

trary to his recommendations, but still usually unavoidably in this country) with particles consecrated at some other Mass.²⁶ And it is, as the Pope also points out, not only with Christ as offering but with Christ as offered that we are identified—'signified and set forth in his state of victim'. It is in this particularly that we may 'discern the body of the Lord' and not 'eat judgment to ourselves' (1 Cor. II, 29).

Yet holy communion is not communion only with the body that was offered, but with the body which is now risen and glorified. It is characteristic of sacrifices, as opposed to magical rituals, that although (or because) they seek no reward and surrender every claim, they are returned, transmuted and divinized, to the sacrificer. And as God showed his acceptance of the sacrifice on Calvary by raising Christ from the dead, restoring his body glorious and immortal, so now he shows his acceptance of our participation in his sacrifice by giving to us, and transforming us into, the body of him who was slain, but who is now the immortal conqueror of death, who lives and reigns in us for ever and ever.



THE MASS AND THE PEOPLE

J. D. CRICHTON

IT might be thought that much, too much, has been said about what the Holy See has for over fifty years called *actuosa participatio* of the people in the Mass, and much of what has been said is often superficial enough. The impression has sometimes been given that all that was required was that you should make the people *vocal*, that it was a good thing for them to be roused, that they should be weaned from 'individualistic' ways of assisting at Mass, that they themselves should say all that the server says, or that they should sing all the plainsong chants of the Mass even when these are not fitted to their capacity. Taken separately most of these things are good in themselves but they do not go to the roots of the matter. The question is: *why* should the people be active at Mass? To answer this question one needs

²⁶ *Mediator Dei*, para. 126.

to consider two matters: (I) the nature of the Mass itself; and (II) the nature of the Christian people.

In an attempt to answer the first it will be well to see what the Mass, as laid out in the Missal, has to say about itself. If a man from Mars took up a Roman Missal and examined it he would see at once that the service contained in it was a social, communal act. There is the constant dialogue between the leader of the service and the participants, there is the constant use of the plural 'we' even in those parts that are silent, there are the rubrical directions instructing the leader to speak loudly, rubrics that still envisage him as turned towards the people, rubrics that call the people 'circumstantes', those standing around the altar. What would not appear is that certain chants are community chants: the introit, the offertory psalm, the hymns like *Gloria* and *Credo*, the prayers like the *Kyrie*, though he would observe that the great prayers, the Collects, are preceded by an invitation to the people and demand their response. If he went to an average parish church in England on a Sunday morning he would, I fear, suspect that he had gone to the wrong place. The leader would be seen to have monopolized all the words and almost all the actions.

Let us suppose therefore that he had been more fortunate and had made his visitation to the earth at an earlier age, in the sixth century, and to the Rome of Gregory the Great. There he would have gone to one of the great Roman basilicas (not yet adorned with Baroque additions). In the midst he would have seen the altar overshadowed by its canopy. Beyond he would see the throne, in front the 'chancel' for the singers, and all around it and the altar, the people. The service will have started with the procession in which the psalm will have been sung, and the Pope with his priests and deacons and ministers will have gone to the altar, passed beyond and behind it to the throne where the Pope will have sat amidst his presbyters who are grouped around him in a semi-circle. Looking across the altar he sees the people, his people, and to them he will address his words. The altar is the visible link between clergy and people. Here you have a picture of the Church: the union of Head (represented by the prelate) and members, the people, all engaged in the one task of giving glory to God through their common offering of the one sacrifice. In this setting is thus graphically set out the ordered hierarchical assembly of which each group has its 'liturgy' to

perform, whether it be the re-enactment of the sacrifice or the preaching of the word or the proclaiming of the Good News or the singing of the psalms. When the bishop addresses the people with his *Dominus vobiscum* they all reply with their *Et cum spiritu tuo*, and their response to the prayer will resound in the church like a clap of thunder, as St Jerome said two centuries earlier.

All this is not mere 'archaeologism' but serves to underline the first point, that the Mass is a community act, the act of a society, however illustrious the celebrant of it. We, in our age, are conditioned by Low Mass, we *think* the Mass in those terms and we have almost to do violence to ourselves to think of it as a common act in which there are different participants with different functions.

