

The Grammar School and the Liturgy¹

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What is the liturgy? What does one mean by a grammar school? What has each to do with the other? The burden of this paper is to essay some answers to each of these questions, endeavouring to develop maturer concepts of education and liturgy, and to make practical suggestions about the place of liturgy in the life of the school. The liturgy has an important part to play in the Catholic education of all children, so that much of what I have to say will apply to other kinds of school, and it will apply for the most part equally to girls and boys, though I shall generally refer to boys. My own teaching experience in Catholic schools has been largely confined to the grammar school, but this is not the sole reason why I have preferred to speak of the grammar school and the liturgy. I believe that the grammar school offers exceptional opportunities not only for training its own pupils in a right sense and practice of liturgy, but also for assisting the whole Catholic body in this country to arrive at a more realistic understanding of the liturgical life of the Church. Few would deny that we have a long way to go before our attitude to the liturgy ceases to be ritualistic and formal and becomes worshipful. I do not mean that our people are not pious in church; on the contrary they are sometimes excessively devout; and this is perfectly compatible with a wholly unrealistic attitude towards the liturgy as such. Some Catholics seem to be fired by a kind of enthusiasm for their religion which is specifically closer to the confidence with which a man supports his football team than to divine faith, standing on the touchline and applauding the efforts of the star players without feeling themselves directly involved in the struggle: if they lose, it is their fault, the players' fault—their supporters did all they could to help by cheering the team on. So in our church services dislike of changes in traditional ways, which is more widespread than we care to admit even to ourselves, is often shown, both among laity and clergy, in an implied suggestion that one must hasten slowly because authority

¹A paper read on 11th November 1960 at a study conference on 'Teaching Children the Liturgy' at Spode House.

is not playing well at the moment, is a little off form, and will no doubt get back to normal again when a few changes have been made in the team. There is not, and has not been for centuries, any tradition of personal involvement among Catholics at mass, hence our touchline attitude towards the sanctuary. Excellent and necessary though these things are in themselves, it is no good merely imposing external forms of active participation, like dialoguing the responses: what has to be tackled is the spectator's mentality, which means that every parishioner has got to be entangled in the affairs of the parish. Let him once feel himself a part of the parish, a constituent of his church, and taking part in the liturgy will come naturally to him.

What, then, is the liturgy? There have been many definitions, and they have recently been synthesized by Father Schmidt, the Roman liturgist; his Latin is too technical, altogether too succinct to admit of adequate translation, but what he says can be paraphrased without loss of meaning: the liturgy is Christ's work of glorifying God and sanctifying man; the liturgy is the Church's profession of human subjection to the divine majesty; in the liturgy the members of the Church are addressing themselves to the Father, offering themselves in the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, being themselves inspired all the while by the Holy Spirit.² The liturgy is the work of the Church, and the work of the Church is the work of Christ, whose body the Church is. The adjective 'mystical' is often applied to the Church as the body of Christ, but in English it does not possess the same sense as in Latin; it contrasts with physical, but the Church is also physically, in the English sense, the body of Christ; she is certainly not identified with his corporal body, which yielded up its soul on the cross, lay three days in the tomb, rose gloriously on Easter day, and is now at the right hand of the Father, but she is marvellously incorporated into his physical existence. She cannot be Christ by metaphor or analogy; the Church is Christ. Now Christ in his corporal body manifested his work to us as a Jew of a particular age and circumstance, and Christ in his ecclesiastical body manifests his work among us as the members of our generation. The work of Christ is, of course, complete, perfected in his own person, its object once and for all achieved, to reconcile everything in creation to the Father. It is this truth, alas only half understood, which lies at the

²*Liturgia est opus glorificationis Dei et sanctificationis Hominis, quod communitas ecclesiastica, ut excellentiam divinam subjectionemque sui ad Deum Patrem protestetur, ministerio sacerdotali Christi pioque afflatu Spiritus Sancti celebrat.* Hermanus A. P. Schmidt, S.J., *Introductio in Liturgiam Occidentalem*; Herder, Rome, 1960.

