

BENEDICT XIV AND HIS SACRAMENTAL POLITY ON THE EASTERN CHURCHES (1740-1758) - Part I

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The author searches into the the method employed in the letter *De Sacramentis*, exposes Benedict XIV's systematic presentation of the sacraments for the Eastern Catholics. The author also discusses the the authority of the minister and the multiplication of grace through the sacraments of penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders and matrimony.

Introduction

In the course of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XIV dealt with many questions connected with the Catholic Rites and the juridical value of their sacraments in a systematic manner. He carried out this work by differentiating the related topics in which the various disciplines had to be applied. Such were: whether the neophytes lived in a mostly Catholic environment or whether the Catholics lived in a mostly Protestant setting, under a "heretic" ruler or under the "Turkish" domination; whether the Catholics of the Eastern Rite were subject to

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a bishop of the Latin Rite or in contact with Eastern Orthodox Churches. His interventions that regulated the rites and sacraments on behalf of the Eastern Catholics are part and parcel of this comprehensive whole.

Pope Benedict XIV's interventions on the topic of the sacraments can be divided into three typological parts. In the first place we have the regulatory norms, which concern the individual aspects of the sacraments or deal with the solution of doubts about them and with specific cases of a regulatory nature. In the second place, the Pope often coupled his legislations with interventions that we might call of an instructive nature, characterized by a distinctive pastoral concern, which was meant to explain and "clarify" the "simple letter" of the law. Finally, Prospero Lambertini, even as pope, was not afraid to intervene as a scholar in the open debate concerning the matter of the sacraments by way of his erudite writing.

The main documents dealing mostly with the sacraments of the Eastern Catholics are the following: *Etsi Pastoralis* of May 2, 1742 dedicated to the sacraments of the Greeks in Italy; *Demandatam* of December 24, 1743 for the Greek-Melkites; *Eo Quamvis* of May 4, 1745, addressed to the missionaries working for the conversion of the Copts of Egypt. To these documents we should add the decree concerning the doubts connected with the marriage of a deacon who had been given the sacrament of order as a child, *Anno Vertente*, of June 19, 1750.

Internal references dictate that we read the norms concerning Eastern Catholics alongside the apostolic constitutions on the sacraments for neophytes and Catholics in their relationship with infidels and heretics due to the obvious and explicit connections between the two groups of intervention. Belonging to the second group are the important intervention *Inter Omnigenas*, of February 2, 1744 concerning the sacraments of the Catholics that were subject to the Ottoman domination in Serbia and Albania; *Omnium Sollicitudinum*, of the year 1744, concerning the Chinese and Malabarese Rites; *In Suprema*, of January 16, 1743, concerning the marriage of neophytes converted from Judaism; and *Cum Venerabilis*, of January 27, 1757, concerning the faculty of dispensation in the case of the marriage of neophytes. A separate group consists of various letters that deal with the problem of regulating the baptisms of Jewish children and adults and the marriages contracted while still living in the Jewish faith: *Postremo Mense* of February 28, 1747; *Apostolici Ministerii Munus* of September 16, 1747; *Singularis Nobis* of

February 9, 1748 concerning the marriage of a Jewish neophyte and a converted Calvinist woman; *Probe Te Meminisse* of December 15, 1751. Finally we should add also *Magnae Nobis Admirationis* of June 29, 1751 concerning the marriages between Catholics and heretics.¹

The task of regulating the matter of the sacraments for the Eastern Catholic Churches is undertaken by the Pope in the three most important apostolic constitutions already quoted, in the reformation of the *Euchologion* [=Sacramentary] for the Eastern Churches, in a treatise dedicated to the sacraments, originally conceived as part of the *De Synodo Dioecesana* [=Diocesan Synod], published only later as the Letter *De Sacramentis* [=The Sacraments].² Our study will concentrate on this letter, by highlighting some specific contents and elements from an overall reading.

The interventions on the sacraments of the Eastern Catholics are part of an overall system, as is detailed by the attached table which collects the whole legislation of Benedict XIV on the sacraments contained in the first volume of bulls.³

¹For the decisions of Pope Benedict XIV, we refer to the legislation published in the *Magnum Bullarium Benedicti Papae XIV* [=Large Collection of Bulls by Pope Benedict XIV] (Vol. I-II, accurate reprint of Graz 1966 of vol. I-IV of the Collection of Bulls in the Roman edition respectively of the years 1746, 1749, 1753, 1757). The entire collection of this legislative activity concerning the sacraments is the subject of the contribution "*Sempre tenendo saldo ille gamecon la Chiesamadre e maestra:*" *Sacramenti e alterità da Paolo III a Benedetto XIV. Spunti di riflessione* [=Always keeping firm the union with the Church, mother and teacher: Sacraments and differentiation from Paul III to Benedict XIV, points of reflection], in *Atti in onore di Adriano Prosperi* [=Acts in honor of Adriano Prosperi], Pisa 2010, to which I would like to refer.

²The manuscripts of the letter *De Sacramentis* were kept in part in the Secret Vatican Archive (from now on referred to as ASV), later moved to the Apostolic Vatican Library, and in part in the Library of the University of Bologna (Mss. 268, vol. I-IV). Based on the ASV manuscripts, the *Benedicti XIV Papae Opera inedita, Primum publicavit Franciscus Heiner* [=Unpublished Works by Pope Benedict XIV, first published by Francis Heiner], Freiburg of Brisgovia 1904.