This could of course be true of any public 'liturgy', and is true of all sorts of religious services ranging from the essentially tribal (i.e. community) sacrifices of primitive peoples to Evensong in an Anglican parish church. But we must go deeper if we are to find the ultimate justification of an active attitude and participation of the people.

The Mass is a social, community act not merely because it looks like one, not merely because there is dialogue between priest and people, but because it is the principal act of the Mystical Body of Christ. The principal act of Christ's life, that supremely which he came to do, was the redeeming work that reached its climax on the Cross. But in spite of the agonizing and very real loneliness of Calvary, he was dying not as a solitary individual but as the head and representative of the human race. By his incarnation he had made himself not a God appearing among men but indeed and in truth one of us. By his incarnation, as St Leo the Great loved to say, he entered into a union with mankind that *began* at the level of nature, of the flesh. It was through this that he made himself the Second Adam. It was through our human nature that he redeemed man, even if it was the divine Person who gave to his acts their infinite value. And as St Thomas insists all through his treatment of the redemption, it is through our being taken into that corporate sacrifice that its effects are made available to us. Thus the sacrifice of the Cross was essentially a corporate act. It was so wide in its reference that it could be said to embrace the whole of creation. His was a cosmic sacrifice not merely because it stands at the mid-point of all human history, not merely

in the sense that it was the one valid sacrifice of all time, the only sacrifice acceptable to God, the sacrifice by which man and the world are reconciled, re-united to God. It was a cosmic sacrifice because all men and the whole of creation were summed up in the Offerer who drew man and all created things into his sacrifice and distributes to them the effects of his redeeming work. No doubt the duty remains for each succeeding generation to make its own 'the fruits of the redemption', as it is their task to extend Christ's redeeming power to ever-greater areas of the kingdom of this world. Nonetheless, the work in principle has been completed and from beginning to end it was a corporate act involving the whole of mankind.

What is true of Calvary is true of the Mass. We have all been well taught that 'the Mass is one and the same sacrifice with that of Calvary' but we do not always draw all the consequences. For if the Mass, to put it in a slightly different way, makes present to us here and now the sacrifice of Calvary, then it makes present a social sacrifice, what we have called the cosmic sacrifice, and what theologians call the sacrifice of the Church, that is, the sacrifice offered by Christ in his Church. Just as Christ offered on Calvary as the head of the human race, so now he offers himself as the head of the redeemed people of God. He offers as the head of the Church, drawing it into an ever closer union with himself, nourishing, sustaining it, building it up and making it the visible symbol and effective sign of the divine *agape*, of his love, whereby he draws all men to and into himself. His priestly act is perpetuated through the ministry of his earthly priesthood, though as the Holy Father teaches in *Mediator Dei*, the people too have their part in that priestly offering.

The Mass, then, by its very nature, as it flows from the act of Calvary, is a social action, the action of the whole Body, and just as socially in the Body that is the Church the different members have different parts to play, so in the Mass. The Mass, we may say, is essentially an hierarchical offering in which priest, ministers, choir and people *all* have their part to play. In fact it is just that aspect of things, hierarchy, that is the secret of the Mass as a social offering. If the ordained hierarchy were allowed to absorb all the functions of the offering then there would be an imperfect *liturgy*. If on the other hand the people attempted to offer without the priest, then there would be no sacrifice. Even if,

as the Pope teaches, the people thought of him as *their* representative in some way dependent on them, there would be a reversal of the hierarchical order and liturgical confusion. The priest is first the representative of Christ and only through him is he able to be the mediator between God and men.