roots of the protestant conception of liturgy; for them the liturgy is essentially didactic and memorial, a commemoration of the work of Christ, for them the glorification of God and the sanctification of man are completed, without the need for any intervention of man whatsoever. The Christ, *liturgus*, by his unique *liturgia* on the cross, in the name and on behalf of all the people, has once and for all time accomplished the supreme and definitive act of worship. In the Catholic tradition, this truth is fully comprehended: Christ, *liturgus*, has willed and ensured that his supreme *liturgia*, the work of salvation, shall be continued all over the earth until the end of time; Christ, *liturgus*, has actively associated the whole chosen people of God with him in his *liturgia*, and he has transmitted his work to the Church in a wholly marvellous manner. It is not just that Christ has celebrated the supreme liturgy in the name and on behalf of the people, but that he has provided that the people of God, by their own co-operation in his work, shall make the liturgy of Christ their own; all the members of the body of Christ are truly *liturgi* through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ.

As soon as we learn to understand the liturgy in this way, and the part that each of us has in the liturgy of Christ and the liturgy of the Church, the necessity of what is called active participation becomes apparent, and the right meaning of active participation can be perceived. The liturgical movement has not invented some new role for the layman in the liturgy; the liturgical movement is not saying that the laity have progressed to a point where they ought to be allowed actively to participate in the liturgy; all the liturgical movement does is to call attention to the fact that the laity have always been entitled to share in the offering of the sacrifice, have always in fact shared in the offering of the sacrifice: *et omnium circumstantium . . . qui tibi offerunt hoc sacrificium laudis, pro se suisque omnibus . . .* That popular phrase, the priesthood of the laity, is, of course, misleading, with its implication of a lay sharing in sacred orders, but it is no more unsound a concept than that which identifies the whole priesthood of Christ with the sacrament of order. All the members of the body of Christ participate in the priesthood of Christ, but there are progressive degrees of participation. There is lay participation in the priesthood of Christ, and there is clerical participation; the degree of participation, and the powers conferred, are marked by the sacraments: first of baptism, second of confirmation, and, third of order, deacon, priest, and bishop. Historical circumstances, too vast to discuss here, have brought about an unhappy cleavage, in public estimation if not in fact, between clergy and laity

in the church, so that the clergy are now virtually treated as a separate caste, essentially different from the laity, and from here it is not a far step to say that the laity are in some sense second class Catholics. There are, as I said, many causes for this state of affairs, but not the least of these is the gradual monopolization of the liturgy by the clergy. What is needed is to re-establish a community of interest between clergy and laity, and then we shall see its effects in an improved and vigorous liturgical life. Adult Christians meet together in their parish, but children have this advantage, that they also meet together in school. Of the three communities to which a child belongs, the family, the school, and the parish, it is surely the school which, after the family, has the greatest influence over him.

What does one mean by a grammar school? The grammar school is, I think, distinguished from other schools by three main features of its life. First, it has a selective entry, ensuring, within the limitations of selective testing, that certain minimum standards of scholastic attainment and intelligence will be found among its pupils. Second, a large majority of these pupils will later enter the professions or the universities, requiring them all to study several subjects to the ordinary level of the General Certificate of Education, and producing a sixth form working for the advanced and scholarship levels. Third, the older pupils constitute a prefectorial body who actively assist the headmaster in his government of the school, just as the staff, being specialists in their own subjects, assist him in the actual teaching of the pupils; all this confers a hierarchical structure on the school. The first condition, that there be a selective entry, is important, because it means that the grammar school trains those who are to be leaders in the community. These boys are fitted to seize greater opportunities than will present themselves to others less fortunately placed, and their later influence in the Catholic life of society is bound to be considerable. If, therefore, changes are to be induced in Catholic ways of thinking and modes of behaviour, it is among the grammar school pupils that we should make our greatest efforts. The ecclesiastical authorities in this country clearly recognize the importance of the grammar schools, at least for boys, by virtually reserving the headships for priests and by preferring to appoint laymen to the modern schools. The second condition, that the scholastic work be directed to the various levels of the General Certificate of Education, is equally important, because the deeper content of the syllabuses, the more exacting nature of the work undertaken, the greater depth of culture which it can impart, makes it easier for the