³Our choice concerns only the first volume since it was published according to the index and the selection set down by the pope himself. See Ch. Lefebvre, *Le premier volume du Bullaire de Benoît XIV constitu-t-il une Collection Authentique?* [=Does the first volume of the collection of bulls by Benedict XIV constitute an authentic collection?], in *L'Année canonique* [=The canonical year] 17 (1973), pp. 615-621.

The three apostolic constitutions addressed to the Eastern Catholics deal with the whole sacramental structure. All other papal interventions which deal with a single sacrament, or are about specific abuses that are connected with the situations of the old Christian world, deal mostly with the sacrament of orders, crowning point and center of the Church's unity, and with the pair Eucharist-penance.

This formulation has a definite foundation and continuity that goes back to the years that preceded Benedict's pontificate, as it emerges from a comparison with the decisions taken during the period when he was the archbishop of Bologna.⁴ The 107 notifications for the diocese, from the point of view of their contents, can be classified, with some repetitions, into a first group of regulations about the reform of the customs of the clergy or of the religious sisters; a second group of norms about the sacraments; and finally, a third group of instructions about rites and practices. The first are of a juridical character and the last of a pastoral nature, while the second group, dedicated to sacramental matters, act as a suture, so to say, connecting his interventions of a regulatory nature with those of a didactic one. Prescriptive texts are not lacking, and in some passages they tend to assume, so also a more colloquial tone.

Just as was the case when he was head of the diocese of Bologna, the norms issued by Lambertini as pope were only in part prompted by

⁴*Raccolta di alcune notificazioni, editti e istruzioni pubblicate dall' Eminentissimo e Reverendissimo signor Cardinale Prospero Lambertini, arcivescovo di Bologna e principe di S.R.E. per buon governo della sua diocesi* [=Collection of some notifications, edicts and instructions published by His Eminence Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, archbishop of Bologna and prince of the Holy Roman Church for a successful administration of his diocese], I-V, Archiepiscopal Press, Rome 1742; the diocesan publication was followed by a Roman edition and a Latin translation (*Institutiones Ecclesiasticae Prosperi Lambertini S.R.E. cardinalis archiepiscopi bononiensis, postea Benedicti decimiquarti Pontificis Optimi Maximi, quas latine reddidit Il dephonsus a Sancto Carolo Scholarum Piarum rector collegii Urbani de Propaganda Fide* [=Ecclesiastical Constitutions of Prospero Lambertini cardinal archbishop of Bologna, later Pope Benedict XIV, which were published in Latin by Ildephone of St. Charles, rector of the college of Propaganda Fide], Rome 1747). I have analyzed the documentation in Bologna in *Lambertini a Bologna* [=Lambertini in Bologna] 1731-1740, in 'Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia' [=Review of the Church's History in Italy], 2 (2007) 417-461, to which I will go back.

concrete cases; most of the times they were meant to develop an overall and multifaceted plan of regulating the sacraments. If in fact, some regulatory interventions are occasional in character, such as a reply to some concrete known abuses or a response to questions from missionaries, religious superiors or bishops, for most of the cases, the apostolic constitutions reveal an intentionally devised plan that follows clear lines of interpretation of the Ecumenical Council of Trent. Above all, concerning the major post-conciliar questions (and indeed the administration of the sacraments belongs to this section), the plan of the pope, who was an expert in canon law, reveals itself to be well organized. During his episcopacy and papacy, he went back many times to the subject of benefits, the norms concerning pastoral visitation, the duty of residency of priests; while the formation of seminarians is intimately connected with his idea of church government. All of this constitutes the selected topic of his first interventions in the beginning of his pontificate, and were collected in texts as a set programme. A large sub-group of apostolic constitutions concerns the sacraments in a more direct manner.

	Bapt-ism	Confirm-ation	Orders	Eucharist /Mass	Penance	Anoint-ing the sick	Marri-age
<i>UbiPrimum</i>			X				
<i>Ad Apostolicae</i>			X				
<i>Auget</i>						X	
<i>Matrimonia</i>							X
<i>Satisbobis compertum</i>							X
	==	=====	===	=====	=====	===	===
<i>Etsi Pastoralis</i>	X		X		X	X	X
<i>E Sublimi</i>			X				
<i>Eo Quamvis</i>	X		X	X			
<i>Ad Apostolicae</i>			X				
<i>Cum Illud</i>			X				
<i>Cum ad infra scriptam</i>						X	
<i>Obsurdescit</i>						X	
<i>Demandatam</i>	X			X		X	
<i>Tam praeclaram</i>						X	
<i>Avendovi Noi</i>					X		
<i>Quanta Cura</i>				X			
<i>Pro eximia</i>				X			
<i>Exponi Nobis</i>				X			
<i>Certiores effecti</i>				X			
<i>Quaemadmodum preces</i>							
<i>Inter omnigenas</i>	X				X		X
<i>Cum semper</i>				X			

