

The text is also replete with detail which, though at first sight perhaps of more exclusive interest to the liturgical historian, in fact also provides valuable material for reflection by the practitioner of liturgical theology. One such is the intriguing speculation that it was the distinctive form of the *suscipe* in the Dominican rite of Mass, which, in contrast to the Tridentine equivalent, eschews all reference to the Resurrection and Ascension, that led to a certain characteristic caution among Dominican conciliar participants about the desirability of a pronounced emphasis on the entirety of the paschal mystery in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Langevin rightly acknowledges that it is impossible unassailably to demonstrate causal connection here, but he is also surely correct to point out that the coincidence at least suggests a richly symbiotic connection between liturgical formation and doctrinal affiliation.

There is a sense in which *From Passion to Paschal Mystery* raises more questions than it answers, but this is a source of theological stimulation rather than frustration. It would, for example, be fascinating to trace the distinctive contribution made by popular piety alongside that of the liturgy to the development of mid-20th century consciousness of the significance of the Paschal Mystery - a question present to the minds of at least some contributors to the pre-conciliar liturgical movement. There is also much more to be explored and said about the relationship between liturgy and ecclesiology as this was conceived by Pius XII: as Langevin observes in his final footnote, *Mediator Dei* and *Mystici Corporis Christi* would richly repay comparative study. In many such projects on the boundary of liturgical theology and the theology of the Church, Langevin's text might prove a valuable resource.

ANN SWAILES OP

**SIN IN THE SIXTIES: CATHOLICS AND CONFESSION, 1955–1975** by Maria C. Morrow, *The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C.*, 2016, pp. xvii + 264, £68.95, hbk

Morrow's question put simply is 'why did Catholics stop going to confession'? From the 1950s, when it was normal to see long lines of penitents in most parish churches on Saturday evenings, to the 1970s when the practice effectively disappeared in many places – what happened?

She develops a complex answer, parts of which are specific to the American context but most of which are applicable elsewhere. It was, she says, a combination of sociological changes in American Catholicism, changes in the penitential theology and practices of the Church, developments in moral theology particularly in relation to the understanding

of sin, and the crisis of *Humanae Vitae*, that together account for the dramatic change.

As a migrant Church moved from the ghettos to join the American middle classes in their religiously pluralist suburbs, so too the practices of those migrant communities changed. Those practices – confession on Saturdays, fish on Fridays, serious fasting during Lent – had helped to give them a strong sense of identity within, more often over against, the dominant culture. These social and cultural changes impacted on people's sense of identity and on the ways in which they had before felt it necessary to protect the communal identity of a Catholic 'subculture'. Add to that changes coming from the broader culture in which Catholics now moved, through things like the rise of counseling and psychology, shifting notions of sexuality and sexual sin, and a stronger sense of individual freedom.

Another source of change came from within the Catholic community itself. The sacrament of penance was the pinnacle of a spirituality that included a range of devotional and penitential practices. These were interpreted by a theological language that offered an understanding not only of suffering to be accepted and offered up in union with the sufferings of Christ, but also of penances to be freely chosen. The language of reparation and satisfaction, of temporal punishment due to sin, of indulgences and expiation, provided a rationale within which the practice of confession, often of frequent devotional confession, made perfect sense.

Morrow then contrasts the famous handbooks of neo-scholastic moral theology authored by the Jesuits Ford and Kelly with the then increasingly influential personalist moral theology of Bernard Häring. Very quickly the language within which the practice of frequent confession had made perfect sense was replaced with a theological language in which the sacrament was not rejected, but in which its practice was to be more intentional, conscious and free, more meaningful.

It is reasonable to link with that personalist theology of the 1960s Paul VI's instruction on penance issued immediately after Vatican II (*Paenitemini*, 1966) and interpreted in a particular way by the American hierarchy. The values of the day were 'active and conscious participation' on the part of believers, values that were taken to express a more mature and adult faith. Earlier ways of practicing penance and of celebrating the sacrament came to be regarded as immature, even infantile, in the kind of moral responsibility they encouraged and the attitudes to sin and punishment they endorsed.

So changes came in the Church's laws of fasting and abstinence, as Catholics were encouraged not to give up penance but to choose for themselves appropriate penances, encouraged to think of actions that would be positive, such as works of mercy and charity, instead of choosing penances that seemed simply negative or egoistic, such as giving up chocolate or alcohol for a few weeks. Penance was to be more 'meaningful and effective': without being explicit about it Morrow

alerts the reader to the utilitarianism, rationalism and even pelagianism implicit in such aspirations.

