

“Kneel, *compañero*!” Monsignor Quixote’s Sacramental Adventure

Peter J. Comerford 

Abstract

Graham Greene’s Monsignor Quixote illustrates an ecclesiology of friendship through the title character’s relationship with Sancho. Quixote is depicted as a holy fool, who is able to bring his *compañero* back to the faith by his open mutual mediation with him. Greene has not strayed from orthodoxy, but has developed his theology compared to his earlier novels

Keywords

God, Catholic, Philosophy, Theology, Argument

I. Introduction¹

Graham Greene’s novel *Monsignor Quixote* has been somewhat neglected in the critical literature.² Perhaps this neglect results from the fact that the novel is funny and not terribly long, and that his later novels are considered “lesser” than his earlier masterpieces.³ I think that *Monsignor Quixote* is a gem, created in the tradition of the exemplary novels of Cervantes and Unamuno, brief tales that address moral principles.⁴ The title character engages with a friend and with the world in a way illustrative of a *ressourcement* theology brought to fruition in an ecclesiology of friendship. Greene’s view of the church has matured and deepened, to see it less as rules and structures and more as relationships.

¹ I offer humble and heart-felt thanks to Dr. Constance Rousseau of Providence College for inspiring and guiding my effort, and encouraging me to look at the holy fool. I am also appreciative of everything my anonymous readers did to make this a stronger essay.

² A Google scholar search for “Monsignor Quixote” yield 670 results; the same search for “The Power and the Glory” yields 11,900 results.

³ Robert Murray Davis, “Figures In Greene’s Carpet: The Power and The Glory to Monsignor Quixote.” *Graham Greene Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017): 11. At 25.

⁴ William J. Entwistle, “Cervantes, the exemplary novelist.” *Hispanic Review* 9, no. 1 (1941): 103-109. At 104.

The existing critical literature has hinted at the question of whether Greene has strayed beyond the bounds of orthodoxy in this novel. Few essays probe the theological underpinnings of *Monsignor Quixote*. Probably the first of these, published just a few years after the novel came out, is by Patrick Henry.⁵ For Henry, the novel is the story of how the two central figures, by embracing doubt, can overcome their doctrinaire positions and reconcile to one another. The implication is that both have to abandon orthodoxy in order to reconcile. Chronologically, the next relevant essay is by John Desmond.⁶ Desmond views the novel through the lens of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and sees Quixote and Sancho as reconciled and transformed “by a redemptive vision that sees love as the ineradicable power at the heart of the real.” A few years later, Graham Holderness steps into the fray.⁷ Holderness sees that the 1982 publication of *Monsignor Quixote* undermines the then-current critical consensus that Greene essentially stopped writing “Catholic novels” in the mid-1950s. However, he finds that some aspects of the novel seem heterodoxical of traditional Catholic belief, but reflect the more liberal theological environment of the post-1960s Church.

Mark Bosco discusses this novel in his monograph about Greene.⁸ He makes four points about it: “a Teilhardian understanding of the spiritualization of matter; a Christological, aesthetic apprehension of reality; an extended development of sacramentality in the Eucharist; and the discursive play between religious faith and the creation of literary fiction.” For the Teilhard piece, he tracks Desmond, whose work he acknowledges. Bosco sees Greene’s Eucharistic theology as post-Vatican II. For the Christology, Bosco finds influences of von Balthasar. Finally, he sees that Greene views the writing of this novel, and the reading of it by the public, as a channel of grace.

By contrast, Brannon Hancock⁹ views *Monsignor Quixote* as an instance of a broad notion of what he calls post-ecclesial sacrament. He asserts that Greene’s depiction of “this imaginary eucharist, shared between a defrocked, delirious priest and an atheist” and that a Eucharist without bread or wine, is a step toward this post-ecclesial understanding of what a sacrament is.

⁵ Patrick Henry, “Doubt and Certitude in” *Monsignor Quixote*.” *College Literature* 12, no. 1 (1985): 68-79.

⁶ John F. Desmond, “The Heart of (the) Matter: The Mystery of the Real in” *Monsignor Quixote*.” *Religion & Literature* (1990): 59-78.

⁷ Graham Holderness, “‘KNIGHT-ERRANT OF FAITH’: ‘MONSIGNOR QUIXOTE’ AS ‘CATHOLIC FICTION’.” *Literature and Theology* 7, no. 3 (1993): 259-283.

⁸ Mark Bosco, *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

⁹ Brannon Hancock, “Pluralism and Sacrament: Eucharistic Possibility in a Post-Ecclesial World.” *Literature and Theology* 19, no. 3 (2005): 265-277.

Finally, Robert Murray Davis¹⁰ compares the clerical protagonists of *The Power and the Glory* and *Monsignor Quixote* as stories of pursuit and transformation, reflecting Greene's changing relationship with the Catholic Church over the years. He finds that they have much in common, particularly standing apart from the institutional church. There is, however, no analysis of what theology informs these depictions.

To understand *Monsignor Quixote* within orthodox Catholicism, we need to understand Quixote as a holy fool, and, as such, exemplar of the church of love. The effect of those two identities is that his relationship with Sancho models what theologian John Dadosky calls an ecclesiology of friendship. Greene's (and Quixote's) reliance on doubt as an element of faith, show that persevering through the darkness is precisely the heroism of the "holy fool." Both the ecclesiology of friendship and *ressourcement* theology of the Eucharist allows us to see that Quixote's attempt to say Mass without bread or wine is not meant to diminish the sacrament but to foreground the elements of kenosis and communion.

The *ressourcement*¹¹ was a movement for renewal of the Catholic Church that began in France in the 1930s, most notably with Henri de Lubac, S.J., Yves Congar, O.P., and Hans Urs von Balthasar. The word "*ressourcement*" ("return to sources") was coined by French poet Charles Péguy and refers to the effort to recover what Congar called a more profound tradition by returning to the study of the Fathers of the Church rather than the legalistic *schema* in the seminary manuals at the time. The movement began by rejecting the notion that the natural and supernatural were radically separated, a separation known as extrinsicism. Rejecting this separation was seen as a way to engage the faithful in redeeming the times, which was initially manifested in fighting fascism. Hans Boersma noted the importance of rejecting extrinsicism that "de Lubac believes, can be observed in at least three contexts: in the political acceptance of fascism, in the misdirection of hierarchical authority as domination and in the Eucharistic focus on transubstantiation and real presence."¹² These latter two concerns will play out in the course of this novel.

¹⁰ Robert Murray Davis, "Figures In Greene's Carpet: *The Power and The Glory* to *Monsignor Quixote*." *Graham Greene Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017): 11.

