



The *Fermentum* in the Historical Context of the Roman Liturgy

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Abstract: This contribution is a historical study of the ancient Roman practice of *fermentum*, which was already established and attested in the city of Rome at the beginning of the 5th century. Despite the scarcity of documentation relating to this liturgical practice, a critical study of the sources, together with their broader context, offers a more complete view of the phenomenon. Our study offers a critical re-evaluation not only of the liturgical sources themselves, but also of the opinions of leading scholars of the past regarding the Roman practice of *fermentum*.

Keywords: *fermentum*, roman mass, roman liturgy, papal liturgy, history of the liturgy

The practice of sending bread consecrated by the pope to other assemblies within the city of Rome, known as *fermentum*, is one of the peculiar features of ancient liturgy that continues to arouse scholarly interest. It has been the subject of numerous studies and commentaries by various authors, including some of the most renowned historians of the liturgy in the 20th century.

Approximately twenty years ago, John Baldovin (2005) proposed a departure from the traditional interpretation of the *fermentum* adopted by most earlier scholars of liturgical history, including Josef Andreas Jungmann, Mario Righetti, Antoine Chavasse, Robert Cabié, and Vincenzo Raffa (Baldovin 2005, 43). These authors maintained that the *fermentum* was destined for Eucharistic celebrations presided over by presbyters in the *tituli*. Baldovin, by contrast, drawing on the insights of distinguished scholars such as Pierre Nautin, Victor Saxer, and Robert Taft, raised a number of significant objections to this view, suggesting that the assemblies to which the *fermentum* was sent were not, in fact, full Eucharistic celebrations.

The present contribution takes as its point of departure the objections raised by Baldovin. In its first part, it offers a critical comparison with the positions of Nautin, Saxer, and Taft, based on a careful examination of the literary sources concerning the ancient use of the *fermentum*, in order to determine the precise nature of the assemblies to which it may have been directed. The second part seeks to trace a possible development of the ancient notion of sending Eucharistic bread to other celebrations as a sign of communion. The third part undertakes a critical analysis of the sources

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dealing with a highly specific issue—namely, the idea of continuity between successive Eucharistic celebrations—a concept first articulated by Jean Mabillon and still echoed by some modern scholars, such as Janusz Mieczkowski (2010, 159–60).

Amid divergent opinions among major scholars on this subject, the aim of this historical investigation is to re-examine the available literary evidence critically, not only to clarify the nature of the assemblies for which the *fermentum* was intended (Part I), but also to assess its theological function within a broader liturgical context (Part II). Finally, this study seeks to underscore the problematic aspects of certain interpretations that have arisen from an insufficiently critical evaluation of the sources (Part III).

1. *Fermentum* as a Sign of Ecclesial Communion

The oldest certain testimony concerning the use of *fermentum* is dated March 19, 416. It is the Decretal of Innocent I to Decentius, bishop of Gubbio.¹

De fermento vero quod die dominica per titulos mittimus, superflue nos consulere voluisti, cum omnes ecclesiae nostrae intra civitatem sint constitutae. Quarum presbyteri, quia die ipsa propter plebem sibi creditam nobiscum convenire non possunt, idcirco fermentum a nobis confectum per acolitos accipiunt, ut se a nostra comunione maxime illa die non iudicent separatos. Quod per parrochias fieri debere non puto quia nec longe portanda sunt sacramenta nec nos per cimiteria diversa constitutis presbiteris destinamus et presbiteri eorum conficiendorum ius habeant atque licentiam (Innocentius 1983, 26–28 [Innocent I, March 19, 416]; “About the *fermentum*, which we send on Sunday by way of the titular churches, it is worthless to consult us in this matter for all of our churches are within the city. But the presbyters of these churches—who cannot assemble with us on this day because their people need them—receive from the acolytes the *fermentum* that we consecrated, so that they do not find themselves separated from our communion on that great day I do not think that this needs to be done in the parishes because the sacraments [Eucharist] are not to be carried far nor should we send presbyters through different cemeteries; moreover, the presbyters are themselves, by law and license, able to consecrate” [Connell 2010, 39]).

The paucity of evidence on the Roman liturgy of the time of the Decretal of Innocent I creates, almost necessarily, many ambiguities in understanding the text. The fundamental problem, about the meaning of the quoted text, concerns the typology of the synaxis presided over by presbyters in the *tituli*, to which the pope’s

¹ On March 18, 2016 in Rome, at the Athenaeum of Sant’Anselmo in Rome, an international conference was held on the occasion of the 1600th anniversary of the Decretal Letter of Innocent I to Decentius. The proceedings of this conference were edited by Professor Matteo Monfrinotti (2017).

fermentum was sent. Beginning in the 1980s, some scholars began to question the hitherto accepted idea (Baldovin 2005, 38–39) that is, in 5th-century Rome, presbyters regularly presided at Mass in the *tituli*. Among them Nautin (1982, 511–12) and, after him, also Taft (2000, 415) opted for the idea that the *tituli* synaxis, mentioned by Innocent in the Decretal, was rather configured as a Liturgy of the Word for assemblies consisting of catechumens and penitents who, therefore, were not admitted to Eucharistic communion. According to Nautin (1982, 512–13), this would also result from an albeit uncertain record in the *Liber Pontificalis*² which, in attributing the creation of the *tituli* to Pope Marcellus (308–309), does not name the Eucharist among the functions of their employment. It states that, Marcellus

XXV titulos in urbe Roma constituit, quasi diocesis, propter baptismum et paenitentiam multorum qui convertebantur ex paganis et propter sepulturas martyrum (Duchesne 1886, 164 [*Liber Pontificalis*, ca. 530]; “Appointed 25 parish churches as dioceses in the city of Rome to provide baptism and penance for the many who were converted among the pagans and burial for the martyrs” [Loomis 1916, 38]).

Similarly, the explanation by which Innocent I justifies not sending the *fermentum* to the churches attached to the cemeteries, because there are presbyters in them who possess the *ius et licentia conficiendi*, also suggests that the presbyters of the *tituli*, located *intra civitatem*, did not possess this privilege (Taft 2000, 415). Saxer (1989, 930) even claimed that the presbyters of the *tituli*, not having the right to consecrate, celebrated in them a kind of *missa sicca* or a Liturgy of the Presanctified such as that of Good Friday. As a result, acolytes brought from the papal mass sufficient of the consecrated bread for the communion of all, while the wine was consecrated *per contactum* with the immixtion of the *fermentum* in a chalice of unconsecrated wine.

Behind these assumptions is an idea that in ancient times, even in Rome, the rule of one Mass by the bishop, surrounded by presbyters, was observed. Thus, the *fermentum* would be nothing more than a way of preserving this ancient rule (Nautin 1982, 511–18). According to Nautin (1982, 515–17), this custom is referred to in a letter dated 444 or 445, which Leo the Great (died in 461) addressed to Dioscurus of Alexandria (died in 454). In it, the pope responds to the problem of the impossibility of the participation of all the faithful in the mass in the basilica because of their overabundance.

