is clear that, by means of the impositions of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so impressed, that the bishops in an eminent and visible way undertake Christ’s role as Teacher, Shepherd, and High Priest, and that they act in His person” LG 25 explains that bishops are “authentic teachers, that is, teachers endowed with the authority of Christ . . .”

In these ways, the bishop, and thus the ordained priesthood, has the unique capacity of representing Christ to the Church. It is Christ who continues his work and service of teaching, sanctifying and shepherding through the ordained priesthood. The texts on Headship, notably in LG 28 and PO 2, should not be abstracted from this context so carefully constructed in nos. 19-21 of LG. It is true, of course, that this activity of the ordained priest is a gift of service for the Church, and in the Church, but the Council understands that the origin of this activity and service is from Christ.

Butler’s research is helpful here. She calls attention to the fact that Vatican II’s strong

statements about the participation of the laity in Christ's priesthood necessitated a further specification of the distinctiveness of the ordained priesthood. This further specification of the ordained priesthood in terms of the formulas *in persona Christi*, and *in persona Christi capitis*, not only served to clarify its distinctiveness but also served to illuminate "the sacramental ordering of the Church as a body in which diverse functions bring about a vital unity."³⁵

Two texts are important here with regard to the phrases *in persona Christi* and *in persona Christi capitis*: LG 28 and PO 2. I take the former of these texts first.

The text of LG 28, presents the ordained priesthood's participation in the priestly office of Christ as encompassing the three *munera* of teaching, leading and sanctifying. Furthermore, the *relatio* clarifying the final text explains something of how the Council Fathers understood the relation between the Head and Body of the Church. This passage from LG 28 reads:

Although priests do not possess the highest degree of the priesthood, and although they are dependent on the bishops in the exercise of their power, they are nevertheless united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity. By the power of the sacrament of orders, and in the image of Christ the eternal High Priest (Heb. 5:1-10; 7:24; 9:11-28), they are consecrated to preach the gospel, shepherd the faithful, and celebrate divine as true priests of the New Testament. Partakers of the function of Christ the sole Mediator (1Tim 2:5) on their level of ministry, they announce the divine word to all. They exercise this sacred function of Christ most of all in the Eucharistic liturgy or synaxis. There, acting in the person of Christ, and proclaiming His mystery, they join the offering of the faithful to the sacrifice of their Head. Until the coming of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26), they re-present and apply in the Sacrifice of the Mass the one sacrifice of the New Testament, namely the sacrifice of Christ offering Himself to His Father as a spotless victim (cf. Heb 9:11-12).

Butler pointed out in her essay that this text is particularly important because, according to the *Acta*, the editing of it forced a clarification of the phrase *in persona Christi*.³⁶ The first draft of the text did not present priest-presbyters as participating in the *munera* of teaching and leading when they acted *in persona Christi*. The use of the term *in persona Christi* in regard to priest-

presbyters was restricted to the *munus* of sanctifying, that is, in offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass and administering the sacraments. As for the other *munera*, priest-presbyters were said to be under the authority of the bishop and are to cooperate with the bishop in his shepherding of the people.

The second draft, on the other hand, related the *munera* of teaching and guiding the faithful with acting in the person of Christ. The final draft, which was to become the approved final text, quoted above, made further changes after the Council fathers reflected more upon the office of priest-presbyter. The phrase *in persona Christi*, used in reference to priest-presbyters, was now clearly linked to the other two *munera* -- teaching and shepherding. Acting *in persona Christi* is not restricted to the celebration of the Eucharist. Priest-presbyters are said to be consecrated “to preach the Gospel, to shepherd the faithful and celebrate the divine worship.” The sacrament of Orders which gives the priest-presbyter a share in the priestly office of Christ includes the three *munera* of teaching, leading and sanctifying. Butler writes: “The Council connects Eucharistic presidency and pastoral leadership on the grounds that in both the priest acts in the person of Christ.”³⁷ Still, having made this strong connection, the Council fathers teach that it is in the Eucharistic liturgy that priest-presbyters exercise their sacred functions in a pre-eminent way. The text of LG, at this point, footnotes the twenty-second session of the Council of Trent (Denzinger 1743) and the encyclical *Mediator Dei*, no.84 (Denzinger 3850).³⁸ After warning against certain errors³⁹ the text from *Mediator Dei* states: “But we deem it necessary to recall that the priest acts for the people only because he represents Jesus Christ, Who is Head of all His members and offers Himself in their stead.”