¹¹ See, e.g., Gabriel Flynn, "A Renaissance in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2011): 323-338. (Interestingly, Péguy had a profound influence on Greene. Cf., Grahame C. Jones, "Graham Greene and the Legend of Péguy" *Comparative Literature* (1969): 138-145.) This movement brought forth a Eucharistic ecclesiology that saw the celebration of the Eucharist as constitutive of the church. Hans Boersma "Sacramental Ontology: Nature and the supernatural in the ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac." *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1015 (2007): 242-273.

¹² Boersma, "Sacramental Ontology" p. 249.

II. The Holy Fool and The Church of Love

Greene's rejection of the view of "hierarchical authority as domination" is seen in his depiction of Quixote as a holy fool. Theologian Peter Phan wrote, "foolish wisdom is a gift, a revelation received in humility of mind and simplicity of heart."¹³ The holy fool, or wise fool, is an ancient figure, not only within Christianity but also for Sufis, Hindus, and Zen Buddhists,¹⁴ and "is believed to possess a source of knowledge that is more akin to supernatural and inspired wisdom than to the information accumulated through formal education."¹⁵ Within Christianity, "The fool of fools is the pious Christian who imitates the folly of Christ by accepting the cross of Christ."¹⁶

Hans Urs von Balthasar examines the holy fool in both theology and literature in volume V of *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. He describes "the metaphysics of the saints" in such figures as St. John of the Cross, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Francis de Sales, and Jean Pierre de Caussade. He identifies as constitutive of that metaphysics an abandonment of the ego in openness to the transcendent, quoting Caussade urging the believer to "March off in the direction you are sent, and without knowing the map, walk blindly on."¹⁷ In seeking literary representations of this metaphysics, von Balthasar finds conventional hagiography inadequate to all but the pious.¹⁸ The ideal form for literary depiction is the holy fool, in whom he sees "a gleam of unconscious, unintended sanctity."¹⁹ This sanctity is cloaked, so that the holy fool travels "*incognito*."²⁰

For von Balthasar, Ignatius Loyola personifies the special holiness of the holy fool. He notes that Ignatius calls for "an attitude of 'indifference' and readiness for anything God may ask,"²¹ which yields "a form of life which descends from above as a gift of grace."²² That life consists of "specific deeds in an active apostolate of service to neighbor."²³ Ignatius wants his life given over to "the loving and chivalrous

¹³ Peter C. Phan, "The wisdom of holy fools in postmodernity," *Theological Studies* 62, no. 4 (2001): 730-752. p. 751.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 732.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 738.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 745.

¹⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord* vol. V, San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1991, p. 135.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 142.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 143.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 146.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 103.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

service of this God.”²⁴ In the literary context, these are attributes of the holy fool.

The “holy fool” gains significance in light of von Balthasar’s distinction between the official church, embodied by St. Peter, and the church of love, embodied by St. John the Evangelist. Von Balthasar sees this distinction portrayed in John’s gospel in the narration of Easter morning, Jn 20: 1 – 10, when Peter and John run to the tomb. John arrives first, but waits for Peter before entering the tomb. As expressed by scholar John Dadosky, the episode shows von Balthasar that “‘love unencumbered’ runs faster, while ‘office’ approaches more slowly because it has more things to consider.”²⁵ Dadosky finds that the church of love informs an ecclesiology of *friendship*²⁶ and that it “becomes the mediator that identifies and directs the official church to the hidden Christ in the Other.”²⁷ Von Balthasar sees that the holy fool performs this duty for the official church since “under the protection of his folly’s freedom, the Christian can approach people unreached by official churchmen or no longer moved by fossilized forms of piety.”²⁸ Being a holy fool, with new-found freedom, (much to his bishop’s chagrin²⁹) enables Monsignor Quixote’s catechesis of Sancho, embodying the church of love finding “the hidden Christ in the Other.”³⁰

Father Quixote’s relation to the “official churchmen” of von Balthasar’s phrase is that Quixote “had reason to be afraid of bishops.”³¹ His bishop considered him as “little better than a peasant.”³² Despite this episcopophobia, Quixote stops to help the bishop of Motopo when his Mercedes broke down, about whom we learn only that his diocese is “*in partibus infidelium*.”³³ The bishop finds him to be his “guardian angel in disguise,”³⁴ suggesting transcendence, *incognito*. Praising Father Quixote’s hitherto unrespected qualities, the bishop says he would like the priest “to go forth like your ancestor Don Quixote on the high roads of the world...”³⁵ The priest replies “He

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 107.

²⁵ John Dadosky, “The Official Church and the Church of Love in Balthasar’s Reading of John: An Exploration in Post-Vatican II Ecclesiology.” *Studia canonica* 41, no. 2 (2007): 453 at p. 454.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 456.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 470.

²⁸ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord* p. 146.

²⁹ Graham Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* New York: Simon & Schuster 1982 p. 167.

³⁰ Dadosky, “The Official Church” p. 470.

³¹ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 16.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.* p. 17.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 18.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 25.

was a madman, monsignor.”³⁶ The bishop's significant reply is, “so many said of Saint Ignatius.”³⁷

Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno inspired Greene's reference to Ignatius. Leopoldo Duran tells us that *Monsignor Quixote* was born when he and Greene visited Unamuno's grave in Salamanca.³⁸ He notes that Greene “knew almost by heart” Unamuno's *Life of Don Quixote and Sancho*, which is a chapter-by-chapter reconstruction of Cervantes' novel. Within Greene's novel, Professor Pilbeam, the scholar of Ignatius, discusses the saint with Trappist Father Leopoldo, and they talk about the “romantic” nature of St. Ignatius. The Trappist remarks, referring to Unamuno, “You know that one of our great modern philosophers compared Saint Ignatius to Don Quixote. They had a lot in common.”³⁹

In that context, it is also well to remember that in his 1980 autobiography, *Ways of Escape*, Greene wrote:

My wasteland is inhabited by the pious ‘suburbans’ of whom I had too carelessly written—I had not meant the piety of simple people, who accept God without question, but the piety of the educated, the established, who seem to own their Roman Catholic image of God, who have ceased to look for Him because they consider they have found Him. Perhaps Unamuno had these in mind when he wrote: ‘Those who believe that they believe in God, but without passion in their hearts, without anguish of mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe only in the God Idea, not in God himself.’⁴⁰

The timing of Unamuno's influence on Greene, alluded to in this excerpt, is a matter of some interpretation, but it seems clear that Greene and Unamuno were thinking along the same lines even before Greene had read deeply in the works of the Spanish philosopher. In his autobiography, he says that he had not read *A Tragic Sense of Life* at the time he wrote *A Burnt-Out Case*, which was published in 1960, though he had read Unamuno's *Life and Death of Don Quixote* years before. Nevertheless, despite what he describes as “making my way with passionate curiosity through works of theology”⁴¹ he finds himself out of sympathy with attempts to rationalize mystery and in agreement with Unamuno's conclusion that proofs for the existence of God only prove

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Leopoldo Durán, *Graham Greene: an intimate portrait by his closest friend and confidant*. San Francisco: Harper, 1994 p. 212.