Nor is it true that the people are just *permitted* to have some part in the offering of the Mass. Their function is based on something that is given them by God, something that is rooted in them as Christians. This is not the place to set out fully the doctrine of the people's share in the Priesthood of Christ which is magisterially expounded in *Mediator Dei* (89-98). But we must recall, however briefly, the foundation upon which the common participation of the people in the Mass rests. The people have a duty to take part in the offering of the Mass not merely because they are called to do so by the Church; they are called to do so by the Church because they *are* something that implies it. By Baptism we are made members of Christ's Body. A truth often repeated but we may ask once again: What does it mean? What does it imply? It means that in the depths of our being we are made like him, we are 'conformed' to him. But what was he? Was he, is he, just some undefined Head of the Church like a chairman or schoolmaster? Christ our Lord is head of the Church primarily as *Priest*, for he called it into existence by the supreme act of his priesthood, namely the offering of himself in sacrifice on the Cross: 'Christ loved the Church and delivered himself up for it . . .' (Eph. 5, 1). So when we are baptized, by the character of that sacrament *we are made like to Christ the Priest*. The Holy Father writes: 'It is no wonder the faithful are accorded this privilege (of offering the Mass); by reason of their baptism Christians are in the Mystical Body and become by a common title members of *Christ the Priest*; by the "character" that is graven upon their souls they are appointed to the worship of God, and therefore, according to their condition, they share in the priesthood of Christ Himself' (*Mediator Dei*, 92). For there is, in the last resort, but one priesthood, Christ's. It is true that, as the Pope has had to insist since the encyclical appeared, there is a specific difference between the priesthood of God's ordained minister and that of the laity; the ordained priest alone has the power to consecrate and offer in *persona Christi*, and the people have the power to join in making that offering. Yet though essentially dependent on the priest they

are nonetheless his true co-operators. *He* can offer alone but they never without him, yet his priesthood and his Mass are not primarily for himself. Just as 'Christ is priest indeed but for *us* not for himself' (*Mediator Dei*, 85), so is the human priest. Even if he offers alone he is always doing a public act, precisely a liturgy. Always (there may be exceptional cases) his Mass must be audible so that the people may take their rightful part. Whether they do or not is another matter; the principle remains.

The Mass then is the common public act of the Church. Christ, the Head of that community, is the principal offerer. The priest is his earthly visible representative. The people, as members of that Body and as sharers in Christ's priesthood, offer with him and his representative. Just as the priest's action is a public one, so is theirs. Assistance at Mass is not a private devotion but the most public act that the layman or woman ever engages in. If then we are to be faithful to the nature of the Mass as the common act of the Body of Christ, if we are to express its sacramental nature as a visible sign of the unity of the Body, it will be seen as *normal* that the people should be encouraged to take an active part by gesture and voice. It is distressing to find that the Dialogue Mass, for instance, should be regarded, at least in this country, as something that may be good now and again by way of exception but that *normally* the people should be silent.

It goes without saying that if we *start* with externals, if we think of the Dialogue Mass as a mere dodge for keeping the people attentive (though of course it does do that and it is important—what more distressing than to find people, especially young people, who are *bored* at Mass, as many are?), if we emphasize the mere recital of words without presenting them to the people as *prayers*, the greatest prayers of the Church, then we shall get a merely external participation, which could leave the people as far away from the action of the sacrifice as that vague and distracted way of assisting which the Pope condemns in his encyclical. As the Holy Father insists, our offering of the Mass must be both an interior offering of heart and life and an external one which, as St Augustine said, is the *sign* of the interior sacrifice. *Both* are necessary. There is a natural and understandable anxiety to secure the interior offering without which our worship would be an empty show of the sort condemned again and again by God's prophets in the Old Testament. But once that requirement

is safeguarded, it must be said as a matter of experience that where the practice of, for instance, Dialogue Mass is the habit of a congregation or community, there the appreciation and love for the Mass grow day by day. For when the Mass is *seen* for what it is, as the visible and effective sign of the Church's sacrifice, it becomes its own best teacher and formal instruction on it infinitely easier as well as less necessary.

There is another aspect of the people's share in the Mass that is sometimes overlooked in talk about active participation. It is a matter that takes us far deeper than discussions of the practicability or not of Dialogue Masses or of the people's singing of the Mass. Of the many names the holy Eucharist had in the early Church, that of 'Banquet', 'Repast' or 'Meal' predominated. The early Christians could never forget the Last Supper and it was this that was in St Paul's mind when he wrote about the Eucharist and spoke of the one Bread that makes us one Body. The *effect* of the Eucharist, said St Thomas, is the union of the Mystical Body, and this is most strikingly achieved in the act of holy Communion. This gives to the people their deepest and most active participation in the Mass. Here they are united immediately with Christ and through him with their fellow-members, especially with those in church with them, and with their brethren throughout the world. It is true that in this country the abuse of habitual reception of holy Communion outside Mass seems hardly to exist, but it is still true, I think, that it is regarded for the most part as a *purely* individual act in which the private colloquy between Christ and the soul is the only thing that is important. Nothing should be said to lessen the importance of that contact, but likewise we may not overlook the other aspect, the social aspect as it is sometimes called, though that expression hardly does justice to the sublimity of the truth it covers. For union implies love, and the effect of holy Communion should be the generation of an ever more enveloping and active love of our neighbour. It may be that the spiritual dryness that often afflicts daily communicants comes from their failure to realize the full richness of what they are doing. If they would bring *into* their Communion all the needs and sufferings of their friends and fellow-members of the Church, lay them, so to say before Christ our Lord, there would be no question of 'drying up', and what some may regard even as 'distractions' would become the theme of their prayer.