This text of *Mediator Dei* serves as a key to interpreting what LG 28 means when it speaks of

the priest acting *in persona Christi* and affirms that in the Eucharist the priest-presbyter exercises in a pre-eminent way the functions of Christ, the Mediator. The passage from *Mediator Dei*, cited by LG, also discloses something about how the fathers at Vatican II understood the relationship between the ordained priesthood and the common priesthood, as well as the relationship between the Head and body of the Church in the Eucharist. The priest can act for the people, for the common priesthood, only because he represents Jesus Christ, who is Head of all the members. It is Christ who speaks for us to the Father and draws us by the power of the Spirit into his worship of the Father. The ordained priest in the Eucharist sacramentally represents Christ presenting his Body, the Church, to the Father. He represents Christ doing for us what we cannot do by ourselves alone. Thus, it is because the priest acts in the person of Christ as Head that he can speak *in nomine ecclesiae*.

Samuel Aquila notices that there was another addition that made it into the final text of LG 28 that contributed to the clarification of the term *in persona Christi*: “Exercising within the limits of their authority the function of Christ as Shepherd and Head, they gather together God’s family as a brotherhood all of all one mind and lead them in them Spirit, through Christ, to God the Father.” Aquila notices, rightly, that this addition is important because it connects the *munus* of the priest to Christ’s function as shepherd and Head of the Church.⁴⁰ This emphasis is further developed in PO.⁴¹

Summing up thus far: Careful study guided by the *Acta* shows that LG 28, clarified the phrase *in persona Christi* by teaching that the priest-presbyter acts in the person of Christ not only in Eucharistic presidency and but in pastoral leadership as well. In both instances, the priest-presbyter shares in the function of Christ the sole Mediator. It is in the Eucharist that priest-

presbyter acts in the person of Christ *par excellance*. There, he re-presents the sacrifice of Christ and acts for the faithful joining their sacrifices to the sacrifice of Christ the Head. Priest-presbyters according to LG 28 participate in the function of Christ as Head and shepherd, gathering together the faithful into God's family and leading them in the Spirit through Christ to the Father.

In LG 28 the essential difference between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the baptized cannot simply be distinguished by its "public" character. The ordained priest has a different relationship to Christ. He shares in the mediatorship of Christ in a special way because he represents Christ facing the Church announcing the word of the Gospel and joins the sacrifice of the faith to Christ's sacrifice. In this way, LG 28 understands the ordained priesthood as directly Christological and as a gift for the Church.

PO builds upon what is taught about the ordained priesthood in LG 28. The first paragraphs of PO 2 state that all the baptized share in the consecration and mission of Christ and that in Christ all the baptized are made into a holy nation and a royal priesthood. It is recalled that the Lord, in order that the baptized might be joined together into one body, set up certain ministers and gave them the power to offer sacrifice and forgive sins. This priestly office, PO teaches, is carried out for faithful in the name of Christ.

Butler points out that the *Acta* shows that the fathers of Vatican II were concerned to further clarify still, the theological nature of the distinctiveness of the ordained priesthood. PO 2 sets out to do precisely this. It declares that priests share in the authority of Christ to build up his Body, the Church, and act *in persona Christi capitis*:

Inasmuch as it is connected with the episcopal order, the priestly office shares in the

authority by which Christ Himself builds up, sanctifies, and rules His Body. Therefore, while it indeed presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, the sacerdotal office of priests is conferred by that sacrament through which priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are marked with a special character and are so configured to Christ the Priest that they act in the person of Christ as Head . . . Through the ministry of priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made in perfect union with the sacrifice of Christ, the sole Mediator. Through the hands of priests and in the name of the whole Church, (*nomine totius ecclesiae*) the Lord's sacrifice is offered in the Eucharist in an unbloody manner until he Himself returns.⁴²

The Council fathers were not satisfied with simply saying that the priest represents Christ; they wanted to specify how the priest represented Christ differently from the rest of the baptized. The specific difference between priesthood of the baptized and the ordained priesthood is that the priest acts in the person of Christ the Head. But the fathers went even further, clearly affirming that the participation in Christ's Headship is given for the purpose of building up the Church and directing its growth.

By the time this text reached its final form, it had undergone several revisions. Butler calls attention to the official *relatio* -- which is helpful in seeing how *in persona Christi capitis* was understood. It explains that the presbyter "is configured in a special way to Christ the priest, so that, having become a sharer in the episcopal mission, he is able to act in the person of Christ the Head, Teacher, Priest, and Ruler . . . in the building up of his Body, which is the Church."⁴³

The connection between Headship and mission here is clear.