³⁹ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 206.

⁴⁰ *Ways of Escape* p. 265.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 266.

the existence of that idea of God.⁴² Instead, he says, he found himself “in that tragicomic region of La Mancha where I expect to stay.”⁴³

Unamuno embraces the notion of the holy fool, calling Don Quixote “the Knight of Faith, who with his folly makes us sane.”⁴⁴ He says Quixote shared the same temperament as Ignatius Loyola⁴⁵ and even claims that Quixote had a life of St. Ignatius in his library.⁴⁶ Despite the shared temperament, Unamuno finds that Quixote's madness “was based in sin” because it is “always self-centered”⁴⁷ in seeking his own glory, unlike the Ignatian drive to seek the greater glory of God. Von Balthasar himself finds that Saint Ignatius “shows some strange affinities with Quixote.”⁴⁸ Yet, in his scrutiny of Don Quixote as a holy fool, von Balthasar finds Don Quixote's lasting significance in that at his death “he has to see all his Christian chivalry as foolishness.”⁴⁹ It is only in abjuring his role as the holy fool that he becomes exemplary. Greene transforms Unamuno's narrative by making his protagonist unconcerned with his own glory (and therefore not sinful), but follows Unamuno rather than Cervantes in having his Quixote remain true to his “chivalrous service” rather than disavowing chivalry⁵⁰ and is therefore a more faithful example of a holy fool because he remains both holy and a “fool” to the end.

Father Quixote's Ignatian adventure of “chivalrous service” begins when he gets a letter from his bishop telling of his elevation to monsignor. He recalled that he had never had a letter from the bishop that did not include a complaint.⁵¹ He recalls that “The bishop had called him a fool—a term which Christ had deprecated.”⁵² Quixote is correct that Christ uses the word “fool” in a derisive manner, as in referring to the foolish virgins who do not save enough oil for the return of the bridegroom. Mt. 25:2. To focus on those references is typical of the priest's humility, since it ignores the numerous positive Pauline references to fools such as 1 Cor. 3:18, where Paul says “Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.” Again, in 1 Cor. 4:10, he says “We are fools for Christ's sake.”

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Miguel de Unamuno (trans. Homer P. Earle), *The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho* Spain: A.A. Knopf 1927 p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 13.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁴⁸ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord* p. 174.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 180.

⁵⁰ Unamuno, *The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho* p. 19.

⁵¹ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 28.

⁵² *Ibid.*

After he is created a monsignor, Quixote sets off on his journey as the Bishop of Motopo had hoped, fulfilling the saintly metaphysic as understood by Jesuit Father Caussade (whose book Quixote brings with him) to march off in the direction he is sent, with an Ignatian readiness for anything God may ask. As he does, he packs not only Caussade's book but works by St. Francis de Sales, St. John of the Cross, and Saint Theresa, the very people whom von Balthasar identifies as embodying the metaphysic that defines the holy fool. As he sets forth, Quixote remarks to Sancho that "Indeed I must be a little mad, for I am mocked with the title of monsignor and I am leaving El Toboso in charge of that young priest."⁵³ In the course of that journey, Sancho tells the Guardia that Quixote is "traveling *incognito*" because "He has the kind of humility which is often to be found in holy men"⁵⁴ echoing precisely von Balthasar's observation that the holiness of the holy fool is cloaked, and he travels *incognito*. The main action of the novel is Quixote and Sancho getting to know one another; Quixote's love and catechesis drawing Sancho to faith. As John Desmond puts it, "Greene enacts the Christological movement—the spirit moving mysteriously—in the growing bond of companionship between the priest and the ex-mayor."⁵⁵ As Mark Bosco describes that process: "[Christ] sacrifices himself as a manifestation of presence, of compassion, and companionship."⁵⁶ Quixote brings all three of those qualities—presence, compassion, and companionship—to Sancho, to salvific effect.

This catechesis takes a comic turn when Quixote attempts to explain the Trinity to Sancho using bottles of wine they had brought for their journey. He explains that the three bottles they consumed all contain the same wine; two full-sized bottles and a half bottle. He says that, like the Holy Spirit, the half bottle "gave us the extra spark of life we both needed."⁵⁷ In his humility and reverence, Quixote is later deeply saddened at the thought that he has denigrated the Holy Spirit by representing Him by a half bottle. The two thereupon consume another full bottle to make matters right.⁵⁸

We see Quixote's holy simplicity, an aspect of his humility, when he and Sancho see a blue movie called *The Maiden's Prayer*.⁵⁹ Quixote is attracted by the title, thinking it will be a pious film, yet it is in fact mildly pornographic. Someone worldlier might have foreseen the

⁵³ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 84.

⁵⁵ John F. Desmond, "The Heart of (the) Matter" p. 67.

⁵⁶ Mark Bosco, "Seeing the Glory: Graham Greene's The Power and the Glory through the Lens of Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics." *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2001): 34-53 at p. 39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 50.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 51.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 120.

irony in the title, or seen the warning letter “S” on the movie poster. More telling than this evident naiveté is Quixote's reaction having seen the film. He explains to Sancho that he had to suppress his laughter while watching the movie, in parts of which there is only “the sound of hard breathing and sometimes a grunt or a squeal” to let the viewer know what the poorly-envisaged scene was meant to depict.⁶⁰ Once he learns from Sancho that the film was depicting sex, his reaction was to be “worried by his failure to be moved by any emotion except amusement.”⁶¹ He displays none of the anger one would expect from the institutional church upon encountering such a film. Quixote's reaction instead manifests humility in finding risible this depiction of what he takes to be love, and feels he is inadequate for having found it funny. As Desmond observes, the mercenary exertions captured in this film are not love at all and that, therefore, Quixote's reaction is appropriate.⁶²

Parallel to his development as the holy fool, Monsignor Quixote becomes an exemplar of the church of love. It is axiomatic that the holy fool would exist in tension with the institutional church. Von Balthasar finds a scriptural basis for the church of love in the twentieth chapter of John's gospel. Father Duran tells us:

The scene when Peter and John race to the tomb in Chapter 20 of St. John's Gospel was of great help to Graham's tortured faith throughout his life. He often talked about the chapter to me. For him, the passage had all the indications of absolute veracity. I loved to watch him analyzing it. He read it often, even though he knew it by heart.⁶³

John's Gospel is invoked more than once by Monsignor Quixote and linked by him to the church of love. As he and Sancho make their way to Madrid, they fall into a discussion about hell. He doubts whether a merciful God would send anyone to hell, and then notes that he re-read all the gospels with this issue in mind. He says to Sancho:

Do you know that Saint Matthew mentions Hell fifteen times in fifty-two pages of my Bible and Saint John not once? Saint Mark twice in thirty-one pages and Saint Luke three times in fifty-two. Well, of course, Saint Matthew was a tax collector, poor man, and he probably believed in the efficacy of punishment, but it made me wonder...⁶⁴

This discourse palpably increases Sancho's affection for Quixote. By contrast, Quixote later recalls a conversation he had had with Father Herrera, who as the bishop's secretary is the avatar of the institutional church within the novel. Quixote and Herrera had been discussing Quixote's regret that the post-Vatican II liturgy omitted

⁶⁰ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 121.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 123.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 73.

⁶³ Duran, *Graham Greene* p. 100.

⁶⁴ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 55 (ellipsis original).

certain lines from Saint John's Gospel that had been said at the end of Mass. Herrera dismisses the phrase as "poetry" and opines that "The Gospel that goes by his name is not one of my favorites. I prefer Saint Matthew."⁶⁵ Quixote replies (wary his reply would be recounted to the bishop) that he has always considered Matthew the gospel of fear, based on the number of references to hell. Herrera is not convinced; Quixote tells him, "To govern by fear...surely God can leave that to Stalin or Hitler. I believe in the virtue of courage. I don't believe in the virtue of cowardice."⁶⁶ Quixote goes on to point out the paucity of references to hell in the other synoptic gospels and, almost reluctantly, points out to Herrera that Saint John does not refer to hell at all.

The journey of Quixote and Sancho continues and in Madrid, during a siesta, Quixote dreams that he is present on Calgary and that instead of dying, Christ, with the help of the angels with whom the Devil had tempted Him, comes down from the Cross and is greeted triumphantly as clearly being the Son of God.⁶⁷ Quixote's terror is that by this revelation, Christ has eliminated doubt, and, thus, faith. As Bosco phrases it, "Greene's text is making a very Catholic claim: it is the faith that God is in the reality of Good Friday that allows for the hope of Easter Sunday."⁶⁸

Quixote believes that "Doubt is human."⁶⁹ Sancho had earlier said that Unamuno, by leaving room for doubt, kept him in the church for longer than would otherwise have been the case.⁷⁰ As Patrick Henry put it, "certainty is an illusion that cannot be attained, and those who think they possess it, characteristically devoid of life experiences, exude the complacency and 'bad faith' epitomized by the Bishop of El Toboso and Father Herrera."⁷¹

The reliance on doubt, and the references to Unamuno, have led some to detect a whiff of the heterodox. Graham Holderness, for instance, says that "we are very close indeed to that neutral territory in which antithetical dogmas are reconciled on a shared common ground—here represented by the voice of Unamuno—of what looks very much like existentialism."⁷² We avoid that conclusion through von Balthasar's insights to the holy fool. In his treatment of the metaphysics of the saints, he quotes Father Caussade that "pure, naked, undefiled faith...does not want to know anything; it is thus 'faith in darkness'."⁷³

⁶⁵ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 67.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* (ellipsis original).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 69.

⁶⁸ Bosco, p. 150.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 180.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 99.

⁷¹ Patrick Henry, "Doubt and Certitude" p. 69.

⁷² Graham Holderness, "'KNIGHT-ERRANT OF FAITH':" p. 276.

⁷³ Von Balthasar, p. 133.

In light of that, von Balthasar says: "The Christian rests in this holistic act: God's 'mercy leaves me, instead of certainty, pure hope, which in value immeasurably outweighs certainty.'" ⁷⁴

The tension between Quixote, the exemplar of the church of love, and his local bishop, leader of the institutional church, is a recurring motif in the novel. When the real-life Father Duran tells Greene he sees the bishop as reasonable, Greene replies with three words, "He is Hell." Greene says "The mere gesture of using his white silk handkerchief to wipe the slightest trace of dust from the chair on which he was about to sit beside Father Quixote's bed, said it all..." ⁷⁵ That scene occurs just after the bishop had arranged to have Father Herrera and Doctor Galvan sedate and abduct Quixote and return him to El Toboso. Herrera explains, in response to Quixote's objection, that he was acting on clear instructions from the bishop. ⁷⁶ Quixote responds "*Que le den por saco al obispo,*" which translates roughly as "Bugger the bishop." ⁷⁷ Shortly after that exchange, and Quixote's meeting with the bishop, Sancho, with the help of Quixote's housekeeper Teresa, arranges Quixote's escape, and the resumption of their adventures.

Beatriz Valverde Jimenez views Quixote's response to the bishop, and his decision to resume his adventures, as a transformation, whereby Quixote leaves "his complacent life in El Toboso to become a real Monsignor-errant in defense of a model of the Church quite different from the one existing in Spain at the time." ⁷⁸ In her view, the transformation is completed by the "liturgy" he performs even in the face of a suspension of his priestly faculties, whereby "Father Quixote develops from the complacent and conventional religious shown in his life in El Toboso to become a man of deeper faith, free from conservative bonds." ⁷⁹

Another episode along the journey further places Quixote within a Johannine context. Quixote and Sancho make for Galicia, seeking refuge at a Trappist monastery, and stop on the way, to buy wine. Sancho learns that the best wine is made by Señor Diego, a character based on a vintner Greene and Father Leopoldo Duran, Greene's close friend (whose travels with Greene inspired the novel), would visit on their travels and enjoy wine with under what they called his "biblical" fig tree. ⁸⁰ When Quixote and Sancho go to Señor Diego's vineyard, they

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 134.

⁷⁵ Duran, *Graham Greene* p. 218 (ellipsis original).

⁷⁶ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 155.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 158.

⁷⁸ Beatriz Valverde Jimenez, "If you are afraid, go away and say your prayers": *Monsignor Quixote* as a Thematic Transposition of *Don Quixote*." *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* 38, no. 2 (2018): 81-99 at p. 90.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 96.