<i>Dilectus filius</i>				X			
<i>Singularem</i>				X			
<i>Matrimonii</i>							X
<i>Nimiamlicentia</i>							X
<i>Redditae Nobis</i>							X
<i>Laetiora</i>					X		
<i>Adpassionis</i>					X		
<i>Sacramentum</i>					X		
<i>Pastor bonus</i>					X		
<i>In Apostolicae</i>					X		
<i>Apostolica indulta</i>					X		
<i>In suprema</i>					X		
<i>Apostolici muneris</i>					X		
<i>Cum multorum</i>					X		
<i>Nullisverbis</i>							
<i>Supremaomnium</i>							
<i>Omnium solicitudinum</i>	X				X	X	X

The pope carried out his interventions on specific aspects of the seven sacraments, which he analyzed, accepted or rejected in individual cases of the Latin Catholic tradition, through comparison and analysis which took into account the canons of the Eastern Catholic tradition as well as the debates with the Protestants, who had made of the sacraments and of the hierarchical structure, which was based on it, the object of a precise opposition. Finally, while going over the sources of the Eastern Rites, the pope kept in mind also some cases that the Catholic Church had encountered during the course of her worldwide expansion.

Between 1753 and 1754, Benedict XIV wrote five volumes, whose preparatory materials were not published in the second edition of the *De Synodo* [=The Synod] that came out in 1755. On the basis of archival research and of the discovery of documents of ancient liturgies and ritual collections, with the help of several collaborators, the pope prepared a vast addition to the *De Synodo*, in which a lot of material had already been published concerning the Greek Italians living in the dioceses ruled by Latin bishops. The unpublished materials, grouped together in five books, were later organized as a papal *Letter* to be published separately as a commentary on the *Euchologion*. In the *Letter*, the analysis was to include customs, abuses and traditions of the Melkite, Coptic, Armenian, Syrian, Ethiopian and Ruthenian Churches; inevitably, the entire research into the sacraments that the pope had carried out during his lifetime, ever since his first experiences working in diocesan offices, all through his government of the diocese and up to the years of his pontificate, was

reflected in this work. The need to clarify the relationship between the Latin and Eastern Rites convinced Benedict XIV to deal in an organic fashion with the relationships and correspondences between the Catholic Latin liturgy and the Catholic Eastern liturgy.

A similar need of clarification in the rites and sacramental practices was manifested also in the work of editing and publishing the liturgical texts which the congregation of *Propaganda Fide* and other smaller commissions had amended since the second half of the 17th century, during the pontificate of Urban VIII, a work which Benedict XIV had resumed with renewed vigor and carried to completion.⁵ Between 1748 and 1755, the pope ordered the completion of the work of editing the Greek *Euchologion*, which was later published in 1756. A prior *Letter (Ex quo primum)* was coupled with the publication of this ritual for the Eastern Churches and a second more detailed one (*De Sacramentis*) was supposed to explain all the sacraments for the Eastern Churches. It was left unfinished on account of his death.⁶

⁵Of this work of overall editing of the Coptic, Armenian, Ruthenian, Maronite, Syrian, Slavic, Greek and Chaldean liturgical books there remains a trace in the materials published by Heiner, in the section titled *De ritibus* [=The rites]. See *Opera inedita* [=Unpublished work], III, pp. 193-455.

⁶Some of the materials prepared for the revision of the *Euchologion* and the Greek ritual in ASV, Benedict XIV Fund, vol. 25, *Riti greci e eucologio* [=Greek rites and *Euchologion*], and vol. 26. The first letter of explanations and accompaniment of the *Eucology, Ex quo primum* or *Epistola prima ad Archiepiscopos, Episcopos, aliosque Ritus Graeci Ecclesiasticos, Saeculares et Regulares, gratiam & communionem Sedis Apostolicae habentes* [=First letter to the archbishops, bishops, and other ecclesiastics of Greek rite, lay people and religious, having grace and communion with the Apostolic See] had been published on March 1, 1756, MBR vol. IV, pp. 365-403. In the letter of April 7, 1756 to Cardinal de Tencin, Benedict XIV mentioned the editing of the Greek *Euchologion* as a necessary work "because the Orthodox had printed it with many mistakes. The work had begun during the pontificate of Urban VIII; then it had been put aside. We have summed it up and the editing has been carried out during a period of many years. The printing house of *de Propaganda Fide* published the entire edited *Euchologion*. In order to inform the public about the editing that was carried out and the labour involved, we thought it best to write a first letter, where everything is explained in detail; with a second letter, if God will grant us life and health, the entire task will be completed." See *Le lettere di Benedetto XIV al card. De Tencin* [=Benedict VIII's Letters to Card. De Tencin], by E. Morelli, 3 vols., *Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura* [=Publications of History and Literature], Rome 1955-1965-1984, III, p. 342. See also the testimony of the letter to

1. The Method Employed in the Letter *De Sacramentis*

The style of clarification of each sacrament followed in the *Letter "De Sacramentis,"* offered an initial brief presentation of the Latin regulations, then an exposition of the Eastern regulations in the points that differed from the Latin one; finally the author compared the points of dissension or the ritual differences in order to set down the legitimacy of a regulation other than the Latin one or the necessity to eliminate some of the differences. Lambertini proceeded by way of reference to prior studies in a composite manner: his work of erudition therefore originated by an accumulation of material, through a work of card indexing of old sources (post-apostolic and patristic), conciliar and pontifical decisions, and the opinions of theologians or canonists. From this there followed the frequent references, within the text, to the instructions for the Bologna diocese of the years of his episcopacy (1731-1740), to the two treatises *De Festis* [=About the Feasts] and *De Sacrificio Missae* [=About the sacrifice of the Mass]⁷ (1740 -1745), and to the work *De Synodo*.⁸ The

