

of heart, leaving self to be in the hands of God. 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit.' A tranquillising prayer not only to be made at the day's end, but during our work. I must clamber up out of the world up to a greater sense of God's will, not as it is done on earth but in heaven. We just want to do what God wants, no less, no more, safe in the shelter of his hands. Sometimes in a wood we come to a deep unused quarry. The wonderful stillness affects us even as we stand and watch the still water in its depths. There is always something so restless about the sea, always restlessly stretching out its arms, but in the quiet waters there is something of peace. (God is the clear pool, tranquillising our souls. Looking in that deep well and finding silent peace, may he help us.

Mass and our meditation will help us also to find that peace—untroubled and clear, in the world held by him and his unmoved strength finding peace. Silent in the heart we shall hear him speak and so silent *shall* we hear.

LITURGICAL PRAYER

BY

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It is almost a truism to say that a creature's primary duty is to glorify its creator, a duty fulfilled by the creature's being itself to perfection. The Lauds canticle, *Benedicite*, is an expression of this idea, the whole of creation singing a hymn of praise to God. But man occupies a special position in this choir, in that, of all its members, he alone is free in offering his praise. All carry out this work by living according to the nature God has given them—the animals, the trees and flowers, the very sticks and stones—but it is of their nature to be incapable of anything else. It is of man's nature to be free, and so his praise of God must be voluntary, if it is to be truly human. He has only two alternatives, either to glorify God by choosing to worship him, or to insult him by refusing. That is why man's service of God is meritorious, and his neglect blameworthy.

No human act need be excluded from this idea of worship. As St Paul says: *Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Cor. 10. 31.) But although there are in every part of life possibilities of Godward living, man's purest worship must be offered by those faculties which are peculiar to him, the intellect and the will. These faculties, indeed, can be used in different ways for God's glory. But man reaches his greatest perfec-

tion when they are brought to bear directly on God, that is to say, when he prays, and when the power to practise habitual virtue, to live a holy life, is derived from this intimate contact with God. There we have man at his best, the complete man, the realisation of the eternal idea of man in the infinite intelligence of God.

The most noticeable characteristic of this Godward life is that it is essentially personal. Man's approach to God must be an individual movement. There is no such thing as mass-salvation. By reason of the freedom of his will and the fact that no power outside him can determine his will towards any object, every man is responsible for his own actions, and he alone is immediately responsible, even though others can influence his decisions. So true is this that a man living in a religious community dedicated to the public worship of God derives little credit for his life, unless he personally as an individual enters into the spirit of that worship. The fact that the other members succeed to perfection in realising the object of the community will not necessarily achieve anything in him. In the matter of achieving the purpose of human existence, salvation, only two persons are of ultimate importance, God and the individual. And therefore a man's highest perfection is reached in his own individual prayer. It is not the degree of prayer which matters so much as the extent of his own personal co-operation with grace. This reflects his perfection, and will overflow into his less exalted actions, producing perfection in them.

But man is more than an individual. He is also a member of a race. He cannot escape from that membership, it is natural to him. Therefore it is the source of certain responsibilities. Just as the individual creation of every soul causes the duty of individual worship of God, so also the corporal creation of all men in Adam causes the duty of corporate worship. Each of these duties is imperative, for each rests on a real foundation. But in addition to this natural racial unity of mankind, there is also a supernatural unity, which has its cause in the universal redemption of man by the death of Jesus Christ. He is the second Adam, and by the creative power of the redemption he intends that all should share in the supernatural life which flows from him into the members of his mystical body. Grace is a reality, and causes a real unity among those who possess it. It is therefore the source of real duties, among them that of corporate worship. Thus there are two foundations for this duty, one natural, the other supernatural. Grace perfects nature and elevates it to a higher order.

The duty of individual worship, as we saw, is satisfied by prayer. How is the duty of corporate worship to be fulfilled? It is by the liturgy, public prayer controlled and directed by the authorities of the Church, whose function it is to guide the life of the mystical body of Christ. And because this supernatural body is created by the

power of the redemption, it is most suitable that its prayer, the liturgy, should consist in the sacramental renewal of the act of redemption, surrounded by the divine Office and, flowing from it, the administration of the sacraments by which life is diffused through its members. Every member of the mystical body has a part to play in the liturgy, simply because he is a member; but the part will vary according as he is a lay or a clerical member, using the word clerical as applying to all who are officially deputed to engage in liturgical worship.

Broadly speaking the layman's part in the liturgy is to receive the sacraments, as opposed to administering them.¹ But since the common use of the word *liturgy* is more or less limited to the Mass and the divine Office, we must consider the laity in relation to these most obvious parts of the liturgy. How should the laity join in the sacrifice of the Mass, especially when it is celebrated in conjunction with the Office? The act by which they most fully associate themselves liturgically with the sacrifice is the communion. When the priest has consumed the sacred species, the laity unite themselves with his offering by doing the same. Thus the sacrifice is completed by all. It must be admitted that only rarely are they able to participate fully when the Mass is surrounded by the splendour of the Solemn Office, or even in an ordinary high Mass. But the same principle applies at a low Mass. The point of contact between priest and laity is the Communion, and the answer to the question: how often should the laity receive Holy Communion?, is simply: whenever they assist at Mass. The Mass is designed with that in view.