The next revision of the text and the accompanying *relatio* supply further insight into how the Council fathers understood *in persona Christi capitis*. The revision -- pertinent to the second sentence of the text quoted above -- relates and differentiates the sacraments of initiation and the sacrament of Orders. The ordained priesthood is grounded in the sacraments of initiation, but it is bestowed by the distinct sacrament of Orders. Thanks to the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the

priest-presbyter is given a unique character which configures him to Christ. Here, again, we see the Christological priority and approach in Vatican II's teaching on the ordained priesthood. It is this special sacramental character, which is Christological, that enables the ordained man to accomplish his mission *in persona Christi capitis*. In other words, if priests are marked with a special configuration to Christ, then this is basis of their action *for* the Church. Understood in this way the ordained priesthood cannot be spoken of as first ecclesial because the source of priestly action comes not from the Church but from Christ.

The *relatio* notes the addition of the phrase *nomine totius ecclesiae*. The final text asserts that the faithful participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice through the ministry of the ordained priest. This is, of course, affirmed elsewhere in the documents of Vatican II,⁴⁴ but here the spiritual sacrifices of the faithful are said to be consummated in union with Christ's sacrifice which is offered through the hands of priest-presbyters in the name of whole Church (*nomine totius ecclesiae*). The addition of this latter phrase is important because it shows something about how the Council understood *in persona Christi capitis*. The priest can pray in the name of the Church because he represents Christ, the Head of the Body, who gathers together the prayers and sacrifices of the members, joins it to his prayer and sacrifice and presents it to the Father. It is this relationship of Christ to the Church that is sacramentalized in the ordained priesthood in which the priest stands *in persona Christi capitis*. Thus, when the priest prays *in nomine ecclesiae*, he does so not only in the name of the local church community, but also in the name of the whole Church because he represents Christ, the Head who presents his body, the Church to the Father. The *relatio* sheds additional light on how *in persona Christi capitis* was understood because it explains that the mission of the priest-presbyter is distinct from the one given to the laity because

it has its source in the mission Christ gave to the apostles and through the apostles to the bishops.⁴⁵

The understanding of Headship, *in persona Christi capitis*, in the documents of Vatican II is different from the conception that Coffey proposes. He understands Headship to be directly ecclesiological and indirectly Christological because it is an ecclesial function and can only be exercised in the Church. The difference between the ordained and common priesthood for Coffey ultimately rests upon an ecclesiological difference. He thinks of Headship as the ability to represent the members of the Church.

On the other hand, in the documents of Vatican II, the essential difference between the ordained priesthood and the common priesthood is not simply ecclesial but Christological. The ordained priesthood and the common priesthood each involve a different participation in the priesthood of Christ and a different participation in Christ's mission. The Council fathers could affirm, deliberately, this Christological difference while at the same time asserting that both the common priesthood and the ordained priesthood each in their own way are given for the service of the Kingdom of God and the Church. But again, this service issues from certain participation in Christ's priesthood -- something that not even the Church can give by her own power or ability alone.⁴⁶

IV. The meaning of Headship

What about Coffey's other claim, that if the ordained priesthood is understood immediately in terms of the Headship of Christ, then the priest appears as above the Church or apart from the Church? Coffey argues, as we have noted, that the texts of Vatican II and subsequent magisterial texts are incorrect in their conception that the ordained priesthood refers first to Christ's

Headship, “For the headship of Christ as exercised in the only place where it can be exercised, namely the Church, is clearly an ecclesial function . . .”⁴⁷ Does the teaching of Vatican II about the priest representing the Headship of Christ isolate him from the Church or place him in a position above the Church?

It is certainly true, as we have seen above, that Vatican II understands the source of the ordained priest’s action for the Church as a participation in Christ’s Headship, but, this does not isolate the priest from the Church or put him in a position above the Church. The share of the ordained priest in the Headship of Christ is given for the Church and is ultimately intelligible only in reference to the Church. In the documents of Vatican II Headship is an inherently relational concept. Recall how LG and PO describe and explain the *munera* of the ordained priesthood in terms of sanctifying, shepherding, leading, preaching, and teaching. These things only make sense in relation to the Church -- not apart from or outside of it. In other words, the priest understood as *in persona Christi capitis* represents Christ the Head in his relationship to the Church. This relationship -- thanks to the indissoluble union between the Head and members of the Body -- is not outside of the Church but within the Church. The Church lives in her Head and from her Head who is the source of her life. Christ the Head lives with her and in her.⁴⁸ Headship is constitutive of the Church and therefore cannot be other than within it.