Canon Peggi, F. X. Kraus, *Briefe Benedicts XIV an den canonicus Francesco Peggi in Bologna (1727-1758)* [=Letters of Benedict XIV to canon Francesco Peggi in Bologna], Freiburg i. B.-Tübingen 1884, p. 115, where he mentioned "the two labours [...] about the sacraments, whose use in the Eastern Church is in need of new regulations... or explanations;" in 1756, still to Peggi, F.X. Kraus, *Briefe Benedicts XIV* [=Benedict XIV's Letter], op. cit., III, p. 120, Benedict XIV spoke of a next letter being prepared "which will speak about the same *Euchologion*, and will contain what relates to the matter and form of the sacraments in the Eastern Church."

⁷The work *Santo sacrificio della Messa* [=The holy sacrifice of the Mass] was published initially in Bologna in 1740 (by the Longhi printing house), it was translated into Latin in the Padua edition of 1745 (with funds from the seminary at the Manfrè house), and finally translated back into Italian from the 1745 edition in Padua in 1747. It belongs to a first phase of a historical-liturgical research with the two *Annotazione opera le feste di nostro Signore e della Beatissima Vergine* [=Notes on the feasts of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin]... and *Annotazione opragliattid'alcuni santi de' quails icelebral'Offizio e la Messa* [Notes on the lives of some saints whose office and Holy Mass are celebrated], and was revised, updated and edited in some sections on the occasion of the Latin translation of 1745.

⁸For the reconstruction of the treatise on the synod, see my intervention "*Acciòves covilat inisiano bene informati di tutto*": la seconda edizione del *De Synodo* dioecesana di *Benedetto XIV* [=So that the Latin bishops be well informed about everything:" the second edition of *De Synodo dioecesana* of Benedict XIV], in "*Cristiane simo nella storia*"

composition of the *Letter "De Sacramentis,"* on the basis of some internal references, dates back to the years 1753-1754.

In other words, the *Letter "De Sacramentis"* is the presentation, in argumentative fashion, of the regulations issued by the pontifical constitutions by which the biblical and patristic antecedents were made known and their theological and canonical foundations were given. Each decision was thus dissected, explained and justified in each of its individual enunciations. The simple laws, in order to be understood and rightly interpreted, demanded this prior exegesis and manifested the type of authority upon which they were founded. The holy pontiff gave an account of his choices.⁹

The author worked in a gradual and painstaking manner by way of an examination of the validating sources of the liturgy, the common attestations of local churches, conciliar and papal teaching, thus justifying the choices made by the Roman Congregation for the correction of the books of the Eastern Church that had been

[=Christianity in history], 28 (2007)/3, 543-608. The *De Synodo* first edition was printed with funds from the liturgical academy of Coimbra, Rome 1748, through the Nicola and Marco Pagliani Brothers (*Libri octo, nunc primum editi ad usum Academiae liturgicae Conimbricensis* [=Eight books, now first published for the use of the Coimbra Academy], vol. XII); there followed the Roman edition by Komarek, also in 1748; the edition of Ferrara in 1753, by G. Manfr . In the letter of September 22, 1745, *Lettere di Benedetto XIV* [=Letters by Benedict XIV], III, p.275, Lambertini announced the *De Synodo*, "prepared by us when we were in Bologna, and completed and expanded during my pontificate." The second edition, re-edited and doubled in size, came out in September in Rome, printed by Giovanni G. Salomoni: it was subdivided into 13 books and contained an opening dedication to Maria Teresa of Austria, see the letter of September 24, 1755 to Tencin, *Lettere di Benedetto XIV* [=Letters of Benedict XIV], III, Ibid. p. 107. The Benedict XIV's fund donated to the Institute of Sciences, later BUB, vol. 268, contains the "Italian originals of the Latin additions to the work *De Synodo dioecesana* [=Diocesan Synod] made by Pope Benedict XIV himself.

⁹This problem, which would deserve further study, was in part dealt with by P. Prodi, *Note sull'agenesi del diritto nella Chiesa post-tridentina* [=Notes on the origin of law in the Church after the council of Trent], in *Legge e Vangelo. Discussione su una legge fondamentale per la Chiesa* [=Law and the Gospel. Discussions about a fundamental law of the Church], Paideia, Brescia 1972, pp. 191-2323; for the rational demonstration of its juridical tradition, see the Introduction of the same author in *Lettere di Benedetto XIV al marchese Magnani*, [=Benedict XIV's Letters to Marquis Magnani], by P. Prodi, M.T Fattori, Rome 2010.

operating during his pontificate, and the constitutions *Etsi Pastoralis*, *De Mandatam* and *Eo Quamvis*. When the list of sources was not sufficient to prove that a particular ritual was sound or that it could be changed, the author limited himself to expounding the most probable theological and canonical opinion. If an agreement on a specific point did not exist or could not easily be reached, the author offered the various opinions and then proceeded to present his own, by differentiating between the privately expressed opinions and the papal decisions.