⁸⁰ Leopoldo Durán, *Graham Greene: an intimate portrait by his closest friend and confidant*. San Francisco: Harper 1994 p. 158.

approach a table under a fig tree from whence comes “a young man in blue jeans.”⁸¹ Quixote greets the young man as “Father” and the man is surprised to be recognized as a priest, given his casual garb. The fig tree is “biblical” as it echoes the scene in John’s Gospel when Jesus tells Nathanael he knew him from seeing him under the fig tree, and Nathanael comes to believe that He is the messiah (Jn 1:49). This exchange is immediately followed in John’s Gospel with the miracle at the wedding at Cana, and then the cleansing of the temple by Jesus.

Quixote’s recognition of Father Jose under the fig tree affirms that Quixote is divinely inspired, and, indeed, Christ-like. After recognizing Father Jose, Quixote and Sancho are welcomed by Señor Diego, and learn of the simoniac priests among the Mexicans. Incredulous, Quixote is told “Go and see for yourself.”⁸² His anger at seeing the statue of the Blessed Mother carried aloft covered in money, “and right over the heart a hundred-dollar bill”⁸³ speaks to both Greene and Quixote’s devotion to the Blessed Mother, and that devotion precipitates the climax of the novel. The church of love at its core is Marian. As Dadosky pointed out, “the church of love that Balthasar identifies with John must be inextricably intertwined with Mary. In other words, a Johannine ecclesiology must make Mary a central feature just as John takes Mary into his home, so the church of love embodies a love between Mary and John, one of mother and son; one could even add, one of mystical friendship.”⁸⁴

“Was it for this she saw her son die in agony? To collect money? To make a priest rich?”⁸⁵ Rejecting prudence, Quixote stands athwart the route of the procession, telling them to stop the blasphemy. The simoniac priest strikes him in the head with a censor.⁸⁶ Just as the cleansing of the temple by Jesus, with His reference to tearing it down and rebuilding it, foretells His death and resurrection, so Greene uses Quixote’s intervention to foreshadow his kenotic sacrifice, identify him as a “holy fool” heedless of prudence, and places him within the church of love.

III. Monsignor Quixote and The Eucharist

The climax of the novel is a liturgy performed by Quixote after he has been injured and his mental state is unknown, and is the scene that has garnered the most attention in the scholarly literature. Quixote proceeds

⁸¹ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 189.

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 195.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 198.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 462.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 200.

without bread and wine, and dies after placing a “host” on his companion’s tongue with a touch of his fingers. Is this Eucharist “real”? Yves Congar examined what constitutes a “real” liturgy in an essay he began while a German prisoner of war (and, as such, would have lacked wine and hosts). In that essay, he said “A ‘real’ liturgy is one adapted to being internalized, to producing its *res*—its spiritual effect—in the souls of the faithful.”⁸⁷ Similarly, Nicholas Healy’s view of von Balthasar’s Eucharistic theology is that its heart is not the conversion of the bread and wine but the “personal and free exchange of life.”⁸⁸ Von Balthasar points out the kenotic nature of the Eucharist; that it is “at the deepest level, a loving self-surrender or gift-of-self.”⁸⁹

This understanding of the Eucharist is very much rooted in the theology of the *ressourcement*. For example, Henri de Lubac taught that “Nature and the supernatural, the temporal and the eternal, co-inhere.”⁹⁰ For him, the *loci* of that co-inherence are the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and the Church, so that “Eucharist and Church were understood in function of one another, in a dynamic vision which moved from the physical body of Christ raised from the dead, to its mystical presence in the Eucharist, to the ‘true’ Body of Christ which is the Church brought together in and by that Mystery.”⁹¹ To say that the presence is “mystical” is not to say that it is not real. In fact, quite the opposite. As de Lubac wrote, “the Church could not be built up and her members could not be gathered together in an organism which was really one and really alive, by means of a rite which contained only in symbolic fashion Him whose body she was to be and who alone could be her living unity.”⁹²

Monsignor Quixote centers on sacramental concerns from the outset. As Quixote prepares to drive the Bishop of Motopo back to his rectory for wine and lunch—the bishop having just told Quixote that “A glass of wine is essential in my situation.”⁹³—the bishop prepares to crouch his tall frame into the back seat of Quixote’s Seat because there is a jug of wine in the front seat. Quixote offers to remove the “unimportant” wine to make room for the bishop. The bishop replies that “No wine can be regarded as unimportant, my friend, since the marriage at

⁸⁷ Yves Congar, *At the Heart of Christian Worship: Liturgical Essays of Yves Congar*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010 p. 5.

⁸⁸ Nicholas J. Healy Jr, “Christ’s Eucharist and the Nature of Love: The Contribution of Hans Urs von Balthasar.” *The Saint Anselm Journal* 10, no. 2 (2015): 1-17 at p. 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁹⁰ Hans Boersma, “Sacramental Ontology: Nature and the Supernatural in the ecclesiology of Henri de Lubac” *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1015 (2007) 242 – 273, p. 268.

⁹¹ Joseph A. Komonchak, “Theology and Culture at Mid-century: the example of Henri de Lubac.” *Theological Studies* 51, no. 4 (1990): 579-602, p. 592.

⁹² Henri De Lubac, *SJ The Splendour of the Church* New York: Sheed & Ward 1956 p. 111.

⁹³ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 17.

Cana.”⁹⁴ Thus, while Davis is technically correct in saying that none of the abundant wine in the novel is used to say Mass,⁹⁵ Quixote's use of the wine is Eucharistic, as he and Sancho share their simple repasts of wine, cheese, and sausage in increasingly warm communion.

The novel ends with Monsignor Quixote's celebration of the Eucharist. Duran reports that because of a series of discussions with Greene concerning “doctrinal points,” “Greene changes the entire ending of the novel.”⁹⁶ Greene, an avid reader of theology, wanted properly to ground his depiction theologically.⁹⁷ Duran does not identify the theologians whose insights are brought to bear, but Duran does tell us that the two of them ascribed greatness to Rahner, de Lubac, and Congar.⁹⁸ Patrick Query described Greene's view of the sacrament, which “emphasizes the physicality of the Eucharist, it attributes to the body an immense gravity in the formula for receiving divine grace, and it demonstrates the radical synthesis of divine content with earthly form.”⁹⁹ Monsignor Quixote tells Sancho “I don't believe in God. I touch Him.”¹⁰⁰ Greene quoted this phrase from his friend, Father Duran, who said it to him in conversation.¹⁰¹

Quixote, having been injured in a car wreck when the Guardia shoot out the tires of his car, takes refuge in a monastery, where he receives some basic medical care and is sedated. He is given a room where he can rest, but rises from his bed during the night, and is believed to be sleepwalking, but the details of his mental state are left ambiguous. He proceeds to the monastery's chapel and ascends to the altar where he “began to say the words of the old Latin Mass, but it was in an oddly truncated form” and without bread or wine.¹⁰² In observing this scene, Professor Pilbeam, the lapsed-Catholic scholar of Ignatius Loyola, asks the Trappist Father Leopoldo whether Quixote is conscious of what he is doing. Leopoldo offers the pregnant reply “God knows.”¹⁰³

Desmond found that the monsignor's “quest culminates in an ‘imaginary’ mass that seals the bond of love between the two travelers.”¹⁰⁴ He sees that “the Monsignor's journey is a journey into doubt and mystery, especially the mystery of love acting in the world of matter and

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 16.