The question naturally arises here as to the proper method of the laity's assistance at Mass. The answer must clearly be: whatever method enables them to communicate in the best possible dispositions. It will therefore vary with individuals, since dispositions are subjective. For some it will be following the Mass with a missal, for others the recollected following of the actions taking place at the altar, for others even the recitation of private prayers or the Rosary. Objectively, however, the proper method may be summed up as adding their *Amen* to the prayers recited by the priest, that is to say, in a low Mass, the Dialogue. According to the present custom the laity are represented by the server in his responses, and he also adds to this representative office the performance of purely clerical functions. At a solemn Mass similar proper assistance consists in singing the responses, the common, and indeed the proper of the Mass; whereas today, more often than not, a concert choir represents the

¹ Of course there is another aspect of the sacraments which is not precisely liturgical, and in this all are concerned, clergy and laity alike. But it is outside the scope of this essay.

laity in these offices. It is only in small groups and religious communities that the Dialogue Mass, either with music or without, can be regarded as a practicable possibility. But even when the ideal can be realised the subjective aspect cannot be ignored, namely entering into the spirit of the prayers of the Mass, so that each person assisting is offering in his heart the sacrifice which the priest is deputed to offer sacramentally in the name of all.

The principle underlying this method of assistance at Mass applies also to the public Office. The laity's part, when they are present, is to make the responses. But the practical difficulties here are greater even than with the Mass. In the private recitation of the Office the laity's part can only be private, for they have no official delegation to pray in the name of the Church, as have priests and professed religious. Except when they are playing their own part in a public liturgical office, they pray officially only in their own name. The exception is that members of one of the Third Orders, which impose an obligation of some sort of Office, pray in union with the Order to which they are attached, and therefore in the name of the Church. The private capacity of the laity however does not mean that they may not recite the divine Office. It is a great prayer apart from its liturgical aspect. They can moreover have a private intention of praying in the name of all men, and their prayer can be of great value to the mystical body. But as far as the Church is concerned it will always be private, that is non-representative, prayer. The principal public good produced by the laity reciting the Office is that it gives them a deeper understanding of the liturgy.

The full significance of liturgical worship is seen, however, when we consider the carrying out of corporate worship by those who have the official duty of engaging in public liturgical prayer. Let us consider in general the celebration of the solemn Mass, for this is the central point of the liturgy. Here we have a priest, his ministers and servers of various sorts engaged in a composite religious action, an action governed by innumerable rubrics designed to give it dignity and uniformity. These rubrics are simply the directions given by the Church in satisfaction of her duty to see that the worship offered to God by the human race, which is at least in the intention of its Redeemer co-extensive with his mystical body, is offered in a suitable manner. What is it that the individuals performing this sacred action are intending to do? Their intention is to offer worship as the representatives of their fellow-men. It is not as individuals, as particular men, that they pray, but rather as portraying universal man at prayer. And that fact gives the key to the sort of dignity which is suitable to liturgical worship. It is not the dignity of any individual, however dignified he may be. It is the dignity of the ideal man, of a

personification of that common nature in which all men share. This is not an idea easy to capture, still less to portray; but it is of great assistance in realising the aim in view to remember that all individual peculiarities are lacking from the idea of universal man. A universal idea is general, and so the idea that has to be formed is of man with no particular mannerisms and personal tricks of voice and movement. It is the embodiment of this idea, as being truly representative of all men, that is the proper subject of liturgical worship. And so the details of the rubrics have a purpose. They may on occasions be trying to human nature, but their aim is to suppress individual characteristics in order to bring out more clearly in those who perform the liturgy the picture of the universal man. Thus in a well-conducted solemn Mass voices are controlled so that in the choral parts one does not predominate over another; actions are formalised so that no one hurries, and those moving together walk in step; the distinctions between the various sorts of bow are observed; the Epistle and Gospel are not shouted, nor yet made inaudible; and especially the actions of the priest at the altar, which by reason of their familiarity are prone to admit personal idiosyncrasies, will follow the directions of the rubrics to the detail. The whole tone of the liturgy in fact is that of discipline and control, for it is only by such means that the individual can be kept in the background and the idea of universal man at prayer emphasised. It is not surprising, therefore, that the monastery is the special home of liturgical worship. The whole of the monastic life is a life of discipline, and it is reflected in the manner in which the liturgy is performed. For those not disciplined by a conventual life in their ordinary actions this ideal in liturgical actions is difficult to realise. But it should be the aim of the worshipper wherever the liturgy is carried out, even in the humblest parish church. Those who are assisting should be conscious of the control exercised by those performing the acts of worship.