Above all, this method was not limited to a mere presentation, but represented rather a precise system of authoritative principles from which to draw logically some definite criteria. Lambertini in fact adopted an orderly combination of criteria in order to establish whether and upon which foundation it was possible to maintain or, on the contrary, whether it would be necessary to eliminate a disciplinary difference between the Eastern Catholic observance and the Latin one. Each aspect of the sacrament was filtered through a first level, namely the presence of confirmations in the ancient sources and documents; then the verification of conciliar and papal authorities; and finally the opinions of theologians and canonists. Such a combination of criteria did not pretend to solve all the cases that might arise later on, but it tended indeed to propose a method.

The verification of the oldest sources was intended to establish the presence of precise ritual and liturgical systems found in the Eastern *leratika* and *Euchologia*. Such verification Lambertini carried out mostly from learned authors of the Latin culture and language, not directly the sources of the Eastern and Greek world. Where there existed trustworthy testimonies, the antiquity of the liturgical customs had for the author a decisive normative value.¹⁰ Although he had a limited awareness of the distance between the liturgical regulations of the first Christian centuries and the subsequent

¹⁰Ed. Heiner, in chapter 5, *Delle oblazioni o sienoostiemaggiori e minori che nella Messa si consacrano dai sacerdoti greci e dell'oblazione diaconale* [=About the offerings of either the large or the small hosts that Greek priests offer, and about the diaconal oblation], pp. 275-277; the research on the most ancient liturgies of the Roman Church, the Ambrosian rite, the Mozarabic Mass is summed up in No. 2 of chapter 13, *Della commemorazione del romano pontefice nella Messa* [=The commemoration of the Roman pontiff in the Mass], pp. 313-314, where the work of philological reconstruction of the text was based on the publication of an ancient code carried out by 'Lutheran' FlaccoIllirico.

traditions that had become norms in the Latin and Eastern Churches, Pope Lambertini systematically applied a leading principle in the theology of the years after the Council of Trent, first proposed by the Dominican Melchior Cano in his *De Locis Theologicis* [=Theological sources]. According to Cano, historical veracity was the necessary condition for any theological proof; it was based on the authentic value of the text. Only when the Church pronounced a formal teaching, was the historical demonstration no longer necessary.¹¹ Lambertini made his own and applied systematically this criterion in his evaluation of the liturgical practices.

The second level of authorities was constituted by patristic and conciliar sources, which were verified also through texts of ecclesiastical history, on the publications of the Church Fathers, on conciliar acts and decisions. In this area, the author would assess the range and dissemination of a custom, whether it was valid only in one particular church, for most of the churches, or whether it had been approved by the universal Church.

A third level was applied through a comparison between the Eastern rites and the oldest and most attested uninterrupted Latin practices. In this way, the sacramental practices showed substantial similarities that could hide behind apparent diversities of formulations.

According to a fourth level, an ancient practice could have undergone modifications caused by a decision of a Roman pope. In this area, the choices of Benedict XIV were in continuity with the decisions concerning the Greek Italians of Clement VIII, the Instruction promulgated in 1595, and the attempted reformation of the liturgical books carried out under Urban VIII. It was the role of the Roman pontiffs in fact to apply "with appropriate decisions all the possible helps to the bishops who had appealed to the apostolic see as teacher and center of unity."¹² A confirmation of this was the

¹¹The *De locis theologicis* [=Theological sources] was published posthumously in Salamanca in 1563; the theologian from Salamanca lived between 1509 and 1560; see J. M. de Bujanda, *La censure ecclésiastique que sur les oeuvres historiques* [=Ecclesiastical censure on historical works], in *Nunc alia tempora, alii mores* [=Other times, other customs]. *Storici e storia in età posttridentina, Atti del convegno internazionale (Torino, 24-27 settembre 2003)* [=Historians and history after the Council of Trent, Acts of the international convention (Turin, September 24-27, 2003)], by M. Firpo, Olschki, Florence 2005, pp. 268-269.

¹²See *De Synodo*, book XIII, paragraph 17 No. 9.

letters, decrees and constitutions, the bulls and the briefs of the popes that filled the libraries and the archives of the Vatican. To this normative deposit Benedict XIV himself had referred in his decisions, which were taken according to criteria of continuity and were the result “not of our mind, but of our resolve to keep always before our eyes what has been set down by our predecessors.” Precisely this continuity of action and choices was an important and uncontroverted proof of the sollicitudes of the Holy See in doing what is in her power in order to lead the souls on the way to heaven.” The Roman pontiffs reserved to themselves some decisions in response to requests from the various shepherds of the Churches; however, the Roman authority prevailed also on account of its reasonableness, inasmuch as it proved its equanimity and fairness in resolving controversies and doubts.

Finally, the last criterion consisted in the research of the opinions of theologians or in the comparison among the most accredited schools. This criterion was valid in the absence of “the Church’s decision.”¹³ In this context, although opting for one party, Lambertini gives up his role as pope to take up the role of a private expert.