⁹⁵ Davis, “Figures” p. 26.

⁹⁶ Duran, *Graham Greene* p. 219.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 111.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 112.

⁹⁹ Patrick Query, “God in the Guts: Graham Greene's Hard-Boiled Sacramentalism.” *Lonely Without God: Graham Greene's Quixotic Journey of Faith*: Bethesda: Academia Press 2008 p.173-186 at 177.

¹⁰⁰ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 141.

¹⁰¹ Duran, *Graham Greene* p. 96.

¹⁰² Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 215.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Desmond, “The Heart of the Matter” p. 67.

human relationships.”¹⁰⁵ “The Monsignor’s death is a triumphant affirmation of this higher vision of the material, a tribute to the mysterious power of love that binds Quixote and Sancho beyond the limits of matter, beyond death itself.”¹⁰⁶ He regards this liturgy as “a masterpiece in which the form and substance of the mass—centered on the mystery of transubstantiation—and a primary concern of the novel—the mystery of ‘fact’ *versus* ‘fiction’—coalesce brilliantly to focus on the question of the real.”¹⁰⁷ He observes that this mystery is “signified specifically in the act of communion that seals the bond of love between Quixote and Sancho.”¹⁰⁸ He concludes that this communion ultimately brings Sancho back to the faith.¹⁰⁹ As Father Duran put it, conveying both his and Greene’s thinking on the matter, “Father Quixote’s mission in life was accomplished when he saw his friend kneel to receive communion.”¹¹⁰

Graham Holderness sees Quixote’s liturgy similarly to Desmond. He suggests that Quixote’s use of Latin is not an instance of “strict Tridentine conservatism”¹¹¹ but rather a fond memory of years of celebrating Masses. Holderness argues that “As far as Monsignor Quixote himself is concerned, his sacerdotal powers of consecration remain undiminished by injury, unconsciousness or ecclesiastical sanction.”¹¹² He notes approvingly¹¹³ Father Leopoldo’s remark, “Do you think it’s more difficult to turn empty air into wine than wine into blood? Can our limited senses decide a thing like that? We are faced with an infinite mystery.” Holderness concludes:

The suggestion is not despite Greene’s description of himself as ‘a Protestant in the bosom of the Church’ that the liturgy traditionally based on a belief in such doctrines as transubstantiation and real presence, has been diluted into a symbolic ritual; but rather that in the ‘extraordinary circumstances’ within which believers still, inevitably, find themselves, the presence of God either is or is not a substantial reality, in no way dependent on accidental contingencies such as precise adherence to liturgical formulae and ritual practices.¹¹⁴

Holderness prescinds from any theological analysis of the orthodoxy of Greene’s portrayal, but notes that during the period he wrote this,

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 68.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 74.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 76.

¹¹⁰ Duran, *Graham Greene* p. 218.

¹¹¹ Holderness, “‘Knight-Errant of Faith’ at p. 263.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.* p. 264.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Greene had returned to the sacraments and eventually received last rites from Father Duran.¹¹⁵

Eric Ziolkowski does not see this liturgy as being truly sacramental. He says “The scene culminates when Father Quixote gives the Catholic Communion to the Marxist mayor with a nonexistent Host, addressing him as *Compañero* (the codeword of the Communist party), while the mayor kneels and accepts the invisible Host on his tongue.”¹¹⁶ Ziolkowski calls it a “bizarre sacramental act”¹¹⁷ that he says is “a symbolic bonding of the two protagonists’ selves”, because, he says, Quixote uses “*compañero*” as communist code. However, more than once Sancho notes that the communists refer to each other as “comrade,” not *compañero*. As I discuss at length below, Father Quixote uses the latter term in a specifically Eucharistic sense.

Brannon Hancock takes a similar view to Ziolkowski. As Hancock describes it, Quixote “consecrates an imaginary wafer and chalice, and then extends this imaginary communion to his companion, an atheist, who kneels and receives in an act not of faith but of friendship.”¹¹⁸ We already see a different approach from Desmond, since Hancock does not put “imaginary” in quotation marks. Hancock goes on to ask “Where is the ‘real presence’ in this imaginary eucharist, shared between a defrocked, delirious priest and an atheist?”¹¹⁹ Note that *real presence* is in inverted commas but *imaginary* is not. He says that the “imaginative (which is perhaps not to say *imaginary* after all) eucharist becomes for the unbeliever a true sacrament in his communion with and remembrance of his friend the priest, and in the possibility of salvation extended not *in spite of* but *by virtue of* imagination.”¹²⁰ By virtue of that analysis, Hancock concludes that we have entered an era he calls “*post-ecclesial*,”¹²¹ in which we do not so much have faith as a “willing suspension of our disbelief.” He avers that when “Catholic theologian William Cavanaugh suggests that, ‘The Church does not simply perform the Eucharist; the Eucharist performs the Church’”¹²² that Cavanaugh “is certainly taking a cue from John Zizoulas” in the belief that the Eucharist is best understood “as a community and not as a ‘thing’.”¹²³ Such an understanding, post-ecclesially, finds that the sacrament is “a sort of sacred pool into which we dip our cup.”¹²⁴ He

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 271.

¹¹⁶ Eric Ziolkowski, *The sanctification of Don Quixote: from hidalgo to priest*. University Park: Penn State Press, 2008 p. 235.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Brannon Hancock, “Pluralism and Sacrament” p. 266.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* Emphasis original.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.* p. 268.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

goes on to assert that going to the cinema is a similarly quasi-religious activity in the post-ecclesial world,¹²⁵ and describes the “rapture” experienced by the movie-goers.¹²⁶

This post-ecclesial understanding of the Eucharist is precisely the dilution into symbolic ritual that Holderness (correctly, in my view) argues that Greene rejects. We need only think of the rapt silence of the movie-goers who attend the porn film *The Maiden's Prayer*¹²⁷ to imagine what Greene would think of likening that activity to receiving the Blessed Sacrament.