Ut autem in omnibus observantia nostra concordet, illud quoque volumus custodiri, ut cum solemnior quaeque festivitas conventum populi numerosioris indixerit, et ea fidelium multitudo convenerit, quam recipere basilica simul una non possit, sacrificii oblatio indubitanter iteretur; ne his tantum admissis ad hanc devotionem, qui primi advenerint,

² On issues relating to the dating of the *Liber Pontificalis*, it is useful to consult Lidia Capo's study (2009).

videantur hi, qui postmodum confluerint, non recepti, cum plenum pietatis atque rationis sit, ut quoties basilicam, in qua agitur, praesentia novae plebis impleverit, toties sacrificium subsequens offeratur. Necesse est autem ut quaedam pars populi sua devotione privetur, si unius tantum missae more servato, sacrificium offerre non possint, nisi qui prima diei parte convenerint (Leo I, *Epistulae*, 9.2 [Leo I, 444/445]; “Now, in order that all our practices may be in harmony, we want this observance kept, also: Whenever any more solemn festival indicates a larger concourse of people and such crowds of the faithful come together that a basilica cannot hold all of them at once, the offering of the sacrifice should unquestionably be repeated. Otherwise, with only those who came first admitted to this sacrifice, the others who came later may seem rejected. Yet it is quite in keeping with devotion and reason to have a later repetition of the sacrifice as often as a new group of people is present to fill the basilica being used. On the contrary, if the custom of having but one Mass is kept and only those who came early in the day can offer the sacrifice, then, of necessity, some part of the people will be deprived of their religious devotion” [Hunt 1957, 35–36]).

Although Nautin wanted to see in the quoted text a kind of confirmation of the idea of a single mass in the Church of Alexandria, still in the mid-5th century,³ the other data of history do not allow one to share this idea. In fact, as early as the time of Bishop Dionysius (247–265), as reflected in his correspondence preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea (died in 399), in addition to the ordinary assemblies of Christians in the city, there were also particular assemblies, which met in the peripheries (Eusebius Caesariensis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 7.11.17). According to Annic Martin (1984, 211, n. 3), although these were meetings of only a part of the faithful, they formed Eucharistic synaxis presided over by presbyters. Epiphanius of Salamis (315–403) also attests that in his time there were several churches in Alexandria, entrusted to presbyters, one of whom was Arius (died in 336) (Epiphanius Constantiniensis, *Panarion* 68.1–2).⁴ It was around 351–353, in the context of the conflict provoked by Arius, that Bishop Athanasius (died in 373) sought to organize large communal assemblies on major feasts, using larger, though not yet completed, premises for this purpose (Martin 1989, 1136–37; Metzger 2015, 225). Historically speaking, it is, therefore, a process from multiplicity of assemblies toward unification and not *vice versa*. Moreover, the custom referred to by Leo the Great in his letter to Dioscurus (*mos unius tantum missae*) would be, instead, that of the celebration of a single mass on the same day on the same altar (Martin 1989, 1137, n. 11). A Coptic

³ “L’évêque d’Alexandrie observait donc strictement ‘la coutume d’une messe unique.’ D’après tout ce qui précède, il ne s’agissait pas seulement de célébrer une seule messe par basilique mais une seule messe par ville” (Nautin 1982, 515–56; “The bishop of Alexandria therefore strictly observed ‘the custom of a single mass.’ According to all the above, it was not just a matter of celebrating one mass per basilica, but one mass per city” [my own translation]).

⁴ See also Metzger 2015, 224.

text,⁵ probably from the 5th century, attributed to Peter of Alexandria, speaks of it. In the West, this rule appears in the Acts of the Diocesan Synod of Auxerre, held between the 6th and 7th centuries.

Non licet super uno altario in una die duas missas dicere (Sinodus Autisioderensis 561–605, 10 [Synod of Auxerre, 6th–7th century]; “It is not permissible to say two masses on one altar on the same day” [my own translation]).⁶

The rule, therefore, does not exclude the possibility of celebrating another Eucharist at another altar on the same day.

Even in Rome the pastoral situation between the 4th and 5th centuries was so diverse that there was no possibility of thinking of a single Eucharistic celebration in the city, presided over by the pope. This state of affairs already goes back to the very origins of Christianity in Rome, as Marcel Metzger notes:

Rome n’était pas un lieu de naissance du christianisme et celui-ci ne s’y est pas implanté à partir d’une souche unique et primitive, qui aurait été comme la maison-mère de tous les chrétiens de la cité. Dans cette mégalo-pole, des groupes de chrétiens se sont établis en colonies, dont les maisons-mères se trouvaient à Jérusalem, Antioche, Alexandrie, Éphèse, Corinthe, etc. De ce fait, dès les débuts, l’Église de Rome se caractérisait par la multiplicité de ses lieux de synaxe (Metzger 2002, 198; “Rome was not the birthplace of Christianity, and Christianity did not take root there from a single, primitive stock, which would have been like the motherhouse of all the city’s Christians. In this megalopolis, groups of Christians established themselves in colonies, with mother-houses in Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, etc., and so on. As a result, from the very beginning, the Church of Rome was characterized by the multiplicity of its synaxis locations” [my own translation]).

Confirmation of this initial situation can be found in Eusebius of Caesarea (died in 399). In his Ecclesiastical History (ca. 260–340), he mentions a letter that Irenaeus of Lyons (died in 202) addressed to Pope Victor (189–199) around the year 190. The letter concerned the problem of the Churches of Asia Minor celebrating Easter on the 14th of Nisan, regardless of the day of the week on which it occurred. Faced with the pope’s hostile stance toward those who did not celebrate Easter on Sunday, Irenaeus appealed to Victor’s predecessors who accepted this diversity of traditions, and to a custom of sending the Eucharist, as a sign of communion, to those communities that observed the 14th of Nisan (Metzger 2015, 335).

⁵ “Break (κλασματίζειν) not (bread) twice upon the same altar (θυσιαστήριον) on the same day.” (Crum 1903, 390) See also Riedel 1990, 102.

⁶ See also Martène 1967a, 292–93.

οἱ πρὸ σοῦ πρεσβύτεροι τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν παροικιῶν τηροῦσιν ἔμπειρον εὐχαριστίαν (Eusebius Caesariensis, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.24.15) [Eusebius of Caesarea, ca. 260–340]; “the presbyters before you [those who were observing the fourteenth day] sent eucharist to those from the parishes” [my own translation]).

The sending of the Eucharist to a synaxis, as a sign of communion, is mentioned here. As Metzger (2015, 335) notes, it is unimaginable to think that the Eucharist could have been sent to the Churches of Asia Minor at that time, because of the distance and slow transportation. The custom recalled in Irenaeus’ letter must, therefore, have referred to groups (παροικίαι = parishes) of Christians from those Churches, sojourning in Rome, who celebrated according to their own customs (Metzger 2002, 198–99).

At the starting point, therefore, we have a multiplicity of communities, quite autonomous, as Metzger also points out:

Dans cette diaspora initiale, comment les pasteurs sont-ils parvenus à nouer des relations entre les multiples groupes de chrétiens, puis à fédérer les groupes à l’intérieur de la mégalopole? Il n’est pas dans notre propos de répondre à cette question, mais de reconnaître que la diversité initiale a façonné les institutions ecclésiastiques de la ville de Rome. Même après la Paix de l’Église, lorsque le christianisme est devenu majoritaire, les difficultés n’ont pas disparu. Vu la taille de la ville, l’unification d’une telle population devait surmonter les divisions internes propres à toute grande cité. Ces divisions, dont les factions du cirque constituent une des expressions les plus manifestes, ont traversé la communauté chrétienne elle-même et peuvent expliquer l’origine des schismes au moment des élections à l’épiscopat (Metzger 2002, 198–99; “In this initial diaspora, how did pastors manage to forge relationships between the multiple groups of Christians, and then federate the groups within the megalopolis? It is not our intention to answer this question, but to recognize that initial diversity shaped the ecclesiastical institutions of the city of Rome. Even after the Peace of the Church, when Christianity became the majority, the difficulties did not disappear. Given the size of the city, unifying such a large population had to overcome the internal divisions typical of any large city. These divisions, of which the circus factions are one of the most obvious expressions, cut across the Christian community itself and may explain the origin of schisms at the time of elections to the episcopate” [my own translation]).