The work of research carried out by Lambertini on the sacraments was not historical in the proper sense of the term according to modern sciences. It was based rather on a reading of the historical sources, which, however, were used, with a concrete and practical theology, for the purpose of demonstrating the original aspects of the Christian sacraments, immune from contaminations with pagan rites, lay or heretical practices. In other words, he used history as an apologetic instrument. However, we cannot go into detailing each individual error or mistaken interpretation that Lambertini identified in one or another aspect of the sacramental ritual, but it is interesting to know the reasons that inspired his analysis and comparison.¹⁴

¹³Ed. Heiner, Title V, chapter 2, No. 8, p. 421: the criterion emerges from the comparison between the indissolubility of marriage in the Latin practice and the justification of the separation in case of adultery in the Greek practice.

¹⁴Lambertini’s work contains the limitations of an incomplete understanding of the essential characters of the early Christian liturgy, which he considers on the level of the pastoral and normative revision in view of the sacramental concerns of the present. An interpretation in terms of historical aspects of his liturgical works would allow us to clarify better

The history of the Church, as the Letter argues, contributed to the interpretation of the "simple" decisions, allowing the correct historical understanding of texts and canons. The "sacred history" established a connection between the historical research and the hagiographic one which had its meeting point precisely in the liturgy.¹⁵ During Lambertini's period, liturgy was an open field for debates. On the one hand, there were movements that criticized the existing practices in the name of fidelity to the early Christian centuries, whose liturgy the proponents wanted to restore; on the other hand, there were those who demanded a simplification of a ritual that had accumulated decorative external contrivances with detriment to the interior aspect and understanding of the Scripture; moreover, there were those who opted for a purification and rationalization of elements that had turned into superstitious practices, as well as those who considered any change an undue innovation of a "tradition" that should be understood and accepted in its entirety.¹⁶ It is within this context that Benedict XIV's research on the sacraments finds its place.

Lambertini dealt with the problem of the sacraments in keeping with his general formulation of the treatise on the synod, namely by avoiding a systematic confrontation about the great questions underlying the individual concrete problems of his time. Free from the polemical spirit that emerges from the reflections on the sacraments of the Eastern rites, he avoided the questions altogether

some passages: the treatise on the *Sacrificio della Messa* [=Sacrifice of the Mass] appears to be dedicated to follow and simplify the works of the liturgists of the XVII century, among which, in number of quotations, there stands out Cardinal Giovanni Bona (1609-1674): *Libri duo rerum liturgicarum* [=Two books on liturgical matters], Rome 1671, and *De sacrificio Missae tractatus asceticus* [=Ascetical treatise of the sacrifice of the Mass], Rome 1658. See the evaluation of F. Cabrol, *Benoît XIV* [=Benedict XIV] in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* [=Dictionary of Christian archeology and liturgy], vol. XII/1, Paris 1925, col. 771-775.

¹⁵S. Ditchfield, "Historia magistra sanctitatis?" [=History, teacher of holiness?] *The Relationship between Historiography and Hagiography in Italy after the Council of Trent (1516-1742 CA.)*, in *Nunc alia tempora alii mores* [=Now other times, other customs], op. cit., pp.3-23.

¹⁶L. Brandolini, *Benedetto XIV di fronte ad alcuni movimenti riformistico-liturgici del secolo XVIII* [=Benedict XIV vis-à-vis some reformist liturgical movements of the 18th century], in *'Ephemerides liturgicae'* [=Liturgical collections], 88 (1974) 447-470.

and the very dogmatic controversies not because he did not have an opinion on the matter or to evade difficult arguments, but, one might say, in order not to put into question the main objective of his interventions, intent as he was on resolving the individual specific conflicts with equanimity. He remained firmly anchored to the purpose of unraveling the thorny knot by keeping his distance from the subject in order to embrace the appropriate positions most in keeping with the custom of the universal Church and the previous Roman decisions. The final objectives of the normative revision coincide with a general plan of reform of the rites, liturgies and sacramental practices, a plan which, from a negative point of view, was aimed at eliminating confusions and inconsistencies, which caused internal conflicts in the ecclesial organization, and *false* rites or doubts that deprived the Church of credibility, and, on the positive side, of reaching a level of purity and clear elegance in the external cult.

2. Systematic Presentation of the Sacraments for the Eastern Catholics

The hierarchical system of the Church, according to Lambertini, is based on the sacraments: the central position of the sacrament of order, in a direct relationship between Christ and the priesthood, was the basis of a precise ritual hierarchy the laws of which guided the religious life of the faithful. The sacrament of baptism was the essential and unique initiation, which imprinted in the soul the character and could work independently from the will of the faithful. To baptism was connected the sacrament of confirmation, as the complement of baptism itself, in as much as between the two the same natural separation (and distinction) should be maintained as between birth and growth.

At the center of the religious life and of the heart the priestly ministry is the pair Eucharist-sacrament of reconciliation, the unity of which is justified by the personal sanctification of the faithful. The commandment of receiving Holy Communion during paschal time and to go to confession before communion in case of mortal sin had been categorically reaffirmed by canon 21 *Omnis utriusque sexus, De poenitentibus et remissionibus* [=Each and both sexes, about penance and remission of sin] of the Fourth Lateran Council and repeated at the

Council by Trent, session 13, chapter 7, *De Eucharistia* [=The Eucharist].¹⁷

The anointing of the sick concluded the cycle of the sacraments aimed at the sanctification of believers assuming an unexpectedly important role, while in the sacrament of matrimony, confirmed in its form by the Council of Trent, was at odds with civil ceremonies, family traditions, and local customs, often reflecting pagan rites.¹⁸