These scholars all allude to the “communion” of friendship between Quixote and Sancho as being *similar to* the Eucharist and to be found in the “imaginary” Eucharist enacted by Quixote. For Congar and von Balthasar, the *heart* of the Eucharist is the self-giving love it re-enacts. To the extent Cavanaugh wants to take a cue from Catholic theologians, the cue would be from Henri de Lubac saying that the Church *makes* the Eucharist and the Eucharist *makes* the Church.¹²⁸ The verb for de Lubac is “make” rather than “perform.” The Blessed Sacrament is not a pantomime or playacting. The phrase “the Church makes the Eucharist” is specifically based on the belief that ordained priests who say the words of consecration over bread and wine *make* the sacrament occur. As de Lubac put it, “The Church produces the Eucharist, and it was principally to that end that her priesthood was instituted.”¹²⁹ Their larger point is that the sacrament is not limited to that “making” but the Eucharist constitutes or brings into being, i.e., “makes,” the Church. De Lubac avers that “Eucharist and Church were understood in function of one another, in a dynamic vision which moved from the physical body of Christ raised from the dead, to its mystical presence in the Eucharist, to the ‘true’ Body of Christ which is the Church brought together in and by that Mystery.”¹³⁰ As Father Leopoldo notes in the novel, “We are faced by an infinite mystery.”¹³¹ Through that mystery, Quixote's Eucharist is ecclesially constitutive rather than post-ecclesial.

These theologians never neglect the importance of the consecration of the physical bread and wine by an ordained priest. Bosco points out, in his monograph on Greene, that for von Balthasar, God's presence in the world comes through kenosis.¹³² In that light, he says that “Quixote enacts a final kenosis of himself in the very words of the liturgy that

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 271.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 272.

¹²⁷ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 123.

¹²⁸ De Lubac, *Splendour* p. 92.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 93.

¹³⁰ Joseph A. Komonchak, “Theology and Culture at Mid-century: the example of Henri de Lubac.” *Theological Studies* 51, no. 4 (1990): 579-602 at p. 592.

¹³¹ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 220.

¹³² Bosco, *Graham Greene's Catholic Imagination* p. 152.

make Christ sacramentally present.”¹³³ Bosco notes that when Sancho feels Quixote's fingers “like a Host, on his tongue,”¹³⁴ Quixote is acting *in persona Christi* and he “becomes that tactile presence himself, the ‘Christ form’ that touches Sancho.”¹³⁵ Sancho senses that in kneeling and saying “*compañero*” he has assented to something in a deep way, that adopting that term carries for him the same weight it did for Quixote. Yves Congar has pointed out that the Eucharist is not complete without the “amen” from the congregation. In a formulation that speaks to our ability to see the term “*compañero*” as Sancho's *amen*, Congar writes that in the *amen* “the organism of fraternal harmony to which the presence of the Lord has been promised is realized. *This is a mystery that goes beyond any question of juridical validity; and it achieves the very objective of liturgical action, namely, the glorification of God and the sanctification of the faithful.*”¹³⁶ my emphasis

Sancho objects that he is an unworthy communicant¹³⁷ who has not been to confession in thirty years. Father Leopoldo reassures him that Quixote knew his state of mind and unhesitatingly urged him to take the host.¹³⁸ Leopoldo recalls “I distinctly heard him say, ‘Kneel, *compañero*.’”¹³⁹ As he drives away at the end, Sancho feels that the love he had come to feel for Quixote continues to grow. Precisely as the Eucharist makes the church, the kenosis of this holy fool has brought Sancho into the kingdom that Quixote promised.

As I write this, the world is in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, and public Masses have largely been eliminated for health reasons, including the Holy Week and Easter liturgies of the Vatican itself. In their place, Catholics are live-streaming Masses on the internet, and notions of “ocular communion” and spiritual communion expand our notion of what a Mass is and how one might share its grace. We can recall that in the twelfth century, to combat heresies that denied the Real Presence, the church created what became known as the major elevation, wherein at the moment of consecration the priest raises the consecrated host above his head (bear in mind he would consecrate the host with his back to the congregation), so that even merely viewing the host from a distance aroused the devotion of the faithful and was even the occasion of miracles.¹⁴⁰

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 227.

¹³⁵ Bosco, *Catholic Imagination* p. 152.

¹³⁶ Yves Congar, *At the Heart of Christian Worship* p. 62 (emphasis mine).

¹³⁷ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 219.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 220.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Gerard G. Grant, “The Elevation of the Host: A Reaction to Twelfth Century Heresy.” *Theological Studies* 1, no. 3 (1940): 228-250.

IV. A New Theology: The Ecclesiology of Friendship

This novel represents a break-through for Greene's ecclesiology, to the extent a novelist can be said to have such a thing. By showing both Quixote and Sancho transformed by their friendship, and both brought closer to God by the transformation, Greene has followed the depiction of the church of love to its proper conclusion in ecclesiology. Dadosky refers to an ecclesiology that is characterized by what he calls authentic mutual self-mediation, in which the church not only teaches but also learns. It is based on and grows out of communion ecclesiology that was developed by *ressourcement* theologians Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac,¹⁴¹ but instead of the focus on our communion with each other as Catholics as featured in communion ecclesiology, the ecclesiology of friendship arises from our communion with the "other."¹⁴² He says "Learning involves a mutual self-mediation and it presupposes that one cannot truly learn without being changed, enriched, and challenged."¹⁴³ Significantly for our purposes, Dadosky finds that this ecclesiology has Ignatian roots, "in the spirituality of the Ignatian principle of 'finding God in all things.'"¹⁴⁴ This ecclesiology is a major change, theologically, from two of Greene's earlier priests who are featured characters, the whiskey priest in *The Power and the Glory*, and Father Leon in *The Honorary Consul*.

When the whiskey priest says Mass in a hut in his village, it is clear that despite his sinfulness and his new-found humility, he is standing above the peasants who make up his congregation. Despite knowing that the police are on the way and only a mile off, he proceeds with his homily. Told that they are a mile off, he reckons that if they are on foot in the jungle, he will have twenty minutes to conclude the Mass.¹⁴⁵ Despite the knowledge of his impending peril, "He began the prayer for the living: the long list of the Apostles and Martyrs fell like footsteps—Cornelii, Cypriani, Laurentii, Chrysologi—soon the police would reach the clearing where his mule had sat down under him and he had washed in the pool."¹⁴⁶ He then says the words that Quixote would say years later, "*Hoc est enim Corpus Meum*"¹⁴⁷ with the

¹⁴¹ See, e.g., Dennis M. Doyle, "Journet, Congar, and the roots of communion ecclesiology." *Theological Studies* 58, no. 3 (1997): 461-479, and "Henri de Lubac and the roots of communion ecclesiology." *Theological Studies* 60, no. 2 (1999): 209-227.

