

# Two Aspects of Liturgy

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Despite the 'liturgical movement', the reform now taking place in the Roman rite, and the considerable efforts made by recent popes to render the Church's worship accessible to all, it would still be possible for an unbiased observer to form something like the following views about Catholic worship in the West, and particularly in English-speaking countries, in the latter half of the twentieth century.

He would find in the first place a system of worship, with the text printed out in the liturgical books of the Roman rite, which had developed from the simple elements whose origins are to be found in the New Testament, the worship of the synagogue and the practice of the primitive Church; he would observe that by study of the history of these liturgical forms it is possible to trace the evolution of the various rites to their present complex form. Thus he would discover a highly developed system of worship which has grown up in the course of some two thousand years. On the other hand, he could hardly fail to observe from the celebration of this worship that very much of it appears to be totally incomprehensible to those using it. Not only the language (though that forms a considerable barrier) but other things as well could confirm him in this opinion. For instance, on a Sunday morning at mass, to see the congregation all kneeling at the epistle (while the celebrant recites it in Latin with his back to the congregation) could hardly fail to produce the impression that, along with other elements in the 'liturgy of the word', it had become a ritual gesture whose real meaning has been lost. On a final analysis, the only conclusion that could be formed would be that most of the fundamental ideas of this liturgy, because never explained to the faithful, and a great number of the rites, because they are foreign to the mentality of modern man, have become atrophied organs in a once living system.

A great many facts could be quoted in support of this gloomy conclusion. Here just one must suffice. It is common knowledge that the worship in common of Christian people ('the liturgy') is opposed or contrasted with their private prayer in many books dealing with these matters, with the result that books are written to show, for example, that any attempt to separate public worship from the 'interior life' is

contrary to the spirit of the liturgy.<sup>1</sup> Yet the real danger is not to be found there; for some centuries the 'interior life'<sup>2</sup> has been presented as something wholly unconcerned with the worship of the Church and various practices have been presented and recommended for performance during the celebration of mass or office. The tendency is still with us today; people are still encouraged to make their meditation during mass,<sup>3</sup> a practice which would prove very difficult if the liturgy were really living. And a whole host of practices could be mentioned—practices that are taken for granted—that show clearly enough that among many of the clergy and laity some of the fundamental assumptions of Christian public worship are wanting.<sup>4</sup>

Some of those thoughts are provoked by two books published abroad dealing with the worship of the Church. The first comes from France. Under the title, *L'Eglise en prière*<sup>5</sup> with Canon Martimort as editor, appeared contributions from thirteen distinguished experts on liturgical matters. The result, although it is called an introduction to the liturgy in the subtitle, is a compendious, authoritative encyclopedia of the worship of the Church in East and West. After a long introduction running to three chapters the first part of the book is concerned with the fundamental realities of liturgy. To this Canon Martimort contributes a long first section on liturgical law, the nature of the Christian congregation and its function, the dialogue between God and his people in worship, and sacred signs. All this is important because it shows clearly that much which is often regarded as unimportant is in reality the expression of a fundamental truth that has been too long ignored.

An example of this is to be found in what is said about the attitudes of the congregation in church. The idea is current in this country that the proper attitude of the congregation at mass is to kneel (at least one popular missal tells them to kneel during the introit at high mass). Canon Martimort makes it plain that 'for the faithful . . . the most fundamental liturgical attitude is standing. In the first place it is a mark

<sup>1</sup>For example, *Liturgy and Contemplation*, by Jacques and Raïssa Maritain.

<sup>2</sup>The nearest English translation of this term is, I suppose, 'personal religion'.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Dom B.C. Butler, *Prayer* (London, 1961), p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>A further example can be added: Cardinal Godfrey's funeral mass, televised with a useful and effective commentary, presented the commentator with an anomaly which he did not attempt to explain, though the reference to what our Lord did at the Last Supper seemed as a result to highlight the omission of the people's communion. This virtual excommunication of the congregation is becoming rarer, but it is still far from uncommon on occasions such as the one mentioned above.

<sup>5</sup>*L'ÉGLISE EN PRIÈRE*, ed. A. C. Martimort, Desclee, n.p.

of respect. But it is more than a mark of respect . . . it is the characteristic attitude of Christian prayer, as is shown by the frescoes in the catacombs, the carvings on the ancient sarcophagi, the writings of the early Fathers, the prescriptions of the Council of Nicaea . . . ' But it is the eschatological meaning which complements and dominates the others. St Basil puts it thus: 'It is not only because risen with Christ, and having to seek the things that are on high, that we call to mind by standing to pray, on the day of the Resurrection, the grace that has been given to us, but because that day seems in some sort the image of the world to come'.