Benedict XIV's analysis set down explicitly the distinction between sacramental acts and ritual acts: the former were rigidly examined according to the five criteria spelled out above; the latter could be admissible in some cases and in others they were to be revised or eliminated, but, at any rate, they did not require the same strict normative control. Tradition, custom and the intention of the minister, in addition to that of the faithful, permitted a distinction of the legitimate acts from the illegitimate ones in order to avoid inconsistencies, since "it was not proper that a sacrament instituted by Christ should be subjected to an arbitrary ceremony, albeit of a

¹⁷The Eucharist has not only the "power to sanctify" as do the other sacraments, but contains the "author of holiness" itself. See Ed. Heiner, Title II, *De Eucharistia et sacrificio Missae* [=The Eucharist and the sacrifice of the Mass], in chapter 1, No. 1, p. 254. For a deeper understanding see P. Prodi, *L'istituto della penitenza: nodi storici* [=The institution of the sacrament of penance. Historical roots]. I am grateful to the author for allowing me to consult his book, before its being published; it was presented as a dissertation at the congress of moral theology of the school of theology of the Emilia-Romagna region, Bologna, September 22-23, 2009. For an analysis of the Letter on the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, Eucharist and the Mass see M. T. Fattori, *Chiesa latina e rito orientale nel De Synodo dioecesana di Benedetto XIV* [=Latin Church and Eastern rite in the letter on the diocesan synod of Benedict XIV] op. cit.

¹⁸See D. Lombardi, *Matrimoni di antico regime* [=Marriages of the old practice], Il Mulino, Bologna 2001. Also useful is Id., *Storia del matrimonio dal Medioevo a oggi* [=History of matrimony from the Middle Ages to the present], Il Mulino, Bologna 2008. For the debate on matrimony see S. Seidel Menchi, D. Quaglioni, *Matrimoni in dubbio. Unioni controverse e nozze clandestine in Italia dal XVI al XVIII secolo. I processi matrimoniali degli archive ecclesiastici italiani* [=Doubtful Marriages. Controversial unions and clandestine marriages in Italy from the 16th to the 18th century. The matrimonial processes in the Italian ecclesiastical archives], Il Mulino, Bologna 2001.

devotional nature.”¹⁹ Since, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent, the sacraments combine both regulations and teaching, each practice was examined carefully, under the penalty of heresy and the opening of an inquiry about whether “the sacrament lacked the appropriate credibility” or was abused.²⁰ There existed moreover an intermediate range of ceremonies related to the sacraments, namely ritual customs which contained non-sacramental purifications and practices that prevented the faithful from turning to the sacraments in special circumstances. Lambertini’s examination distinguished between rites based on ancient traditions and rites that expressed a “superstitious” intention. He did not grant any value to those rites that claimed to have a relationship with the “substance” of the sacrament, even if founded on ancient traditions.

The Eastern tradition was placed in a parallel position vis-à-vis the Latin one, but it was considered a counterpart which confirmed the Catholic discipline in the three-sided comparison with the symbolic aspects that the reformed Protestant ecclesial communities also maintained.²¹ The Council of Trent’s decree emphasized the anti-Protestant aspects of the definition of sacrament and this was reflected in the view about the sacraments of the Eastern Churches. Since the Orthodox Eastern traditions were known to Lambertini through the filter of Catholic authors and rarely from direct sources, the pope quoted both the controversial Catholic authors and Protestant theologians. The synods and the councils of the Eastern Catholic Churches occupied an intermediate less authentic area. Their authority, contested on various levels, had received confirmation from the Holy See. As example, we may consider the case of the Synod of Zambrak for the Ruthenian Church, the Council of Mount Lebanon for the Maronite Church and in addition, the Synod of Diamper, held in 1599 with the purpose of Latinizing the

¹⁹Ed. Heiner, Title III, *De Poenitentia et Extrema Unctione* [=Penance and Anointing of the sick), in chapter 8, No. 9, p. 371, which forbade to anoint the faithful, either healthy or sick, in a superficial manner out of simple devotion and as protection against sin and sickness in general.

²⁰Ibid., p. 372.

²¹Ibid., in chapter 1, No. 5, p. 329 we find a confirmation in the Eastern practice of what is prescribed about the obligation of the auricular confession by the Catholic Church and “keeps intact the perfect coherence between the Western Church and the Eastern Church as regards the obligation of the penitent to reveal all sins to the confessor.

Syrian community of St. Thomas from the liturgical and dogmatic point of view, which Benedict XIV used as a source to establish the discipline of the Syrian-Nestorian Christian Orthodox.²²

In the course of his presentation, the author offered an important indication of an overall organization of the hierarchical structure of the sacraments

“There are some sacraments that, for their validity, require an act on the part of the recipient, such as penance and matrimony; for this very reason they cannot be given to infants or the insane. Some other sacraments do not require an action on the part of the recipient, such as baptism, confirmation and orders, since by divine disposition they possess a special spiritual power; because this infused natural power exists first before the act, unlike an acquired one, and can subsist without it, these sacraments can validly be given to infants and the insane.”²³