¹⁴² John Dadosky, p. 457.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ John D. Dadosky, "TOWARDS A FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGICAL RE-INTERPRETATION OF VATICAN II." *The Heythrop Journal* 49, no. 5 (2008): 742-763 at p. 752.

¹⁴⁵ Greene, *The Power and the Glory* p. 96.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 97.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

result that “God was here in the body for the first time in six years.”¹⁴⁸ That statement, while a valid way to emphasize the Real Presence in the Eucharist, serves to privilege the role of the priest and ignores the theological reality that God is present in the bodies of the faithful laity as well. Moreover, his decision not to truncate the Mass results in the police arriving, on horseback, before he has the chance to escape. Because the police arrive, he consumes the consecrated bread and wine, lest they be defiled by the police. Thus, the peasants are denied the communion for which they risked their lives because of this adherence to rubrics.

By contrast, Quixote proceeds rapidly, omitting parts of the Mass, “racing towards the consecration.”¹⁴⁹ His haste is attributed to a fear that he will be interrupted by the bishop (who put him under a *suspensión a divinis*), or the Guardia, that wants to arrest him for causing a riot. “Even the long list of saints from Peter to Damien was omitted.”¹⁵⁰ In this odd detail Quixote’s liturgy inverts the Mass said by the whiskey priest in Greene’s earlier novel. By having the Monsignor omit the long list of saints, he will complete the words of consecration in time to share the sacrament with Sancho, whom he at last refers to as “*compañero*”¹⁵¹ when Sancho kneels at his request as Quixote places the “host” on his tongue and Quixote dies.

In *The Honorary Consul*, Father Leon has left the priesthood to get married and carry on a fight for social justice as a revolutionary. Whereas the whiskey priest in the earlier novel believes that his preaching gives hope to the peasants to help them bear their lot, Father Leon is ashamed of offering that message without the church taking affirmative steps to deal with the physical needs of the faithful while “the old Archbishop we had in those days was eating a fine fish from Iguazú and drinking a French wine with the General.”¹⁵² Rather than valuing what he gave them in the Eucharist, he mocked the lack of nutritional content in the Host, “it’s not so nourishing as a good *chipá*.”¹⁵³ From the standpoint of ecclesiology, Father Leon has put himself outside the church by deciding to get married without having been laicized. Even so, he celebrates a Mass with his captive while the hut he is in is surrounded by the police, in an echo of the whiskey priest’s liturgy. Bosco sees the interplay of Plarr, Fortnum, and Father Leon as a shared ministry and “a perhaps ironic portrayal of the ‘priesthood of all people.’”¹⁵⁴ Taking

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 217.

¹⁵² Graham Greene, *The Honorary Consul* New York: Pocket Book 1974 p. 128.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Bosco, *Catholic Imagination* p. 114.

that as a given, it is still an ecclesiology of the *Ecclesia ad intra* and not the *Ecclesia ad extra* that we find in the ecclesiology of friendship.¹⁵⁵

Quixote's companionship and catechesis bring Sancho to be his *compañero*. As they are driving to the Mexican procession, Quixote tells Sancho he is "inclined to address you as *compañero*, but not yet, not yet."¹⁵⁶ That Spanish word is equivalent to the English word "companion;" etymologically, to break bread together, and is thus Eucharistic. Quixote's "inclination," obviously weighted with significance (hence "not yet, not yet") comes from Sancho's willingness to join him even though Sancho does not yet share the faith Quixote is defending by his intervention. Later, in the monastery, Quixote tells Sancho "Come with me, and you will find the kingdom."¹⁵⁷ Sancho replies "I will never leave you, father. We have been on the road together too long for that."¹⁵⁸ As Bosco points out, it is only after Sancho's "gradual intensification of his commitment to him as both friend and priest" that Quixote is "finally prepared to recognize Sancho as his *compañero*."¹⁵⁹ The Mass occurs after this, and Quixote offers Sancho communion: "*Compañero*," he said, "you must kneel, *compañero*."¹⁶⁰ When Sancho replies "*Compañero*" that is his "amen."¹⁶¹ Bosco finds that the commitment "to each other reveal the depths of true *compañeros*,"¹⁶² and that "both men mediate God's grace through their affection for one another."¹⁶³ This is precisely the ecclesiology of friendship described by Dadosky.

The evolution of Greene's thinking comes forth in his depiction of the three priests. In the first of these three novels, the priest is literally anonymous, and functions as the bringer of sacraments to the almost equally anonymous laity. That he is replaced by another anonymous priest at the end shows not only God's providence but that the clerics are fungible within the structure of the institutional church. Father Leon, by contrast, seems to feel that he has the most to offer by leaving behind his sacerdotal role, and is only reluctantly drawn back to say Mass, at least in part for the status that confers on his wife. Quixote, by contrast, is fully committed to his priesthood but is very much a unique person in communion with and serving other unique persons who bring their special selves to the sacraments. That he does

¹⁵⁵ Dadosky, "Church of Love" p. 457.

¹⁵⁶ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 196.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 214.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Bosco, *Catholic Imagination* p. 152.

¹⁶⁰ Greene, *Monsignor Quixote* p. 217.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Bosco, *Catholic Imagination* p. 152.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

so at least in part through his doubts rather than in spite of them shows the apophatic insight that the mature Greene shares with Unamuno.

V. Conclusion

Monsignor Quixote is Graham Greene's most explicitly theological novel: the action of the novel consists largely of discussions about faith and the church; the main character is consistently Christ-like, and; the climax of the novel only achieves its impact through an understanding of the Eucharist. It is indeed an exemplary novel, showing in full dimension a shepherd who truly smells like his sheep, a holy fool who brings Christ into the world, embodies the church of love, and brings that love to his fellow man sacramentally. By adopting the apophatic approach of so many great saints, Quixote is able, through rather than in spite of doubts, to grow in his faith and bring his *compañero* to faith, as well. We see that trust in God's will in difficult times will allow the work of grace to come to fruition, and that only by coming out to meet the unbeliever can we save him.

Peter J. Comerford
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Pcomerford1@cox.net