What seemed to some like a simple change of discipline, allowing Catholics freedom to choose a penance other than abstaining from meat on Fridays, actually had more radical consequences. This happened on a number of levels. Sociologically it removed one of the most powerful identity markers of a Catholic community, particularly in a minority situation. From being a tribe that ‘does not eat meat on Fridays’ Catholics became more difficult to distinguish from anybody else, mixing in more smoothly with their neighbours without embarrassing and quaint dietary requirements.

At another level – that of confidence in Church authority – the changes in regard to penance had serious consequences. Eating meat on a Friday had been not just a recommended practice but a matter of Church law which provided the grave matter that would make its infringement, carried out with clear knowledge and full consent, mortally sinful. What had been mortally sinful the year before was now not sinful at all. Those whose penance now was to give extra money to the poor, or to visit the sick or prisoners, could have their steak on a Friday without any qualms of conscience. The year before it had been matter for the anxiety, guilt and sometimes scrupulosity that were often taken to characterize ‘the Catholic conscience’.

This paved the way for an even more serious development following on the publication of *Humanae Vitae* (1968). If what had been mortally sinful could become morally acceptable by a decision of the *magisterium*, perhaps other things that had been considered in the same way might also be changed by the same authority. In the American Catholic church there were high expectations of such a change in regard to the use of artificial contraception. One of the fears of the minority group advising Paul VI was that a change in the Church’s teaching would seriously undermine the confidence of Catholics in the Church’s teaching authority. The encyclical’s publication led to precisely the loss of confidence feared by the minority. Priests were sacked and demoted for opposing the decision of the Pope, hierarchies twisted and turned as they sought to present interpretations that would be faithful to the encyclical and yet acceptable to their people, people stopped confessing their use of contraception because they could not be sure what approach a particular priest might take, eventually people stopped confessing altogether as they lost confidence in the wisdom of the Church’s teaching on a matter about which there was agreement in the society at large that it was a matter of personal conscience.

Put all this together, add another forty years of argument about sexual and marital morality, and you get the present situation where the virtue of penance is hardly considered, the sacrament of penance is rarely celebrated, and the language of reparation, contrition and satisfaction is an unknown dialect for most Catholics under the age of sixty.

While Morrow's book is at times repetitive, overall it is a stimulating reflection on a major cultural and spiritual change within the Church. It will prove a valuable resource for any theological reflection on the virtue and sacrament of penance today.

VIVIAN BOLAND OP

**KAROL WOJTYLA'S PERSONALIST PHILOSOPHY: UNDERSTANDING PERSON & ACT** by Miguel Acosta and Adrian J. Reimers, *Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2016, pp. ix + 260, \$57.28, hbk*

Every desire depends on the desirer's understanding of its object and is therefore correctable with an improvement of that understanding. If I desire, on a Friday, to avoid eating meat and am enjoying an egg wrap but subsequently find it stuffed with bacon, I have done what I desire (eaten an egg wrap) but not what I desired at a deeper level. And while not all desires are so easily correctable we can say that desires and actions that are not based on the real truths about their objects are simply not deeply grounded responses of the desirers to those objects.

Some thinkers, and Karol Wojtyla was clearly one of them, take a particular interest in the nature of desire and seek to reach the truth about the human person by reflecting on desire as well as on more 'external' matters. It is no surprise that philosophers who have devoted much time to work in sexual ethics take this approach to the discovery of moral truths. In his classic work *Love and Responsibility*, Wojtyla produced a rich account of sexual ethics influenced by, of course, Thomas Aquinas, but also 'realist phenomenologists' such as Max Scheler. This approach to the subject is little known in England, though interestingly Roger Scruton, in his *Sexual Desire*, fruitfully and refreshingly adopted a similar approach in his defence of a broadly traditional sexual ethic. The attention to sexual desire certainly helped Wojtyla to account for the 'specialness' of this area of ethics, a 'specialness' perhaps not well captured by some of the older moral theology manuals.

Of course, while Wojtyla is especially known for his work in sexual ethics his central philosophical work is *Person and Act* (often confusingly rendered from the Polish as *The Acting Person*). This difficult and challenging work is lucidly explained in a number of engaging chapters by Acosta and Reimers, who do a valuable service in drawing out lines of thought from the man who would go on to become Pope John Paul II. While there is some mention of later encyclicals such as *Fides et Ratio*, one disappointment is the lack of mention of what is arguably John Paul II's most important encyclical, *Veritatis Splendor*, which demonstrates an extraordinary depth of understanding and originality concerning Thomas Aquinas's moral thought.