According to the testimony of Eusebius of Caesarea (died in 399),⁷ even before the Edict of Constantine (313), a sign of communion was the sending of the Eucharist even to groups that followed customs other than those of the pope (Metzger 2015, 335–36).⁸

⁷ See above Eusebius Caesariensis, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.24.15.

⁸ The Book VIII of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, speaking of the ministries of the bishop and presbyter, also mentions the custom of sending and receiving eulogy (= blessed bread) as a sign of communion among various communities (*Constitutiones Apostolorum* 8.28.2–4). On this issue see also Stuiber 1996, 922–23;

In this context, the centralization of church government came later and was the result of a long process of regrouping Christians. It included the establishment of *tituli*, or neighborhood churches, entrusted to presbyters and endowed with the authority of *quasi dioecesis* in the field of Christian initiation.⁹ This type of organization would correspond to the oldest structure of the pastoral system of *Urbe*. In it, presbyters in the *tituli* played the role of presidency of a quasi-episcopal type, which, therefore, inevitably presumes Eucharistic presidency as well. Indirectly, a certain authority of presbyters over the titular church could be inferred from some indications scattered in sources of various kinds and not always entirely reliable. On the one hand, e.g., in an entry concerning Pope Sylvester, in the second edition of the *Liber Pontificalis*, it says: “constituit beatus Silvester in urbe Roma titulum suum” (*Liber Pontificalis* 34; “the blessed Silvester established his titular church in the city of Rome” [my own translation]). Moreover, speaking of the Lateran Basilica, the popes referred to it as *ecclesia nostra* (“our church” [my own translation]) (Metzger 2015, 219; Chavassee 1993, 263–64). On the other hand, however, when *Ordo Romanus XXXB* (ca. 770–800) states that during the Easter Vigil the presbyters do not attend the papal mass but preside in titles, the expression is used: “unusquisque per titulum suum facit missam” (each one has Mass in his own titular churches [my own translation]) (*Ordo Romanus XXXB* 64).

In this view, it is neither surprising that Irenaeus (died in 202) qualifies the predecessors of Pope Soterius (166–175) with the title of presbyters,¹⁰ nor what Ambrosiaster writes about the relationship between the bishop and presbyters (Metzger 2002, 202):

quare, nisi quia episcopi et presbyteri una ordinatio est? uterque enim sacerdos est, sed episcopus primus est, ut omnis episcopus presbyter sit, non tamen omnis presbyter episcopus. hic enim episcopus est, qui inter presbyteros primus est (Ambrosiaster 1969, 267 [Ambrosiaster 4th century]; “Why does he do this, except that there in one ordination of both bishop and presbyter? Both are priests, but the bishop comes first, so that while every bishop is a presbyter, not every presbyter is a bishop. The bishop is the one who is first among the presbyters” [Bray 2009, 3014]).

In regard to the Eucharistic celebration there is, in fact, a title that historically unites the bishop and the presbyter and that is that of *sacerdos*.¹¹

In the face of these data, it is quite unlikely to support Nautin’s hypothesis (1982, 511–12), taken up by Taft (2000, 415), or Saxer’s hypothesis (1989, 930) about the fact

Taft 2000, 404–12. In the West, in the early 5th century, the custom of sending eulogy is attested by Paulinus of Nola (died in 431) (Paulinus Nolanus, *Epistulae* 5.21).

⁹ See above *Liber Pontificalis* 34. See also Metzger 2002, 199–202.

¹⁰ See above, the text regarding the note 7.

¹¹ More specifically on the issue see Metzger 2015, 595–98; Hunter 2017, 495–510.

that, even in the time of Innocent I, presbyters did not have the right to preside at the Eucharist. Indeed, this can be inferred from the text of Canon 18 of the Council of Nicaea (325), which states that:

Ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν καὶ μεγάλην σύνοδον, ὅτι ἐν τισὶ τόποις καὶ πόλεσι, τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις τὴν εὐχαριστίαν οἱ διάκονοι διδόνασιν, ὥσπερ οὔτε ὁ κανὼν οὔτε ἡ συνήθεια παρέδωκεν, τοὺς ἐξουσίαν μὴ ἔχοντας προσφέρειν τοῖς προσφέρουσι διδόναι τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ (*Concilium Nicaenum I* 1990, 14 [First Council of Nicaea, 325]; “It has come to the attention of this holy and great synod that in some places and cities deacons give communion to presbyters, although neither canon nor custom allows this, namely that those who have no authority to offer should give the body of Christ to those who do offer” [Tanner 1990, *14]).

Also, the Roman decretal *Ad Gallos Episcopos*, which would date back to Pope Damasus (366–384), already speaks of it.¹² In it, about the various ministries in the Church it says:

Paschae tempore, presbyter et diaconus per parrochias dare remissionem peccatorum et mysterium implere consuerunt. Etiam praesente episcopo, in fonte quoque ipsi descendunt: illi in officio sunt, sed illius nomin<i> facti summa conceditur. Reliquis uero temporibus, ubi aegritudinis necessitas consequi unumquemque compellit, specialiter presbiter<o> licentia est per salutaris aquae gratiam dare indulgentiam peccatorum, quoniam et munus ipsi licet, causa emundationis, offerre. [De] diaconis uero, nulla licentia inuenitur esse concessa; sed quod semel forte contigit usurpari, per necessitatem dicitur excusatum, nec postea in securitate commissum (*Ad Gallos Episcopos* 2005, 10 [Damasus I, 366–84]; “During Easter, the priest and deacon are accustomed to give remission of sins and perform the mystery in the parishes. Even when the bishop is present, they themselves also descend into the font: they exercise the office, but the whole of their action is attributed to him [the bishop]. But at other times, when the necessity of illness compels anyone to confer [the sacraments], the priest has special permission to grant the forgiveness of sins through the grace of the saving waters, since he is also permitted to offer the gift, for the sake of purification. [Regarding] the deacon, however, no permission is found to have been granted; the fact that one time perhaps [the permission] happened to be appropriated—this is said to have been excused by necessity, and does not mean that afterwards it is granted as a given” [my own translation]).

The quoted text, on the one hand, confirms the primary character of the bishop’s ministry (attended by the presbyter and deacon) in Christian initiation. On the

¹² Among recent scholars it was Duval (2005, 125–38) who pointed out the possibility of a strong influence of Jerome—secretary of Pope Damasus, on the text of the decretal. For a summary of discussions related to the authorship of the source see Duval 2005, 1–7.

other hand, however, it speaks of a *munus offerendi* of the presbyter. The *licentia* of baptizing on extraordinary occasions (outside the Easter season) is granted to the presbyter precisely because he possesses the proper *munus* of celebrating eucharist. While the act of baptizing in parishes during the Easter season, by the presbyter and deacon, is conceived as an extension of the bishop's ministry, that, on the other hand, of the presbyter baptizing outside the Easter season is justified precisely by the *munus offerendi* that belongs to him, regardless of the bishop's license. At that time the celebration of Christian initiation is still one and the same. Yves-Marie Duval, commenting on this passage from the decretal, writes:

A Pâques, lorsqu'ils officient avec l'évêque (dans le baptistère de la cathédrale), prêtres et diacres sont ses servants, ses ministres, ses aides, et ils agissent au nom de l'évêque; lorsqu'ils sont envoyés dans les paroisses – à un moment où l'évêque ne peut être partout à la fois – ils sont ses délégués. En dehors de ce temps, si se produit une urgence, seul, selon notre Lettre, le prêtre peut administrer ordinairement le baptême, parce qu'il a aussi par ailleurs le pouvoir de célébrer l'eucharistie. On notera que, tel qu'il apparaît ici, le pouvoir du prêtre ne lui vient pas d'abord de la permission de l'évêque, mais des droits qui découlent de son statut (*licet, licentia*) de prêtre (Duval 2005, 94; "At Easter, when they officiate with the bishop (in the cathedral baptistery), priests and deacons are his servants, his ministers, his helpers, and they act in the bishop's name; when they are sent to parishes—at a time when the bishop cannot be everywhere at once—they are his delegates. Outside this time, if an emergency arises, according to our Letter, only the priest can administer baptism, because he also has the power to celebrate the Eucharist. Note that, as it appears here, the priest's power does not derive primarily from the bishop's permission, but from the rights deriving from his status (*licet, licentia*) as a priest" [my own translation]).