It is because Vatican II affirms the Christological priority of Orders -- in terms of *in persona Christi capitis* -- that it understands the ordained priesthood as “for others.” The ordained priesthood is “for others” because it is a special participation in Christ’s priesthood which, by its very nature, is ordered to the common good of the Body, the Church.⁴⁹ Thus, Vatican II understands that when a man is ordained a priest-presbyter he is given a new relationship to the

Church within the one Body because he participates in a new way in the priesthood of Christ. The new relationship, which occurs within the Church, makes visible and effective sacramentally the reality of Christ's priestly office for the baptized.

This presentation of Headship in the documents of Vatican II is consistent with the Council's profound sacramental understanding of the Church and Orders. Christ's ongoing love for the Church in which he calls, gathers, sanctifies, builds up and unifies his Body, the Church -- that is his activity as Head and Shepherd -- should be recognizable in a visible sign. This Headship, whereby Christ faces the Church, is visible and identifiable in the ministry of the ordained priesthood. It is a sign of the sheer gratuity and priority of the grace of Christ. It is Christ with the power of the Holy Spirit who unites and fills up the Church with the divine life.⁵⁰

It is important to remember that in the concern to present the ordained priesthood as existing within the Church, it is easy to confuse the question of context with that of representation. To be sure, both the common and the ordained priesthoods exist within the Church, not outside of it. To that extent, they are both ecclesial. It is also true, as we have seen, that both priesthoods have Christ the Priest as their origin. To that extent they are both Christological. But only the ordained priesthood requires the sacramental representation of Christ, not the common priesthood.

A further difficulty is that Coffey fails to apply to his understanding of the ordained ministry the truth that Christ is the source of life in the Church. This failure leads to a faulty understanding of Headship that equates Headship with leadership or "official witness."⁵¹ A fully sacramental understanding of Headship is of a different kind. It is exercised only by the authority of Christ and in his person. It involves a special participation in the mission and mediatorship of Christ whereby Christ, the source of life, nourishes and builds up the Church. The ordained priesthood is a gift to

the Church, instituted by Christ, neither priori or posterior to the Church but within it. The rest of the baptized may designate the one to occupy this office, but they do not confer on him the authority to act in *persona Christi capitis*.

To be fair, Coffey, at one point, appears to come close to a sacramental understanding of Headship that represents Christ as the source of the Church's life. After quoting the comments from an essay by Georg Hintze⁵² about priestly representation, Coffey argues that the ordained priest sacramentally represents Christ's Headship and that this Headship is not drawn from the members of the Church but from Christ. I think it important to quote Coffey here:

It is necessary to add only that the priest does not represent Christ and the Church in exactly the same way. He represents Christ in that he sacramentally makes visible and active in the Church an invisible reality, Christ in his headship. This is not the case with his representation of the Church, for in a real sense the Church is visible already. But in this case he adds headship, apostleship, or leadership to the action of this group of believers, in order to constitute them as Church in the full sense. Apart from his presence and ministry they are only a group of believers, unable of themselves to represent the Church. But at the same time, the fact that he represents them by no means renders their presence and action superfluous, for just as their faith is positive and active, so too is their priesthood. Thus it can be seen that, even though the priest represents a reality that is already at least partially visible, his is truly a sacramental, and not merely juridical, representation. (If, per impossibile, it were only of the latter kind, his priesthood would differ only in degree, not in kind, from theirs.) But what he adds is drawn not from them, but from Christ. And it is precisely this contribution that, along with theirs, truly constitutes the Church, and therefore the Church at prayer, i.e. the priesthood of the Church.⁵³

This affirmation that the ordained priest's sacramental representation of Headship is derived directly from Christ does not seem to be integrated into Coffey's wider analysis of the nature of the ordained priesthood. For throughout his article,⁵⁴ except for the passage quoted above, he claims,

For the headship of Christ as exercised in the only place where it can be exercised, namely the Church, is clearly an ecclesial function, and therefore statements about it, even ones invoking Christ the priest, whether they be magisterial or simply theological,

are directly ecclesiological and only indirectly Christological.⁵⁵

But how can this Headship, that the ordained priesthood sacramentally represents, be only indirectly Christological and directly ecclesiological *if*, as Coffey says, Headship is drawn from Christ and *if* it is precisely this contribution that, together with the common priesthood, constitutes the Church, particularly the Church at prayer? There seems to be a failure, as described above, to grasp Vatican II's point that the sacramental representation of the Headship of Christ has to do with representing Christ as source of the life of the Church evident in the actions of sanctifying, teaching, and shepherding the Church.⁵⁶ Or in the words of *Pastores dabo vobis*, "And so the priest, on account of his very nature and sacramental mission appears in the structure of the Church as a sign of the absolute priority and gratuity of that grace which is conferred by the risen Christ on the Church."⁵⁷ A closer reading of the documents of Vatican II together, with the *Acta*, would have assuaged Coffey in his entirely legitimate fear that the sacramental representation of Christ's Headship not be seen as isolating the ordained priest from the Church and placing him in a position apart from the Church or above it. On the other hand, LG and PO presents the ordained priesthood (and the common priesthood) in a strong relational and Christological framework understanding the ordained priest as sacramentally representing as Headship within the Church and for the Church.