But in any case where you have a *full* participation in the Mass, there the spirit of charity is generated. Where people have learned to pray together and to sing together, where, consciously aware of the tremendous banquet of which they are partakers, they go to the altar together *as a community*, there you have an active charity, a sense of service, the beginnings—as it is the foundation—of all that we mean by the apostolate of the laity.

It is difficult to suppose that after all the pronouncements of the Popes since St Pius X there is any difference of opinion about the desirability of what for want of a more elegant term we must call the 'active participation' of the laity in the Mass, and the liturgy generally. Nor have they remained merely pronouncements: they have been translated into the practice of the liturgy by the *New Order for Holy Week* where, as everyone knows, the people are required by the rubrics (that is, the voice of the Church) to respond to the celebrant's invitations. It is true that the Holy Father in *Mediator Dei* left a wide liberty to the children of God, but what is clear is that he was putting in a word of warning against methods of regimentation and a crushing uniformity that would not be for the good of souls. But even where he maintains that other methods than those of 'active participation' are used, he assumes that these methods will be *ways of offering the sacrifice*. His letter nowhere gives countenance to the view that 'it doesn't matter what the people are doing' or 'leave them alone', even if what they are doing bears no relation to the Mass at all. Nor would it be just to take this isolated statement as the expression of the mind of the Holy Father. On several occasions he has not only endorsed the aims of the Liturgical Movement, which strives the world over to promote a more active participation, but he has constantly exhorted pastors of souls to instruct the people in the Mass and to do their best to make it the centre of their lives.

In fact, in *Mediator Dei*, the Pope envisages five principal ways by which the people may take their part in the Mass and commends them: 'We also approve the efforts of those who want to make the liturgy a sacred action in which externally also, all who are present may really take part' (*Mediator Dei*, III).

(1) First, there is the use of the Missal, a practice so widespread nowadays that there is hardly any need to say more about it. But it would be as well to say that this practice is the result of the

early phase of the Liturgical Movement and the credit should be given to it. No doubt it is not an ideal way and it has been found to foster just that exclusivism it was supposed to correct. Moreover, it can easily degenerate into a word-worship and a chasing of commemorations, which however are now mercifully reduced. A mere 'reading of my missal' will not produce that active and prayerful offering of the Mass which the Church desires all her children to practise. Still, even now, it is a basis, and there is enough experience to show that where a congregation is ignorant of the Missal, instruction in the Mass is a good deal more difficult.

(II) Secondly, 'the whole congregation, always conformably with the rubrics, may recite the responses in an orderly manner' (*ibid.*). In other words, the Dialogue Mass.

(III) The people 'may sing chants corresponding to the various parts of the Mass' (*ibid.*). It should be noted that this does not mean the indiscriminate singing of hymns throughout the Mass, especially of hymns that have no reference to it. There are other regulations of the Church to show that the priest's part must never be overlaid. Almost certainly this passage envisages the practice in certain countries, especially German-speaking countries and those affected by the German tradition (such as Hungary), where the singing of paraphrases of parts of the Ordinary of the Mass is the custom. This ancient custom that goes back to at least Reformation times, the Church wishes to safeguard, and indeed it has taken on a new lease of life since the hierarchies of some of these countries have regularized the chants and in many cases improved them by bringing them into closer relationship with the liturgy. (This is not the place to speak of the German custom of singing vernacular paraphrases during a *sung* Mass. One would merely remark that it is a formally sanctioned practice which, once more, is mentioned in the encyclical *Musicae sacrae disciplina*).

(IV) They may combine this with the Dialogue Mass—as is usually done on the continent.