Even when one starts from the model in which all ministries come, in some way, from the episcopal one, looking from the perspective of history at the order of the granting to presbyters of faculties concerning the administration of the sacraments, the celebration of the Mass is to be placed among the first, ahead of that of the reconciliation of penitents or preaching. In this light, one could already understand a passage from the *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* by Ignatius of Antioch (died in 107), in which he speaks of the legitimacy only of that Eucharist which is presided over by the bishop or those appointed by him.¹³

While the power of presbyters to celebrate the eucharist (Metzger 2015, 613–14) is undisputed, it cannot be ruled out that, at some point in the process of pastoral organization in *Urbe*, the pope might have censured the legitimacy of the presbyteral

¹³ "Εκείνη βεβαία εὐχαριστία ἡγείσθω, ἥ ὑπὸ ἐπίσκοπον οὖσα ἢ ὅς ᾧ αὐτὸς ἐπιτρέψη" (Ignatius Antiochenus, *Ad Smyrnaeos* 8.1; "Let that celebration of the Eucharist be considered valid which is held under the bishop or anyone to whom he has committed it" [Kleist 1949, 93]).

eucharist in the *tituli* with the obligation of the *fermentum*. According to a report in the *Liber Pontificalis*,¹⁴ this custom would date back to the time of Pope Miltiades (311–314) of whom it is said that:

Ab eodem die fecit ut oblationes consecratas per ecclesias ex consecratu episcopi dirigerentur, quod declaratur fermentum (*Liber Pontificalis* 33; “He appointed that consecrated offerings should be sent throughout the churches from the bishop’s consecration; these are called the leaven [*fermentum*]” [Loomis 1916, 41]).

Whereas, of Pope Siricius (384–399) the same source asserts:

Hic constituit ut nullus presbyter missas celebraret per omnem ebdomadam nisi consecratum episcopi loci designati susciperet declaratum, quod nominatur fermentum (*Liber Pontificalis* 40; “He ordained that no priest could perform masses during all the week, unless he received from the bishop of the particular district the consecrated sign which is called the leaven [*fermentum*]” [Loomis 1916, 41]).

Rather than questioning the presbyter’s right to celebrate Mass, the issue here would be to establish, for the *tituli*, a celebratory norm requiring the use of the *fermentum*.¹⁵ In other words, it is not that the *fermentum* was sent so that presbyters would not have the right to consecrate, as Nautin (1982, 521) thought, but presbyters were not to consecrate except by the use of the *fermentum*. It should also be noted that in both of the cited passages from the *Liber Pontificalis* there is an allusion to the Eucharistic celebration. In the first case it speaks of *oblationes consecratas per ecclesias* while, in the second case, of the presbyter celebrating masses throughout the week. The two texts, however, speak of a continuation link between the bishop’s Mass and the presbyteral Mass.

A confirmation from the recipients’ side that the *fermentum* was intended for the Eucharistic synaxis of the *tituli* is *Ordo Romanus* II (750–780). It also indicates the ritual moment when the *fermentum* is placed in the chalice.

Quando dici debet: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, deportatur a subdiacono oblationario particula fermenti, quod ab apostolico consecratum est et datur archidiacono. Ille vero porrigit episcopo. At ille, consignando tribus vicibus et dicendo: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, mittit in calice (*Ordo Romanus* II 6 [*Ordo Romanus* II 750–780]; “When it is time to say Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, a particle of the *fermentum*, which was

¹⁴ This is a kind of chronicle of the bishops of Rome and their activities, the first edition of which seems to have been made for Pope Felix IV, around 530. Reports contemporary with the compilation’s editors begin around 496. For earlier ones, however, there is a tendency to anticipate the origin of the various orders (Metzger 2015, 180).

¹⁵ Baldovin (2005, 49–50) also admits, as possible, this interpretation.

consecrated by the pope, is brought by the subdeacon oblationarius and is given to the archdeacon. He hands it to the bishop. And the bishop, signing [with it] three times and saying *Pax domini sit semper vobiscum*, puts it into the chalice.” [my own translation]).

The rite takes place, therefore, before the fraction of bread. In fact, in the next provision, the *ordo* gives the norms regarding the *fractio*.¹⁶ As the same *ordo* later confirms, an identical procedure is also observed when the Mass is presided over by a presbyter.

Similiter etiam et a presbitero agitur, quando in statione facit missas, preter Gloria in excelsis Deo, quia a presbitero non dicitur nisi in pascha (*Ordo Romanus* II 9 [*Ordo Romanus* II 750–780]; “It is done in a similar way also by the presbyter when he celebrates Masses in the station [churches], except for the Gloria in excelsis Deo, because it is not said by the presbyter except on Easter” [my own translation]).

Ordo Romanus IV (760–790) also alludes to the same rite, although the term *fermentum* does not explicitly appear there.

Et, dum dixerit: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, tenet subdiaconus de Sancta cum corporale ad cornu altaris, quod pontifex consecravit, et accipit eam diaconus et tradit eam episcopo aut presbitero (*Ordo Romanus* IV 106 [*Ordo Romanus* IV 760–790]; “And while he says Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, the subdeacon holds the Sancta, consecrated by the pontiff, with the corporal at the corner of the altar, and the deacon receives it and hands it to the bishop or presbyter” [my own translation]).

Also reinforcing the idea that presbyters *in the tituli* presided over Eucharistic celebrations with the use of the *fermentum* is *Ordo Romanus* XXXB (ca. 770–800).

Ipsa nocte, omnes presbiteri cardinales non ibi stant, sed unusquisque per titulum suum facit missam et habet licentiam sedere in sede et dicere Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et transmittit unusquisque presbiter mansionarium de titulo suo ad ecclesiam Salvatoris et expectant ibi usquedum frangitur sancta, habentes secum corporales. Et uenit oblationarius subdiaconus et dat eis de sancta, quod pontifex consecrauit, et recipiunt ea in corporales et reuertitur unusquisque ad titulum suum et tradit sancta presbitero. Et de ipsa facit crucem super calicem et ponit in eo et dicit: Domnus uobiscum. Et communicant omnes sicut superius (*Ordo Romanus* XXXB 64–65 [*Ordo Romanus* XXXB, ca. 770–800]; “On that night, all the cardinal presbyters do not stay there, but each one says mass at his titular [church],

¹⁶ “Nam et hoc dissimiliter facit, quod apostolicus non confrangit; ipse vero super pallam, quae corporalis dicitur, in altare confrangit” (*Ordo Romanus* II 7 [*Ordo Romanus* II, ca. 750–780]; “For he does this differently, in that the *apostolicus* does not break it; he [the bishop] however, breaks it at the altar on the cloth which is called a corporal” [my own translation]).

and has permission to sit in the chair and say Gloria in excelsis Deo. And each presbyter sends the mansionarium from his titular [church] to the church of the Savior and [they] wait there until the sancta is broken, having corporals with them. And the subdeacon oblationarius comes and gives them of the sancta which the pontiff has consecrated, and they received it in the corporals and each one returns to his titular [church] and hands the sancta to the presbyter. He then, with the sancta, makes the sign of the cross over the chalice and places [the sancta] in it and says: Domnus vobiscum. And all communicate as indicated above” [my own translation]).