V. Conclusion

I think that it is clear that Vatican II successfully avoids a juridical interpretation of priestly identity as well as a juridical understanding of the term *in persona Christi* that isolated the priest from the Church. It affirmed a strong Christological priority of priestly identity in terms of a sacramental representation *in persona Christi capitis*. This inherently relational sacramental

imagining of Christ in terms of Headship firmly placed the ordained priest within the one body, the Church, and thus made reference to the Church absolutely necessary for defining priestly identity. The ordained priesthood is a gift to the Church, instituted by Christ, neither prior or posterior to the Church. The concern that scholars such as Coffey have for the ecclesial dimension of a contemporary theology of priestly identity is well-placed. While not denying these concerns, this article has called attention to the priority of the gratuity of the grace of Christ and the gift of communion that Christ gives to the Church.

In persona Christi capitis is understood in the documents of Vatican II as a sacramental representation of the priority of Christ's activity whereby he gathers and builds up his body, the Church, and draws the Church into his worship and his sacrifice. The ordained priest's ability to represent the Church and to pray in the name of the whole Church is based on his participation in this function of Christ as sole mediator. The priest's representation of the Church and speaking *in nomine ecclesiae*, is situated within *in persona Christi capitis*. The former has its foundation and its reason in the latter. It is Christ who first offers himself and the Church is only able to offer herself because of his offering. The Church gives homage and offers its sacrifice of praise through Christ. In this way, Christ, the Head of the Body, acts in the name of the whole Church and represents the whole Church to the Father. It is on this basis that we can distinguish two distinct forms of representation -- distinct but always united. On the one hand, the priest represents Christ the Head who sanctifies his body the Church and directs its growth. On the other hand, the priest represents the whole Church by speaking *in nomine ecclesiae*, just as Christ does, representing her faithful response to the Father through the sacrifice of Christ.

The Christological priority of priestly representation is well established in Church teaching. I

would suggest that the direction of further research might be well served if it moved beyond the issue of the priority of priestly representation. In this vein, I wish to conclude with a point that *Pastores dabo vobis*, no.12 makes about the identity of the ordained priesthood. In that document, we read that priestly identity, “like every Christian identity, has its source in the Blessed Trinity, which is revealed and is communicated to people in Christ, establishing, in him and through the Spirit, the Church . . .” *Pastores dabo vobis*, no.12 continues on to observe that both “the nature and the mission of the ordained priesthood cannot be defined except through this multiple and rich interconnection of relationships which arise from the Blessed Trinity and are prolonged in the communion of the Church, as a sign and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity of all humanity.” I believe that the direction of further research might find it fruitful to take up the task of probing the interconnection of these relationships that constitute the identity of the ordained priest.

Endnotes

1. Most notably Thomas Rausch “Priestly Identity: Priority of Representation and the Iconic

Argument,” *Worship*, 73 (March 1999): 169-179; See also Paul Philibert, “Issues for a Theology of Priesthood: A Status Report,” in *The Theology of Priesthood*, ed. Donald Goergen and Ann Garrido., (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000): 30-31. Both Rausch and Philibert also draw on an earlier essay by Coffey “Priestly Representation and Women’s Ordination,” in *Priesthood: The Hard Questions*, ed. Gerald P. Gleeson (Newtown, NSW, Australia: E.J. Dwyer, 1992): 79-99.

2. “The Common and the Ordained Priesthood,” *Theological Studies*, 58 (June 1997): 209-236.

3. Ibid, 213.

4. Ibid. He also comes to this conclusion in his earlier essay “Priestly Representation and Women’s Ordination,” in *Priesthood: The Hard Questions*, 88.

5. “The Common and the Ordained Priesthood,” 211.

6. Ibid., 235.

7. “Priestly Identity: ‘Sacrament’ of Christ the Head,” *Worship*, 70 (July 1996): 290-306.