(V) Fifthly, and above all—for the Pope says in paragraph 113 that the High Mass has a dignity all its own—'at High Mass, the people may sing the responses and join in the liturgical chants'.

Of all these ways only II and V call for further comment. And here perhaps one may be allowed to speak from one's experience. The Dialogue Mass, or as it is sometimes called the Recited Mass, is patient of several interpretations. If we are to get the right

balance there is no doubt that we need to keep well in mind the essential structure of the Mass. Not all in the Mass concerns the people: for instance the prayer the priest says before singing or saying the Gospel. The Mass is the act of a 'hierarchy'; priest, choir, servers and people have different parts to play and by tradition the people's parts are those communal chants that *should* be sung by them at a High Mass, the *Kyrie*, the *Gloria*, the *Sanctus*, etc. There is a vast amount of experience to show that there is no very great difficulty in getting the people to recite these parts with the priest, and that after due initiation they say them with a certain zest and joy. The priest is there to lead them and to keep them together (cf. 'in an orderly manner'), and the whole exercise is a real prayer, the prayer of the community. The objection has sometimes been made that this will 'distract the priest'. Frankly, it is difficult to see how it could, once supposing he has a right attitude towards the Mass itself. If it is *his* Mass which, by some strange dispensation of Providence, the people are allowed to *witness* then it would seem that *anything* the people do will distract him. No doubt if a Dialogue Mass were suddenly 'put on' without practice, instruction or preparation, then he would be distracted with a vengeance. But this would be directly against the mind of the Church who has on more than one occasion insisted that the Dialogue Mass must be done 'in an orderly manner', and for that reason has left in the hands of the bishops the power to grant or withhold permission for it.

So this brings us to the matter of how it is to be begun. It is often said that it is easiest to begin with the simplest responses. It does not necessarily follow. Everyone knows that there is nothing more difficult than to extract a hearty *Amen* from the people. We need, I think, to begin a good deal further back. First, the active offering by the people of the Mass is the act of a community, nothing less than the parish which makes Christ present to a certain group of people who are his members in a given area. If then the sense of community is lacking (as it often is, especially in big city parishes), something has to be done in the way of instruction to help the people to understand that they are a community, 'God's holy people', as the Missal calls them, at Mass, and above all at Mass. This will provide the starting point for instruction on the Mass. It would be a whole programme to suggest how that should be done, but it may be observed that

such instruction can best be given *pari passu* with practice of those parts that express, for instance, the community nature of the Mass. Further, if the most important parts of the Mass (e.g. the Preface-Canon or eucharistic prayer with its previous dialogue), are kept in view in the instruction, then there will be less danger of paying too much attention to minor matters, such as the *Deo gratias* after the epistle.

A graduated scheme might run like this: first, if the people are unused to praying aloud together it might be a good thing to get them to repeat certain prayers (e.g. the *Gloria in excelsis*) in English. This will ensure not only a habit of public praying but will impress the meaning of the prayer on the people's minds. There is nothing new or revolutionary about such a practice; it is often done with children. Secondly, it would be well to concentrate on the short responses and of all these the most important are those before the Preface and the *Amen* at the end of the Canon.¹ This is a good place to begin any instruction on the Mass as we are introduced immediately into the eucharistic theme. To this may be added gradually the 'communal chants', the *Kyrie* (about which there is rarely any difficulty), the *Gloria*, the *Credo*, the *Sanctus* and the *Agnus Dei*.²

To this basic pattern it is possible to add other things. In religious communities, for instance, and in boarding schools there would seem to be no reason why the congregation should not reply to the *Judica*, and say the *Confiteor*. In parish churches the difficulties of the Latin make these parts impracticable and in any case far too much time would have to be spent on teaching them, time that the pastoral clergy cannot spare. Where it is not possible to say these things, experience shows that it is possible and desirable to get the people to recite the *Confiteor* together in English. A further welcome and fruitful addition is the singing of

1 This latter is notoriously the most difficult to obtain, and it is to be hoped that in the coming reform of the liturgy the last part of the Canon from *Per quem haec omnia* will be intoned or said aloud by the celebrant.