In this case it is an *ordo* describing the conduct of the Easter Vigil, which, according to the law of the preservation of ancient customs in the celebrations of more solemn liturgical seasons, would reflect a very ancient usage (Baumstark 1927). Despite the absence in the *ordo* of the term *fermentum*, the reference to the same practice is clear, however. What makes the ministry of presiding clearly explicit is the fact that presbyters in the *tituli* may occupy the chair and sing the *Gloria*.¹⁷

In the motivation for sending the *fermentum* to the presbyters in the *tituli*, Pope Innocent I says in his Decretal: “ut se a nostra comunione maxime illa die non iudicent separatos” (Innocentius 1983, 26–28 [Innocent I, March 19, 416]; “so that they do not find themselves separated from our communion on that great day” [Connell 2010, 39]). It is, therefore, a sign of communion between him and the presbyters. It is guaranteed through the *fermentum*. As noted by Metzger (2015, 383), in the context of the Church of Rome, the manifestation of communion between the bishop and the presbyters was important because of the heterogeneity of the Christian communities present in the city and the influx of various religious groups. In fact, the two cited *Liber Pontificalis* records also contain some clues about conflicting situations: alongside the mention of the *fermentum*, dissidents called Manicheans are mentioned.¹⁸

Innocent I, responding to Decentius on the issue of *fermentum*, says that this practice should not be applied in the extra-urban context.¹⁹ The clear distinction between *tituli* and *parrochiae* appears in the Decretal. These are two different modes of ecclesial organization. The former is typically urban,²⁰ while the latter is rural

¹⁷ On this see also Parenti 2008, 201–12.

¹⁸ For example, the part of the *Liber Pontificalis* that refers to Pope Siricius, after speaking of the *fermentum*, says: “Hic invenit Manicheos in Urbe, quos etiam exilio deportavit; et hoc constituit ut si quis conversus de Manicheis rediret ad ecclesiam nullatenus communicaretur, nisi tantum religione monasterii die vitae suae teneretur obnoxius et ut ieiuniis et orationibus maceratus, probatus sub omni examinatione usque ad ultimum diem transitus sui, ut humanitatem ecclesiae viaticum eis largiatur” (*Liber Pontificalis* 40; “He found Manicheans in the city and dispatched them into exile and ordained that if any Manichean were converted and returned to the church he should in no wise be admitted to communion, except he were kept in the restriction of a monastery as one guilty every day of his life, that so he might afflict himself with fastings and prayers and prove himself under every trial until the day of his death and thus through the clemency of the church might obtain his viaticum” [Loomis 1916, 84]).

¹⁹ In fact, the pope tells Decentius that all his churches are located within the city (Innocentius 1973, 26–28).

²⁰ On this type, see e.g., Baldovin 1987.

(Metzger 2015, 235–36; Burini De Lorenzi 2017, 20, n. 45). The *fermentum* concerns only the *tituli* and they are all located within the city. What can be deduced from Innocent's Letter to Decentius is that the link of the bishop of Rome with the presbytery of the *tituli* is, in a way, more direct, than that of the bishop of a rural area with the parishes.²¹ The idea of a particular (more direct) dependence of the titular churches on the pope is discernible from the source. In Rome this link was manifested in the stationary liturgy (Metzger 2015, 376–79; Chavasse 1993, 231–46; Baldovin 1987, 105–66) and through the use of the *fermentum*.

The complex sociocultural and religious situation in *Urbe* leads us to think that this kind of direct jurisdiction of the pope originally concerned only the titular churches and then also the common basilicas. Meanwhile, on the other hand, monasteries as well as other places of worship, such as churches attached to cemeteries or in rural areas, were managed more autonomously.

According to Metzger (2002, 204; 2015, 383), the practice of sending the *fermentum*, as it was linked to the pope's presence at the Eucharistic synaxis, must certainly have been interrupted for various reasons, especially during times of the *sede vacante* or periods when more than one pretender claimed the right to the See of Peter. However, the gloss to the *Decretal* of Innocent I to Decentius in a Regensburg manuscript found by Mabillon (Andrieu 1971, 62) seems to suggest that, at least from a certain period onward, the consecration of the *fermentum* throughout the year took place during five solemn masses. It cannot be ruled out that this practice was designed to ensure a reserve of the *fermentum* for the *sede vacante* periods as well.

De fermento quod dicit [Innocentius], mos est Romanis, ut de Missa, quae cantatur in Coena Domini, et in Sabbato sancto, et in die sancto Paschae, et in Pentecosten, et in Natali Domini die sancto per totum annum servatur, et ubicumque per stationes, si ipse Papa ad Missam praesens non fuerit, de ipsa Missa mittitur in calicem, cum dicit: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum. Et hoc dicitur Fermentum (Mabillon 1685, 60–61) [manuscript of Regensburg found by Mabillon]; “About the *fermentum*: [Innocent] says that it is the custom of the Romans, just as in the Mass that is sung on Holy Thursday, and on Holy Saturday, and on the holy day of Easter, and on Pentecost, and on the holy day of the Nativity of the Lord, and throughout the entire year, and in any of the stationary [churches] if the pope himself is not present at Mass, that from the same Mass [it] is placed in the chalice when he says: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum. And this is called *fermentum*” [my own translation]).

As time went on, the practice would be restricted to major occasions only. Its preservation in the Easter Vigil, in addition to *Ordo Romanus XXXB* (64–65), still

²¹ In the early Middle Ages, a certain independence of the parishes is known. In their case, in order to understand with which bishop, they were in communion, it was necessary to see from where the provost priest of a parish took the Sacred Chrism. I thank Professor Claudio Ubaldo Cortoni for this suggestion.

results from the same gloss in the Regensburg manuscript, found by Mabillon (Andrieu 1971, 62).

Tamen Sabbato sancto Paschae nullus Presbyter per ecclesias baptismales neminem communicat, antequam mittatur ei de ipsa Sancta, quam obtulit dominus Papa (Mabillon 1685, 61) [manuscript of Regensburg found by Mabillon]; “However, on Holy Saturday of Easter, no priest gives communion to anyone in the baptismal churches, before there is sent to him that which le lord pope offered, frome the same sancta” [my own translation]).

A record found in the Roman *Capitulare evangeliorum* (ca. 740–755) could be considered an indirect confirmation of this. It preserves, in fact, a particular rubric that speaks of the distribution of *fermentum* at the Lateran on the Saturday before Palm Sunday:

Sabbato datur fermentum in consistorio Lateranensi (Klauser 1972, 69; 110) [*Capitulare evangeliorum*, ca. 740–755]; “On Saturday, the *fermentum* is given in the Lateran consistory” [my own translation]).²²

In all likelihood, this distribution was in preparation for the celebration on Easter night, which still maintained the ancient use of *fermentum*.