It would be unnatural, however, to carry out the liturgy as if the ministers were automatons. While they are praying as representatives of others, they are still individuals, and they cannot suppress their personality completely. Personal peculiarities ought to be suppressed as far as possible; but the individual as such must simply be controlled by the faithful observance of the rubrics of the liturgical ceremonies. That is enough to give that impression of representation which is essential to the idea of the liturgy.

There is however a danger here. The liturgy can easily degenerate into mere ritual, lacking the spirit of worship. Liturgical prayer means that individuals are worshipping as representatives of all men, not that universal man himself is worshipping, for he cannot. Therefore with the observance of the ritual, the discipline of the liturgy,

there must also be the prayer of those who perform, for it is only from them that it can come. And that spirit of prayer has to be maintained even in actions without vocal prayers. The actions themselves are intended to be prayers offered by members of the body other than the tongue. Walking to the altar from the sedilia, for example, is a liturgical prayer just as much as the more obvious instance of a genuflection. These actions quickly degenerate to the level of insignificant movements, if the spirit of prayer is lacking to them. This spirit of prayer, moreover, implies a recollection of mind which is incompatible with voluntary speech or action other than that demanded by the ceremony.

The liturgy is often called a drama, and there are in this notion several thoughts which help to form the attitude to the liturgy that we have been attempting to describe. Dramatic art tries to portray events, either real or imaginary, in the lives of people other than the actors, to recapture for example the feelings and reactions of those involved in some historical incident. Each actor aims with his own personal qualities to give a living picture of someone else, suppressing his own identity, and bringing out that of his subject. He is a good or bad actor according to his ability to achieve this purpose. Such an idea can very easily be applied to the liturgy. The ministers try to portray, by the control of their own powers, universal man at prayer. From this parallel, imperfect as all analogies must be, we can see the importance of beautiful and well-designed churches. Just as an actor is helped in his art by the setting and scenery of his stage, so too the ministers in the liturgy can be helped, both in the control of their personalities and in maintaining the spirit of prayer, by suitable surroundings.

The application of these principles to the recitation or singing of the divine Office is obvious. The result will be a dignified act of worship, controlled and deliberate, the even rhythm of the words or music indicating that it is no emotional efflux, but the willing satisfaction of a duty to God.

Is there room in this conception of the liturgy for the many non-liturgical devotions which seem to have a greater appeal? These devotions certainly have their place, if we remember that they are subordinate to the liturgy. They are less representative and allow more individual expression, but they can be said to have a quasi-liturgical character. Popular devotions are approved by the Church and certain regulations are given for their conduct. Therefore some control is necessary in them. They are also representative, though of a smaller number of people than the whole race of mankind. A guild service is certainly held in the name of all the members, even if some are absent. An ordinary Rosary, sermon and Benediction service in

a parish church is surely representative of the whole parish and not only of those who attend. It is a matter of debate how much liturgical worship apart from the Mass is suitable for ordinary parish churches. The more easily understood vernacular devotions can in any case promote that parochial solidarity which is so necessary to healthy parish life, just as the liturgy rightly understood makes us conscious of our solidarity as a race and of our racial duty to worship God. These devotions are in the nature of an overflow from the liturgy, an expression of man's need of corporate worship. An obvious example is the deservedly popular Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, which is quite clearly an overflow from the Corpus Christi liturgy. There is no reason why appreciation of the liturgy should not develop side by side with a love of these devotions, each expressing a slightly different aspect of man's duty to his Creator, and each encouraging the other. In this way will the liturgy become a life of worship.

BASIC WORSHIP

BY

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ELL directed and earnest study, . . . and the clash of diverse opinions and their discussion, provided love of truth and due submission to the Church be their arbiter, will open rich bright vistas whose light will help to progress in kindred sacred sciences'. These words of Pope Pius XII, written in 1943, present an ideal for liturgical enthusiasts.

Before all else it is among students of the liturgy that we expect to find a spirit of tolerance and charity, because the inspiration of their study is Calvary, itself the source of charity. Bitterness in dispute is particularly out of place here. Disagreement itself is, as the Pope has pointed out, a sign of health: but when discussion becomes acrimonious something has gone wrong. Intolerance is bred from inaccurate thinking and the most inaccurate thought springs from the confusion of essentials with accidentals. Short vestments may be undignified and lacking in symbolism, but that does not convict the wearer of heresy. The Rosary may—with careful reservations—be reckoned a lower form of prayer than some: yet its recital during Mass flouts no dogma of the Church. Such questions of expediency and accidentals can grow large enough to blind us to the essential purpose of liturgical prayer which is to share as fully as possible in the sacrifice of Calvary. Admiration for gothic vestments and plain-song is one way of sharing: contempt and scorn is no share at all.