8. Samuel Aquila, *The Teaching of Vatican II on “In Persona Christi” and “In Nomine Ecclesiae” in Relation to the Ministerial Priesthood in the Light of the Historical Development of the Formulae*, (Licentiate tessina, Pontificium Athenaeum Anselmianum, Rome, 1990)

9. Francis Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity*, 170. Sullivan observes “One of ‘the norms of theological interpretation’ is that very often considerable light can be shed on the intentions of a Council from the study of its *acta*. In the case of Vatican II, the interpreter has available the thirty volumes of the *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, in which to follow the progress of any text through the Council.”

10. For example, Susan Wood, “Priestly Identity: Sacrament of the Ecclesial Community,” *Worship*, 69 (March 1995): 109-27. Thomas Rausch “Priestly Identity: Priority of Representation

and the Iconic Argument.” Paul Philibert, “Issues for a Theology of Priesthood: A Status Report,” David Power, “Representing Christ in Community and Sacrament,” in *Being a Priest Today*, (Collegeville, MN, 1992), 97-123.

11. For example, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no.1553.

12. Most recently, Pope John Paul’s post synodal apostolic exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis*, which appeared in 1992 after the Eighth Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops that treated the topic of the formation of priests in 1990; “Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood,” *Inter insigniores*, (1976) promulgated during the pontificate of Paul VI and Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947).

13. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no.1553.

14. *Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 16. Translation mine. For the Latin text see *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. 84 (1992): 682.

15. *Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 12. I give the English translation from *Origins*, 21 (April 16, 1992).

16. *Pastores dabo vobis* no.16 also states that the ordained priesthood “arises with the Church” and that “Consequently, the ordained priesthood ought not to be thought of as existing prior to the Church, because it is totally at the service of the Church. Nor should it be considered as posterior to the ecclesial community, as if the Church could be imagined as already established without this priesthood.” I give the English translation from *Origins*, 21 (April 16, 1992).

17. The Pope refers here to the summary of the work of the synod collected in what is termed “propositions” that were forwarded to him at the conclusion of the synod.

18. Rausch, 179.

19. Hereafter PO=*Presbyterorum ordinis*.

20. Coffey, 211.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid. In order to further his argument, Coffey tries to correct Vatican II with *Mediator Dei*.

He cites the following English translation by the Catholic Truth Society of *Mediator Dei*, no. 88:

“by reason of their baptism Christians are in the Mystical Body and become by a common title members of Christ the Priest; by the character that is graven upon their souls they are appointed to the worship of God, and therefore, according to their condition, share in the priesthood of Christ himself.”

Coffey interprets this to mean that the encyclical makes an ecclesiological statement about the faithful -- by baptism they are members of the Body of Christ -- and then infers from it a Christological statement that the faithful are members of Christ the Priest. This passage of the encyclical, in the eyes of Coffey, gave an unambiguous ecclesiological reference for the common priesthood -- one that, according to Coffey, that Vatican II did not embrace as a conclusion. The serious problem with this claim is that Coffey relies on a faulty English translation. It only partially translates the phrase “generali titulo christiani in Mystico Corpore membra efficiuntur Christi sacerdotis” The original Latin text does not allow Coffey’s interpretation, that is, a disjunction between the Mystical Body and Christ the Priest. Rather according to *Mediator Dei* Baptism makes the faithful members of the Mystical Body of Christ the Priest. The American English translation in the Vatican Library translation series released by the National Catholic Welfare Office (Washington D.C., 1947) is more faithful to the Latin:

“By the waters of Baptism, as by common right, Christians are made members of the Mystical Body of Christ the Priest, and by the ‘character’ which is imprinted on their souls, they are appointed to give worship to God. Thus they participate, according to

their condition, in the priesthood of Christ.”

For a similar translation see Gerald Ellard, *Encyclical Letter Mediator Dei of Pius XII*, (New York: America Press, 1948): 44. See also, Gerald Treacy, *Mediator Dei on the Sacred Liturgy*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1948): 41. There is nothing in the encyclical that somehow places the Mystical Body in an antecedent position before Christ the Priest. The Church is not prior to Christ and his priesthood in *Mediator Dei*. Another serious problem with Coffey’s interpretation of *Mediator Dei* is that it seems to require us to think that the encyclical supposes the sacramental character of baptism to be ecclesial rather than Christological. On the contrary, there is no reason to believe that *Mediator Dei* conceived of the character as having an ecclesial priority over the Christological.

23. Coffey, 225.

24. Ibid, 212.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid, 235.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Hereafter LG= *Lumen gentium*

31. All quotations of *Lumen gentium* are taken from the translation *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbot, (New York: America Press, 1966).