2 There would seem to be no rule against the people's saying their *Domine non sum dignus* before Communion, and if we may go by practice which continues over a wide area unproved, it must be said to be at least tolerated. There is no practical difficulty about it and it is obviously highly fitting. It is the *people's* prayer, the one the Church would have them say immediately before Communion. The question of the *Pater noster*, recently debated in the *Clergy Review*, is not so clear and is not mentioned in the reply of S.C.R. of 1935 which regulated the practice of Dialogue Mass. The Restored Holy Week Order enjoins it for Good Friday alone. Until further light is thrown on the matter it is difficult to say that it is permissible for the people to say it with the priest.

hymns or psalm-chants (the latter are very widely used in France). They must be integrated into the action of the Mass and not sung indiscriminately. Thus, first, the hymns must be carefully chosen to fit the season or the occasion. Unfortunately our hymn-books do not as yet provide a sufficiently wide range of suitable hymns,³ yet with a little goodwill and ingenuity (use of the metrical index) some can be found. Secondly, they must be sung at the right places. They should not be looked upon as mere time-fillers or as means to keep the people awake. It does not seem to be generally realized that one of the best places is at the beginning of Mass, a sort of 'introit' hymn that can be sung as the priest approaches the altar, and which can continue until the end of the *Judica*. It will help to create an 'atmosphere' and will positively help recollection as people are always quieter after they have been singing. It is debatable whether the offertory is a good time for a hymn, but if it is sung then it should bear some relation to the Mass itself, and that is where the difficulty lies. There are so few that are appropriate. In any case, it should finish before the dialogue before the Preface. As to a hymn after the Consecration, it is increasingly felt that complete silence during the Canon is the most suitable thing at that time. Even if there is a commentator he should restrict his words to a couple of sentences or so. A hymn at Communion serves to emphasize its communal nature, and if it is one of praise or thanksgiving,⁴ it will actively assist devotion. There are many, very many, who need help at this moment. Finally, a hymn at the end of Mass, especially on the occasion of a general parish Communion, is very much in place.⁵

The value of this pattern can be seen as an enhancement of the communal aspect of the Mass and in the variety of song and word that it provides. To that extent it will serve as a bridge to the full participation in the Sung or High Mass which is undoubtedly the desire of the Church. Nothing marks so clearly the 'hierarchical' character of the Mass as the High Mass when the different functions are visibly shared by priest, ministers and people. There are no doubt difficulties of a practical order—the choice of music including plainsong, and the often limited singing capacity of

³ There is only *one* that mentions the *Mass* in the new Westminster Hymnal (no. 76).

⁴ Or something expressing the sentiments of *Ubi caritas et amor*.

⁵ It must be said that if we could develop the Gélinau psalms, some of which have been adapted by the Grail, it would be much easier to integrate them into the Mass. A vernacular psalm, echoing the introit, is obviously better than the best of hymns.

people who have no tradition of singing—but it is certainly the ideal to be aimed at. It may be remarked here that the '11.0 Sung' is no longer very practical, not so much on account of the difficulties of fasting—if people take an early breakfast they can now communicate at such a Mass—as that most people have to go home and prepare the midday meal. Experience would seem to show increasingly that an earlier hour—9.30 or even 8.30—is often a better one and then the abilities and training of the children can be used. In fact the old-fashioned 'Children's Mass' can form a useful point of departure in securing a more active participation.

The principles of teaching the people how to dialogue the Mass are the same here, except that there may be greater difficulty. All things considered, it may be best to teach individual groups—including the choir, who may need initiation into a more 'communal' attitude to the Mass—and then the nature of the parish as a cell of the Mystical Body will be revealed. All parish groups, whatever they are called, exist to minister to the common good of all, and if this is expressed by their common singing of the Mass, the principal point of unity in the parish, they will be *enacting* what they believe or are supposed to believe. In any case, to attempt to teach a large congregation without preparation or support from such groups is to risk disaster.

It will be seen, then, that 'active participation' is not just an external thing added to the Mass but something that springs from its very nature as the Common Act of the Church in which Head and members are more closely united than at any other moment. That in turn it increases the devotion of the people, promoting in them an active charity in the strength of which they go out and *serve* their brethren, whether Christian or pagan, cannot be doubted, and while, as the Holy Father teaches, the inner, spiritual life of the people is all-important, and while due provision must be made for their personal needs, if they see the Mass indeed and in fact as the centre of divine reality both for themselves and for the community in which they live, they will realize that the life of the Christian is a unity, all flowing from the centre which is Christ.