Kneeling was a sign of penance (and for that reason the early Church forbade it on Sundays and during Eastertide) but it was not exclusively penitential; it was also a sign of private prayer. Possibly, the prevalence of kneeling all through mass is an indication of the individualism that is still predominant. The above extracts were given to show that this book continually relates details to principles, even in what might be considered a dry, rubrical section. Leading up to the main part of the book there comes next an important section on the theology of worship (by Canon Martimort, Frs Dalmais, O.P. and Roguet, O.P.). Of this section probably the most important are chapters II and III (Dalmais) on the liturgy and the mystery of salvation. They repeat much that has been said often before in France and Germany though not so frequently on this side of the channel (Fr Charles Davis's *Liturgy and Doctrine* is probably the best summary in English of the fundamental ideas put forward in this section of *L'Eglise en prière*). The rest of the book follows a fairly well-defined pattern. The second part (by N. M. Denis Boulet and R. Béraudy) deals with the eucharistic liturgy proper: it is a history and complete analysis of the rites and prayers of the mass running to upwards of 200 pages. It covers roughly the same ground as Jungmann's *Missarum Solemnia*. The rest of the book deals with the sacraments and sacramentals and the sanctification of time in the Church's year and in the prayer of the Hours, that is the divine office (Dom Salmon).

So bald a summary can hardly do justice to so vast a collection of very useful material; the book is far more than that: it is a scholarly treatise on all aspects of liturgical worship, completely up to date and an indispensable tool for all working in the field.

The second book to be mentioned comes from the United States; it is *The Dynamics of the Liturgy* by H. A. Reinhold.<sup>6</sup> The book is made up of various articles published in periodicals in the U.S.A. between 1938 and 1961. Some of the articles are historical, dealing with the develop-

<sup>6</sup>THE DYNAMICS OF THE LITURGY, by H. A. Reinhold; Macmillan, New York, 33s.

ment of the liturgical movement in Germany and the U.S.A., others are explanations of the seasons of the Christian year, others again deal with points of doctrine in connection with the worship of the Church. Much of the book, if the truth be told, hardly bears republication—it has all been said again many times since Fr Reinhold did so in the columns of *Commonweal*, *Jubilee* or *Worship* . . . yet there are papers in it of enduring value and still urgently needed on this side of the Atlantic. Take for instance the essay on 'The Eucharist and the Liturgy'. In the first part of this Fr Reinhold is concerned with what he calls 'a dangerous inadequacy'. He is referring here to those secondary and deductive truths about the eucharist which are often emphasized to the detriment of the primary realities. 'In the case of many theologians, I say, it looks as if the deduced doctrine of natural concomitance in the holy Eucharist has served to obscure the first and greater things, those which are comprised under the term *vis verborum*, the primary realities immediately visible: the divine food, the sacrifice.'

As Fr Reinhold points out, examination of popular prayer books and sermons and even some theological literature proves how widespread these tendencies have become. 'They even affect the very interpretation of liturgical texts and succeed in misleading men who want to advocate a return to the liturgy.' He cites E. I. Watkin's *Catholic Centre* where at the end of this useful and right-minded book it is suggested that the divine office should be continually chanted before the blessed sacrament exposed: 'Here the secondary has obviously superseded the primary, the derivative the original. The Divine Office is not directed to the Real Presence, but to the Father in heaven; and that is a very important difference, and not just quibbling.' He points out that it is probably through legitimate defence of Christ's real presence against erroneous ideas that we have to such a large extent lost the 'liturgical and active attitude towards the Blessed Sacrament' and have acquired instead 'A sort of intellectual and quietistic contemplation of concomitant facts'.

In another essay ('Liturgy and Devotion') Fr Reinhold points out that the kind of dogmatic theology, inspired by the controversies of the last few hundred years, is not 'helpful in establishing a sounder relationship between the subject, the sign of the sacrament, and the object of its signification. The Real Presence is the thing that impresses our popular piety. The person of Christ in its static values, his humanity in its historical aspects, and sometimes a bold disregard of what St Thomas said so clearly, that Christ is in the sacrament *non tamquam in loco sed tamquam in sacramento*, not as in a place but as in a sacrament . . . all these

are the things above the surface of our eucharistic consciousness, while the real foreground facts have sunk to the bottom of professional theological books and official statements of doctrine'.

Gradually we seem to be regaining lost, or perhaps it should be said, overlaid aspects of our worship; the emphasis is gradually shifting from the periphery to the centre of the mystery. But there is still need for books dealing with the whole concept of worship, the eucharist in its primary and fundamental aspect of meal and sacrifice and the sacraments not only as affecting what they signify and working *ex opere operato*, but as acts of Christ in the Church and as essential parts of her worship rather than as individual occasions of grace. Fr Reinhold's book, despite the ephemeral nature of some of it, is useful for its emphasis on these fundamental matters.

## St Bartholomew of Farne

SISTER FELICITY, P.C.C.

Any man who can endure the rigours of a British summer on the island of Farne deserves to be venerated as the patron of all Britons who year after year, with unquenched optimism, pack up their beach-wear, and children and buckets and spades and sun-tan lotion and dark glasses, to spend a week or two on the coast of their sceptred island, clad in mackintoshes and regretting that they did not decide to take their holiday in November.

But Bartholomew spent no less than forty-two years, winter and summer, on that tiny island off the coast of Northumbria and though there is no evidence that he was ever accorded any liturgical cultus, he left a reputation for holiness and miracles and acquired the title of Saint. And this it seems to me was very well earned for it is one thing to model your life on that of the Fathers of the Desert in the climate of the Thebaid and quite another to try these tactics on a cold slab of rock in the North Sea.

Bartholomew was born at Whitby, probably around the year 1120...