32. It is interesting to note that the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, no.14 calls attention to this very point. Commenting on chapter IV of *Lumen gentium*’s affirmation of the laity’s participation in the triple office of Christ, *Christifideles Laici*, no.14 states:

“Clearly we are the Body of Christ *because* we are all ‘anointed’ and in him are ‘christs,’ that is, ‘anointed ones,’ as well as Christ himself, ‘the anointed one.’ In a certain way, then, it happens that with the head and body the whole Christ is formed.”

Emphasis mine. I quote from the English translation in *Origins*, 18 (February 9, 1989): 562-595.

33. Coffey, 225.

34. *Ibid.*, 211.

35. Butler, 305.

36. *Ibid.*, 298.

37. Butler, 298, citing also *Acta Synodalia*, v.II, pars II, 213 and Samuel Aquila, *The Teaching of Vatican II on “In Persona Christi” and “In Nomine Ecclesiae” in Relation to the Ministerial Priesthood in the Light of the Historical Development of the Formulae*, 91.

38. The *relatio* on LG 28 and 29 explains “[T]he office by which the priest acts ‘in persona Christi’ especially in Eucharistic worship is shown by the words of Trent and confirmed by the words of the encyclical ‘Mediator Dei’ . . .” The Council of Trent taught in its twenty-second session that it is Christ who offers the Eucharistic sacrifice for us. For the text of the *relatio* see *Acta Synodalia*, III, pars II, 213. I give the translation in Aquila, 91.

39. *Mediator Dei* no.83 warns against the error of thinking that a “priest only acts in virtue of an office committed to him by the community” All quotes from *Mediator Dei* are taken from The American English translation in the Vatican Library translation series released by the National Catholic Welfare Office (Washington D.C., 1947).

40. Aquila, 93.

41. Understood in this context, the reference to Headship in LG 28 is far more important than Coffey thinks. He dismisses it as “theologically insignificant.” Coffey, 211.

42. All quotations of *Presbyterorum ordinis* are taken from the translation *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbot, (New York: America Press, 1966).

43. *Acta Synodalia*, IV, pars VI, 390. I give Aquila's translation, p.106.

44. See for instance LG 10, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no.48. Here we can appreciate the logic of the latter document which teaches that the faithful offer "the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves too. Through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into an ever closer union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all." The point of the text is not to assert some narrow approach to the liturgy that would monopolize it in favor of the priest but rather to affirm the priority and gratuity of Christ who wants to unite the Church to his worship.

45. *Acta Synodalia*, IV, pars VI, 342.

46. It is interesting to note that Vatican II's understanding of the common priesthood and the ordained priesthood bears a certain correspondence with what St. Thomas teaches about the sacramental character being the character of Christ in *ST III*, q. 63, art.3. After stating that a character marks something as being ordained to a specific end, St. Thomas says:

Secondly, each of the faithful is deputed to receive, or to bestow on others, things pertaining to the worship of God. And this, properly speaking, is the purpose of the sacramental character. Now the whole rite of Christian religion is derived from Christ's priesthood. Consequently, it is clear that the sacramental character is specially the character of Christ, to Whose character the faithful are likened by reason of the sacramental characters, which are nothing else than certain participations of Christ's Priesthood, flowing from Christ himself.

I quote from the translation of the English Dominicans, *Summa Theologica*, v.2, (Chicago: Benziger Bros., 1947).

47. Coffey, 211.

48. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no.708.

49. Although he did not use the later terminology of *in persona Christi capitis*, Augustine saw something of this relationship of the priesthood to the baptized as one of “with and for” in a sermon marking one of his anniversaries as a bishop: “Where I’m terrified by what I am *for you*, I am given comfort by what I am *with you*. For you I am a bishop, with you after all, I am a Christian.” Emphases mine. See, Sermon 340, *The Works of Saint Augustine, Sermons*, tr. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rostelle, v. III/9 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990) 292.

50. It is also worth noting that Vatican II’s understanding of the Headship of Christ -- as the source of growth, order and life -- reflects something of what the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians proclaim about the Headship of Christ. Heinrich Schlier commenting on the term *kephale* in Eph 1:22f; 4:14; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:10; 2:19, observes that Christ is presented as Head of the Church “in the sense that from this Head the body grows up to this Head.” In this schema, Schlier states “[T]he Head is not present without or apart from the body, nor the body without or apart from the Head. The Church is the earthly body of the heavenly Head.”