2. A Special Custom in Ordination Rites: Later Development of the Same Idea?

Although the rite of *fermentum* is linked to the specific kind of the rite of *commixtio* within the Roman ecclesiastical organization, the idea that consecrated bread could serve to be destined for later celebrations also spread outside of *Urbe*. At first it is attested in the ancient *ordines* concerning the rite of episcopal ordination. Thus, *Ordo Romanus XXXIV* (first half of the 8th century), speaks of a portion of the altar oblations being reserved by the newly ordained, after taking communion, for communion during the next 40 days.

Dum vero venerit ad communicandum, domnus apostolicus porrigit ei formatam atque sacratam oblationem et, eam suscipiens, ipse episcopus ex ea communicat super altare et caeterum ex ea sibi reservat ad communicandum usque ad dies quadraginta (*Ordo Romanus XXXIV* 44 [*Ordo Romanus XXXIV*, mid 8th century]; “When [the bishop] comes to receive communion, the apostolic lord hands him the large and consecrated oblation, and

²² See also Jungmann 1962, 444–45.

receiving it, the bishop communicates from it on the altar, and reserves the rest of it for himself for communicating for 40 days” [my own translation]).

Since this is an episcopal ordination mass, according to the law of preservation of ancient customs in the most solemn celebrations (Taft 2001, 206–8), the antiquity of this custom can be assumed. A Roman-Franco adaptation of the same *ordo* from the first half of the 10th century contains a reworking of this arrangement.

Cum autem venerit ad communicandum, domnus pontifex porrigit ei formatam atque sacratam oblationem integram, suscipiensque eam episcopus ipse ex ea communicat super altare. Quod vero residuum fuerit, sibi reservat de eo quoque die usque quadraginta dies expletos (*Ordo Romanus* XXXV 73 [*Ordo Romanus* XXXV, ca. 900–950]; “But when he comes to receive communion, the lord pontiff hands him the entire large and consecrated oblation, and the bishop receiving it, communicates from it on the altar. But what remains, he reserves for himself from that day until forty days have elapsed” [my own translation]).

In this form it entered the 10th-century Roman-Germanic Pontifical (Pontificale Romano-Germanicum 1963, 63.58). In contrast, a further reworked version appears in almost all recensions of the Roman Pontifical of the 12th century.

Cum autem venerit ad communicandum, domnus pontifex porrigit ipsi [ei] consecrato sacram oblationem integram, suscipiensque eam episcopus ex ea communicat super altare. Quod vero residuum fuerit, sibi reservat denuo ad communicandum unoquoque die, usque XL dies expletos (Pontificale Romanum saeculi XII 1938, 10.36 [Roman Pontifical, 12th century]; “But when he comes to receive communion, the lord pontiff hands him the entire sacred oblation, and the bishop receiving it, communicates from it on the altar. But what remains, he reserves for himself for communicating again every day until 40 days have elapsed” [my own translation]).²³

This version of the rubric was transcribed in the first edition of the Pontifical of the Roman Curia in the 13th century although, as Michel Andrieu (1974, 587–88) notes, the provision was no longer observed. In fact, it was permanently omitted in the second edition of this liturgical book (Pontificale Romanae Curiae 1938, 11.37). In some 12th-century pontificals, this practice is indicated as optional (Andrieu 1974, 588).

The custom of reserving a portion of the oblations from the ordination mass for communion on the following days is also attested in the case of newly ordained presbyters. In fact, as early as the late 8th century, *Ordo Romanus* XXXIX stipulates

²³ See also Tymister 2017, 86–88.

that the newly ordained receive oblations from the altar from the bishop for communion during the next 40 days.

Deinde offerunt pontifici ante omnes presbiteros et communicant similiter eodem die ante omnes. Et accipit unusquisque a pontifice firmata oblata de altare, unde et communicat XL diebus (*Ordo Romanus* XXXIX 25 [*Ordo Romanus* XXXIX, late 8th century]; “Then they offer [it] to the pontiff before all the presbyters and they communicate in the same way on that day before all the rest. And each one receives from the pontiff a firmata oblata from the altar, from which he communicates for forty days” [my own translation]).

Fulbert of Chartres (died in 1028), in a letter addressed to his friend Eginard in 1006, confirms the actual implementation of this practice. Responding to the question, posed to him by Eginard, regarding the reasons for such a custom,²⁴ he states that it is the general usage in the province²⁵ and reports the case of a newly-ordained priest who, imprudent as he was, one day, while clearing the altar after Mass, lost the consecrated bread, received on the day of his ordination, only realizing it the next day, when he was to take communion.²⁶ The bishop,

²⁴ “Ante hos paucos dies ut meminisse licet, mihi vespertinis horis supervenisti, et repentina inquisitione me permovisti, de hostia quam paulo ante promotus ad sacerdotium de manu episcopi suscepisti: quae ratio sit, videlicet usque ad quadragesimam diem usu quotidiano consumere, vel quos huius rei auctores haberemus” (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Epistula* 3 [PL 141, 193a] [Fulbert of Chartres, 1006]; “A few days ago, as I may recall, you came to me in the evening hours, and disturbed me with an unexpected inquiry concerning the host which, shortly before, promoted to the priesthood, you received by the hand of the bishop: what the reason is, namely, for the daily custom of consuming [it] up until the fortieth day, and whom we should consider the originators of this custom?” [my own translation]).

²⁵ “Nostri enim episcopi provinciales in huiusmodi ritum omnes consentiunt” (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Epistula* 3 [PL 141, 193c] [Fulbert of Chartres, 1006]; “For our provincial bishops all agree about this kind of rite” [my own translation]).

²⁶ “Porro nostro tempore quidam inter caeteros ad sacerdotalem gradum admissus, hostiam quoque sicut et alii de manu episcopi suscepit, quam in pergamenio, in hos usus parato involutam quotidiana celebratione solvebat, et portiunculam parvam, iuxta instantium dierum numerum computatam sumebat. Accidit vero ut quadam die expletis mysteriis dum vestimenta cum sindone altaris incautius colligeret, inmemor hostiae sacrae diligentiam nequaquam adhibens thesaurum coelestem infelix amitteret. Veniens ad diversorium, quaeque necessaria curat, transigitur dies in crastinum, repetita celebratione frater ille instante hora communicandi hostiam sanctam non inveniens, turbatus nimium et consternatus, sursum deorsum cursitans, nec etiam signum aliquod invenire potuit” (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Epistula* 3 [PL 141, 193–94] [Fulbert of Chartres, 1006]; “Moreover, in our time, a certain [person] among the others admitted to the priestly rank, also received the host from the hand of the bishop, like the others, which he used to keep wrapped in a parchment, prepared for this purpose, for the daily celebration, and he would take a small piece, calculated according to the number of the passing days. Now it happened that on a certain day, the mysteries having been completed, while he carelessly gathered together the vestments with the altar cloth, forgetting the sacred host, nor taking any care, he unhappily lost the heavenly treasure. Arriving at the inn, he takes care of the necessary business, and the day passes to the next. The celebration having been

in that case, had to impose a penance on him. It was on that very occasion that Fulbert questioned the bishop about the significance of the practice of the newly ordained priest's use for 40 days of the bread consecrated by the bishop on the day of his ordination. The bishop replied to Fulbert that this usage is related to the Risen One who, before sending his disciples on their preaching mission, appeared to them for 40 days. So too did the bishop, sending priests to the mission, offer them the Eucharistic bread.²⁷ To Fulbert's next question whether this bread provided by the bishop could be replaced by the bread consecrated by the same presbyter in the daily celebration,²⁸ the bishop replied:

Perpende, ait, sicut, fili mi, multae Ecclesiae sunt per universum orbem terrarum, propter diversa loca, et tamen una sancta est catholica Ecclesia, propter unam fidem: sic et multae oblatae propter vota offerentium, unus panis est propter unitatem corporis Christi. Nam panis ab episcopo consecratus, et panis a presbytero sanctificatus in unum et idem corpus Christi transfunditur, propter secretam unius operantis potentiae virtutem (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Epistula* 3 [PL 141, 194c] [Fulbert of Chartres, 1006]; "Consider my son, he said, that just as there are many churches throughout the world, because of diverse places, and yet there is one, holy and catholic Church because of one faith: so also, while there are many oblations because of the prayers of those offering, there is one bread because of the

repeated, that brother at the very moment of communicating, not finding the holy host, was greatly troubled and distressed, running up and down, but he could not find any sign of it" [my own translation]).