²²The synod of Diamper, celebrated by Archbishop Aleixo de Meneses of Goa, aimed at establishing the Latin discipline among the Syrian Christian of St. Thomas, who constituted an outpost of the Syrian-Eastern Church of Persia (later of Mesopotamia) on the coast of Malabar. Meneses wanted to eliminate every trace of a presumed nestorianism: see P. Aranha, *Sacramenti o samskṛṭḥ? L'illusione dell'accomodatio nella controversia dei riti malabarici [=Sacraments or samskṛṭḥ? The illusion of a compromise in the controversy of the Malabarese rites]*, in *Discipline e prassi sacramentali in contesti extra-europei, XVI-XVIII secolo [=Sacramental disciplines and practices in extra-European contexts, 16th-18th centuries]*, by M.T. Fattori, in *Cristianesimo nella storia [=Christianity in history]*, 31 (2010)/2, about to be published. The synod was known to Lambertini through the work of Father Johannes Facundi Raulin, *Historia ecclesiae Malabaricae cum Diamperitana synodo apud indos nestorianos, St. Thomae christianos nun cupatos, coacta ab Alexio De Menezes... nunc primum e lusitano in latinum versa cui accedunt, cum liturgia malabarica, tum dissertations varia...* [=History of the Malabar Church with the synod of Diamper among the Nestorian Hindus, called Christians of St. Thomas, collected by Aleixo De Menezes... now translated for the first time from Portuguese into Latin which they use, to which both the Malabar liturgy, as well as various dissertations are added...], Rome 1745 (in the press of Jerome Mainardi), p. 145.

²³Ed. Heiner, Title IV, chap. 8, No. 11-13, *Del titolo dell'ordinazione...* [=On ordination...], pp. 403-405. This distinction was shared by a great number of authors, beginning with St. Thomas, Summa, Book IV, question 33, up to the theologians and canonists before and contemporary with

This carried with it some concrete consequences: an insane man could not be ordained, neither could an infant or a person whose will was opposed or not made explicit, because the sacrament of order carried with it a power over the mystical body and this in turn demanded an explicit consent on the part of the one who took on the pastoral care of souls; the absence of an explicit consent implied the unlawfulness and invalidity of its being conferred, not so much as the character was concerned, but as it carried with it the care of souls which could not be undertaken except by one who would give his consent, "as he would be contracting a spiritual marriage with the Church;" or the obligation of the ecclesiastical celibacy and the other obligations connected with the clerical state. Baptism, on the other hand, as a sacrament which imprinted the character in the soul, carried with it the objective action of grace even when the subject was opposed. Therefore the act of baptism, even when it was given to adults under threat of death or with coercion, to children against the will of the parents, was illicit but valid, provided the form and the matter of the sacrament were respected and the one conferring the baptism had the intention of baptizing. Grace operated independently from the assent and the free acceptance of the one receiving baptism, which therefore did not constitute an essential element of the sacrament's validity. The act of baptizing was irreversible, and to confer baptism, even in an illicit manner, meant that the baptized person was incorporated into the canonical system which was the Church at the time.

For the other sacraments, matters were different. In the case of ordination of a deacon, who was between seven and fourteen years of age, as was customary among the Copts, Benedict XIV had prescribed what was dictated by the practice of the Roman tribunals:²⁴ the deacon was not required or bound to recite the divine office. There was lacking the free consent to the choice of life and to the undertaking of the obligations connected with the clerical state;

Benedict XIV (Card. Gotti, Berti, Giovanni Andrea, Fagnano, Pirhing, Ferosini, etc.)

²⁴See *Eoquamvis*, MBR book I, pp. 511-522; the assent and the will become important in matters of the baptism of adult Jewish persons, see *Postre momense*, MBR book II, pp. 286-237; *Probe tememinisse*, *ibid*, pp. 417-442; about the Roman controversial trends, see M. Caffiero, *Battesimi forzati: storie di ebrei, cristiani e convertiti nella Roma dei papi* [=Forced baptisms: stories of Jews, Christians, converts in the Rome of the Popes], Viella, Rome 2004, pp.1-100.

therefore the sacrament was valid (provided it was conferred with the necessary form, matter and intention of the bishop), but it was illicit. As a result such deacons were not bound to observe the vow of chastity and other obligations/vows which would be undertaken in such circumstances, since a free and explicit will had not been expressed. Once the boy had reached the age of reason, he would have to be interrogated: if he consented to remain in the state of orders, he would be obliged to follow the law of chastity; if he did not give his consent, he could return to the lay state. The pope concluded his reasoning, rejecting a similarity with an illicit but valid baptism because:

“The infant, after receiving the sacrament of orders, was not bound to the burdens connected with the order, such as continence or the daily recitation of the canonical hours... since there was a big difference between baptism and the sacrament of orders; indeed, the observance of the law of the gospel follows naturally from baptism, while the observance of celibacy is only imposed by a positive law tied to the sacred orders; indeed, since anyone who attains the use of reason has had sufficient information about the law of the gospel, and is therefore bound to receive baptism, while no one is absolutely bound to receive the sacred orders.”²⁵

A great difference existed between the two situations: baptism, even if received against one's will, obliged in a “natural” way to observe the law of the gospel, while the ecclesiastical state could be accepted and undertaken only by the free will. The needed freedom to ask and receive baptism, as indispensable part for the validity of the sacrament, was deliberately set aside by the pope.

²⁵Ed. Heiner, Title IV, chapter 8, No. 13, p.405.