Moreover:

In this unity of Christ and the Church the Headship of Christ is manifested in the fact that He directs the growth of the body to Himself. The *kephale* determines not merely the being of the body but also the fulfilment of its life . . . He is the effective “whence” of the

activity of the body whereby it edifies itself through gifts given to its members. As the *kephale* He is thus the concrete principle of the bodily growth of the Church He is the arche, Col 1:18.

See Heinrich Schlier, s.v. “kephale,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, v.3., ed. Gerhard Kittel, tr. Geoffrey W Bromiley, (Grand Rapids, Mich.:Eerdmans,1964-c1976): 680. Schlier also comments on p.679 that “*kephale* implies one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being. Paul could have used *arche* if there had not been a closer personal relationship in *kephale*.” The exegete Markus Barth observes that Paul preferred to employ the verb “to fill” to describe how Christ the Head governed the body. “If Christ is the head then he is the ‘greatest power,’ the ‘source’, the ‘beginning’ or the ‘rule’ (*arche*), the ‘acropolis’ of all members. Thus it is impossible to assume that they ‘fill’ him. He alone fills them.” See Markus Barth, *Ephesians. Introduction, translation and commentary*. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974): 190-1.

51. For example, recall Coffey’s description of the relationship between the ordained priesthood and the common priesthood. “Depending on whether christological or ecclesiological terms of reference are chosen, it can be called the relation of sharing in Christ’s Headship over simple union with him through faith, or the relation of official witness (apostolic leadership) in the Church over against simple belonging to it through faith and baptism. While both possibilities are correct, the second is the more appropriate, as it is expressive of the actual context in which the priesthood exists and operates.”

David Power runs into a similar difficulty as Coffey when he writes:

Hence his [the priest’s] action *in persona Ecclesiae* is a cultic action wherein the Church’s

devotion and spiritual sacrifice is expressed. This distinguishes the action of the Church in giving homage from its action, through a minister, as instrument of Christ's sanctifying power, though the latter properly occurs in the context of the former. "Representing Christ in Community and Sacrament," 101, in *Being a Priest Today* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), pp. 97-123.

Here are contrasted two situations. In the first, the Church through the priest gives homage to the Father, and the priest acts *in persona Ecclesiae*. In the second, Christ acts through the Church and the Church acts through the priest to sanctify. The difficulty with this is that it camouflages an equivocation on "Church." In the first situation, the assembly expresses its devotion through the prayers said by the priest. In the second situation the assembly moved by Christ expresses its sanctifying action through the priest? On the contrary, Christ acts for the people through the priest. It is true that the action of the priest is an action of the Church but in a different sense than in the first situation. Sanctifying the elements is not an action of the congregation. To be sure, the Church does regulate the exercise of the priest acting as Christ's instrument. Still, the sanctifying action of Christ does not pass as it were from Christ to the assembly and then to the priest. Nor does the liturgy signify something like this. It is relevant to note that during the discussion of the drafting of PO 2 the *relatio* explains that the addition of the words *nomine totius ecclesiae*, in reference to the priest, was made to show forth the nature of the sacrifice of the Mass. A Council father proposed that the text should be emended so as to describe presbyters as "ministers of the Church." The theological commission responsible for overseeing revisions to the text rejected the request explaining that the text already spoke of the priest-presbyter speaking "*nomine totius ecclesiae*." Furthermore, the *relatio* replied: "Presbyters act not as ministers of the Church but as

ministers of Christ.” The *relatio* cited LG 10 and LG 28: in *persona Christi agentes*. See, *Acta Synodalia*, IV, pars, VII, 123-124. Here again we see the Council’s intention to affirm the Christological priority of the priest representing Christ as Head.

52. “Das gemeinsame Priestertum aller Gläubigen und das besondere Priestertum des Dienstes in der ökumenischen Diskussion,” *Catholica*, 45 (1991): 44-77.

53. Coffey, 233-4.

54. He comes to the same conclusion in his earlier essay “Priestly Representation and Women’s Ordination,” 96. Here Coffey states: “However, the priest’s primary and direct representation is of the earthly church, and it is only insofar as he represents *it* that he is able to represent Christ and the whole Church.”

55. Coffey, 211.

56. Here again, Vatican II’s view of Christ’s Headship seems to be well-informed by the Pauline understanding. Markus Barth argues that “Paul could ascribe to the head more than a representative and dominating function. He could attribute to it the power to perceive, to interpret, to coordinate, and to unify all that went on in the body and its several members. Because the head is the ‘greatest power’ of the body, causation and coordination can be ascribed to nothing else.” Barth, *Ephesians*, 190.

57. *Pastores dabo vobis*, no.16. Translation mine.