²⁷ "Si discipulis quos ad praedicationis officium Dominus missurus in mundum fuerat, si illis inquit, adhuc tardis et dubitantibus potuisset sufficere resuscitati corporis speciem semel vidisse, quam semel visam noluit ab eis repente subtrahere, sed per quadragenos dies complacitis horis glorificati corporis revelata specie eos tanquam panis coelestis suavitate refecit. Nam et episcopus qui vices Christi tenet, sacerdotes viros in plebem subiectam missurus, sacri corporis eucharistiam per quadragenos dies sumendam distribuit, ut dum, verbi gratia, quotidie coelestis panis alimonia reficiuntur, tempus illud in mentem habeant, quo per quadraginta dies Dominus discipulis apparens, et convescens desideratae visionis satietate refecit" (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Epistula* 3 [PL 141, 194] [Fulbert of Chartres, 1006]; "The Lord, talking with those, slow [to believe] and doubting, whom he was about to send into the world for the office of preaching—if only it had been sufficient for them to have seen once for all the form of his risen body! [But] once having been seen, he did not want to suddenly take away it from them. For forty days, at suitable times, in a revealed form, he refreshed them as if by the sweetness of heavenly bread. Now the bishop who holds the place of Christ, about to send his men, the priests, among the people subject [to him], distributed the Eucharist of the sacred body to be received for forty days, so that while, e.g., they are daily refreshed by the nourishment of heavenly bread, they might keep in mind that time, in which for forty days, the Lord, appearing to his disciples and eating with them, refreshed [them] with the abundance of the desired vision" [my own translation]).

²⁸ "Ad hoc episcopi responsum, cum ego familiaritatis ausu studiosus perquirerem num idem mysterium supplere potuisset panis a presbytero quotidiana celebratione sacratus, uti in eo passionis Dominica et resuscitati corporis et manifestati discipulis species, satis fuisset nobis" (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Epistula* 3 [PL 141, 194c] [Fulbert of Chartres, 1006]; "To this the response of the bishop would be sufficient for us: when I, eager with the boldness of familiarity asked whether the bread consecrated by the presbyters [priests] in the daily celebration could accomplish the same mystery as in that [consecrated by the bishop]: [namely] the Lord's form [species] of the passion, [and] the body resurrected and manifested to the disciples" [my own translation]).

unity of the body of Christ. For the bread consecrated by the bishop and the bread sanctified by the presbyter are transformed into one and the same body of Christ, because of the secret force of the one operating power” [my own translation]).²⁹

The theme of the unity of the Church, which is expressed in the Eucharist, emerges in the explanation. Fulbertus also confesses the provenance of these explanations from the *scrinium* of Rome.³⁰ As Andrieu (1974, 588) notes, the influence of Fulbertus’ Letter can be recognized in some later liturgical books.

In fact, a 12th-century manuscript of the *Pontifical of Soissons* contains the following rubric:

Debent presbiteri portiones Dominici Corporis ab episcopo accipere, de quibus percipiant communionem per quadraginta dies in exemplum Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, qui quadraginta diebus cum suis discipulis conversatus est post resurrectionem suam (ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 17334, f. 140 [*Pontificale Suessionense*, 12th century]; “Priests should receive portions of the Lord’s Body from the bishop, from which they receive communion for forty days, according to the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who spent forty days with his disciples after his resurrection” [my own translation]).³¹

A variant of the custom, attested as early as the late 9th century in *Ordo Romanus XXXVI*, stipulates, however, that the oblations received from the bishop, are to serve the newly ordained priests only for 8 days.

Tollit vero pontifex oblatas integras et dat singulis noviciis presbiteris et inde communicantur usque dies VIII (*Ordo Romanus XXXVI* 23 [*Ordo Romanus XXXVI*, late 9th century]; “The bishop then takes the whole oblations and gives them to each of the newly-ordained priests, and from there they receive communion until the eighth day” [my own translation]).

In the same period, a similar practice would also be attested in the case of the consecration of virgins, as evidenced by a Pontifical of Saint-Aubin d’Angers also from the late 9th century (Leroquais 1937, 30).³² The prescription appears again in

²⁹ See also Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Epistula* 3 [PL 141, 195c].

³⁰ “Haec pauca de multis, quae repetita memoria, et multo ex tempore dissuta licet recitasse, ad praesens sufficient, dum ego codicem de eiusmodi exemplaribus a Romano scrinio prolatum perlegam” (Fulbertus Carnotensis, *Epistula* 3 [PL 141, 195d] [Fulbert of Chartres, 1006]; “Let these few (out of many) [examples] which have been recounted, repeated from memory, and unused for a long time, suffice for now, while I examine the book taken from the roman archives from exemplars of this kind” [my own translation]).

³¹ See also Martène 1967b, 141. The same rubric also appears a century later, in a Pontifical of Châlons-sur-Marne of the late 13th century (Leroquais 1937, 123).

³² Later this usage also appears in some 10th-century Roman-Germanic Pontifical (Andrieu 1974, 590–591).

the Roman Pontifical of the 12th century.³³ It will, then, be omitted in the Pontifical of the Roman Curia of the 13th century (Andrieu 1974, 591; Jungmann 1962, 450–451).

3. *Fermentum* in the Papal Mass?

The *recensio longior* of the oldest *ordo* of the solemn papal mass, contained by *Ordo Romanus* I (Andrieu 1971, 7–27), in addition to the *commixtio* that the pope performs between communion at the bread and communion at the chalice (already present in the short recension of the same *ordo*), includes another *immixtio*, which the pope performs before the breaking of the bread, at the words *Pax domini sit semper vobiscum*.³⁴

The provision suggests, then, that the pope, in addition to sending a fragment of the bread to the other Eucharistic assemblies, ritually reproduced the use of the *fermentum* in the Mass he presided over. Despite the fact that the text of *Ordo Romanus* I does not contain the term *fermentum*, however, the rite turns out to be entirely parallel to that mentioned in *Ordo Romanus* II.³⁵ Being placed before the fraction, the rubric assumes the use of a fragment of the bread consecrated at an earlier Mass. This possibility cannot be ruled out since, as *Ordo Romanus* I itself states, at the beginning of the Mass, at the moment of the entrance, the pope or deacon is presented with the *Sancta*.

Et tunc duo acolyti, tenentes capsas cum Sancta apertas, et subdiaconus sequens cum ipsis tenens manum suam in ore capsae ostendit Sancta pontifici vel diacono qui processerit. Tunc, inclinato capite, pontifex vel diaconus salutatur Sancta et contemplatur ut, si fuerit superabundans, praecipiat ut ponatur in conditorio (*Ordo Romanus* I 48 [*Ordo Romanus* I, first half of the 8th century]; “Then two acolytes approach, holding open pyxes containing the holy sacrament. The subdeacon in attendance takes them, holding them by the rim of

³³ “Postquam communicet [virgo], reservet de ipsa communione unde communicavit usque in diem octavam” (Pontificale Romanae Curiae 1938, 12.35 [Pontifical of the Roman Curia, XIII sec.]; “After [the virgin] receives communion, let her reserve [a part] from that communion from which she communicated, until the eighth day” [my own translation]).

³⁴ “Cum dixerit: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, mittit in calicem de Sancta” (*Ordo Romanus* I 95; “When [the pope] says *Pax domini sit semper vobiscum*, he places [a piece] from the *sancta* into the chalice” [my own translation]).

³⁵ “Quando dici debet: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, deportatur a subdiacono oblationario particula fermenti, quod ab apostolico consecratum est et datur archidiacono. Ille vero porrigit episcopo. At ille, consignando tribus vicibus et dicendo: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, mittit in calice” (*Ordo Romanus* II 6 [*Ordo Romanus* II 750–780]; “When he says *Pax domini sit semper vobiscum*, a particle of the *fermentum* which was consecrated by the apostolic [pope], is brought by the subdeacon oblationario, and is given to the archdeacon. He in turn offers it to the bishop. And he, signing with it three times and saying *Pax domini sit semper vobiscum*, places it in the chalice” [my own translation]).

the pyx and shows the sacrament to the pope or to the deacon who precedes him. Then the pope or deacon venerate the sacrament with a bow of the head and he inspects it, so that if there are too many fragments, he will direct that they be placed in the vessel for reservation" [Griffiths 2012, 39]).

In addition to this, the short recension of *Ordo Romanus* I also contains a rule by which it explains the fact that when the oblations are taken away from the altar, the piece of bread broken by the pope is still left behind.

Et archidiaconus, evacuato altare oblationibus, preter particulam quam pontifex de propria oblatione confracta super altare reliquit, quia ita observant, ut, dum missarum sollemnia peraguntur, altare sine sacrificio non sit (*Ordo Romanus* I 105 [*Ordo Romanus* I, recensio brevior, first half of the 8th century]; "[The archdeacon] once the altar has been cleared of the loaves, except for the fragment which the pope himself broke off his own loaf and left on the altar they do this so that, while the mass is being celebrated, the altar should not be without the sacrifice" [Griffiths 2012, 53]).

In this configuration, however, the custom cannot be explained by the words of Innocent I, who justified sending the *fermentum* to the presbyters in the *tituli* by saying, "ut se a nostra comunione maxime illa die non iudicent separatos" (Innocentius 1983, 26 [Innocent I, March 19, 416]; "so that they do not find themselves separated from our communion on that great day" [Connell 2010, 39]). Unlike that practice, the rite present in the long recension of *Ordo Romanus* seems to emphasize the link between one Mass and the next, with a view to a continuity of the Eucharistic celebration. Already Mabillon³⁶ read this provision in such a way.

It should be noted that the *recensio longior* of the *Ordo Romanus* I turns out to be the only attestation of the *immixtio*, in the mass presided over by the pope, of a piece of the bread consecrated in the previous mass, before the *fractio*, at the words *Pax domini sit semper vobiscum*. In fact, the short (primitive) recension of the same *ordo*, does not provide for any *commixtio* at this point of the Mass, but only a triple sign of the cross with the hand (*Ordo Romanus* I 95).

The long recension of *Ordo Romanus* I is the one that became most widespread, as evidenced by the multiplicity of manuscripts collected by Andrieu (1971, 4–5). It is this one, which Amalarius of Metz (died in 859) also comments on in his *Liber*

³⁶ "Constat itaque duplice Eucharistiae particulam fuisse immissam in calicem, unam ex priori (ut quidem opinor) consecratione, alteram ex praesente. Cur autem particula ex Eucharistia asservata immissa fuerit in calicem? fortasse ut sacrificii unita set perpetuitas hoc ritu inculcaretur" (Mabillon 1862, 869–70; "It is certain, then, that a double part of the Eucharist was placed into the chalice: one from the first consecration (as I think), the other from the present [consecration]. Why then is a particle from the reserved Eucharist placed into the chalice? Perhaps so that by this rite, the unity and perpetuity of the sacrifice might be emphasized" [my own translation]).

officialis. However, on the basis of our considerations (Celiński 2020, 314–25), it would appear that the double *immixtio* present in the *recensio longior* of *Ordo Romanus* I was the result of a fusion of two distinct traditions of the Mass: of the papal and the non-papal. The operation could be the consequence of a compilation into which various types of sources converged—an entirely plausible hypothesis in the case of the formation of the *Roman ordines*. In fact, while *Ordo Romanus* IV 106–7 glosses over the existence of any *commixtio* at this point of the Mass, *Ordo Romanus* VII, compiled during the 8th century, explicitly says that the pope does not perform any *commixtio* at that time as, on the contrary, some priests do.

Dum vero domnus papa dicit: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, non mittit partem de Sancta in calicem, sicut caeteris sacerdotibus mos est (*Ordo Romanus* VII 22 [*Ordo Romanus* VII, 8th century]; “Now when the lord pope says: Pax domini sit semper vobiscum, he does not place part of the sancta in the chalice, as is the custom for other priests” [my own translation]).

In this, as well as in other cases, *Ordo Romanus* VII explicitly agrees with the primitive version of *Ordo Romanus* I.

The papal liturgy did not preserve, even later, any trace of the *commixtio* before the fraction of bread. While *commixtio* immediately after the *Pax domini sit semper vobiscum* was widespread in the non-papal Mass, even in the 14th century the papal Mass retains only *commixtio* after the pope’s communion of the bread and explicitly excludes any admixture to the *Pax domini*, as the Missal of Clement V (died in 1314) attests (Celiński 2022, 118–20).

On the one hand, it is difficult to determine whether the *commixtio* at the *Pax domini* in the *recensio longior* of the *Ordo Romanus* I is only a textual variant, or whether this practice was also ritually performed in the papal mass, at least at one period in history. On the other hand, however, confirming the doubt from the very beginning is Amalarius of Metz (died in 859) himself, who showed serious difficulties in understanding the double *commixtio* of the long recension of *Ordo Romanus* I (Amalarius Metensis 1948, 3.31.7; Celiński 2020, 314).

Conclusions

In light of the arguments advanced by Baldovin, which draw upon the positions of Nautin, Saxer, and Taft, a critical re-examination of the relevant sources does not support the claim that presbyters in 5th-century Rome were unable to preside at the Eucharist, and consequently that the *fermentum* was not intended for Eucharistic assemblies. On the contrary, the broader evidence indicates that the presbyter’s faculty

to celebrate (or offer) the Eucharist was acknowledged from the earliest tradition of the Church.

The reflections presented in the first part of this study have made it possible to identify the defining characteristics of the use of the *fermentum*. In general, it consisted in sending a portion of the Eucharistic bread consecrated by the bishop to a celebration presided over by a presbyter, as a sign of communion within the local Church. On the basis of these criteria, the second part examined several examples of later extra-urban customs which, although differing in form, appear to have conveyed a similar idea.

The third part addressed the hypothesis of a presumed continuity between successive celebrations in the ancient papal Mass. This notion, originally proposed by Mabillon, was thought to rest upon the practice of a double *commixtio*: first, the mingling of a fragment of Eucharistic bread from the preceding celebration, and subsequently, that of a fragment consecrated during the ongoing liturgy. A critical analysis of the sources, considered within their broader context, leads to the rejection of this hypothesis. The practice of a double *commixtio* is attested in no other liturgical tradition and in no external source independent of the *recensio longior* of the *Ordo Romanus* I. The latter, rather, appears to contain a textual interpolation, which may be explained by the coexistence of two distinct modes of *commixtio* within ancient Roman liturgical practice.

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