mind of the pupil to assimilate the principles of sound liturgical thinking. Here we are confronted with one of the most serious difficulties that the liturgical movement has to tackle. I mean that the priests who prosecute the liturgical movement with such vigour are inevitably men of some education, men who are naturally capable of a profounder appreciation of the nature of liturgy, than those among whom they labour. For these men, the act of dialoguing responses at mass is fraught with deep religious significance; it is no ritual fad or gesture, but a sincere expression of what they feel themselves to be doing at mass. The average man, however, with little or no taste for such matters, may just as easily find the dialogue tedious and repetitive, and disruptive of what he calls his own prayers. He may even resent the discouragement of practices long congenial, associated with the revered mentors of his childhood. The man who has been educated in a grammar school would seem to be more receptive to liturgical changes, especially if he has been introduced to sound liturgical practices at school. The third condition, that there be a responsible prefectorial body, is perhaps the most important of all. Few things are more distressing in a school than to find that the prefects are treated as lackeys (and the staff as merely teachers). Every school is a community and the Catholic school is more than a human community, it is an *ecclesia*. The natural head of such a community is the headmaster, whose authority is exercised both personally and by delegation to his staff and prefects. Unless there is a proper delegation not only of duties but also of responsibilities, there can be no competent discharge of office by staff or prefects; the training and selection of prefects is as important as the appointment of the staff. The headmaster is truly *liturgus*, he is assisted in the *liturgia* of the school by each master, each prefect, and each boy, and though they all have specific functions and tasks, they are all truly *liturgi* by their participation in the work of the school. The work of Christ is the work of the Church, and the work of the Church is manifested in the world by the work of her members. The hierarchical structure of the school should impress every boy with the grandeur of being assumed into a life greater than anything to which he has natural title: in this community each member of the body takes to himself the life of the body. The celebration of the liturgy is not confined to the chapel; it is conducted in the classroom and on the playing-field, and it is solemnized at mass.

The grammar school has a tremendous advantage over the parish, that all its members are visibly united in a common purpose. Every boy

knows that he is come together with his fellows and his masters in the pursuit of knowledge, with certain clearly defined goals: passes at ordinary, advanced or scholarship level. I am not saying that he always takes kindly to this fact, merely that he recognizes it. In the parish it is sometimes difficult for the average man to see how his own daily toil harmonizes with that of his parish priest, or with his neighbour who may have a better or more congenial job. Where God is glorified and man is sanctified, there Christ is at work; the work of Christ is the work of the Church, and the work of the Church is manifested in the work of her members. It is of the nature of a schoolboy that he works at the subjects set before him; to the extent that he applies himself to his work, he co-operates with grace and he actively exercises his baptismal right to participate in the liturgy of the Church. The ecclesiastical community of the school contains its saints and its sinners, they grow side by side until the harvest time, and I think there are far more saints than sinners, however depressing the G.C.E. pass lists may sometimes be. The amount of work that boys do, bearing in mind how uncongenial study can be to the young personality, is surely a triumph of grace over nature, or rather a transfiguration of nature by grace. What he does, rather than the way he says his prayers, is what matters. His set prayers are like his set books: a feature of his life on which he is told to concentrate; he gets them up in special detail and hopes to be asked pertinent questions about them, but he will be dumb if he is not more widely based in his knowledge, if he has not really worked. It is, whilst we are thinking of work, a wholly mistaken notion that the work of the Church is immediately to convert individual non-Catholics to the Catholic viewpoint. The error of thinking that it is has gained currency from the modern Catholic obsession with apologetics. It is, of course, wholly desirable that individual non-Catholics should receive the gift of faith, it is also important that every Catholic should bear witness to his faith, but this is not to say that the conversion of non-Catholics is the beginning and end of being a Catholic. We must preach and teach, but it is for them to listen and learn; we cannot learn for them, nor insist that they are 'wrong' when by their own lights they cannot see what we see by the light of faith. There is no place for chess board triumphs in our apostolate.

If this is the way we must understand the practice of liturgy, what shall we say about its solemnization? I must assume for the purposes of this paper that the grammar school possesses its own chapel; if not, there should be a local church which it can use as a chapel. It passes all

understanding that any school can be built by Catholics and not possess a chapel, or not have some church available for use as a chapel. In chapel the liturgy is solemnized, and of all the ceremonies which take place, the most important is the celebration of mass. Boys will generally have the opportunity to attend mass once a week in the school chapel, and it can be administratively convenient if this is the first item on the timetable for the day. To start one's day by hearing mass is certainly an excellent thing, but at school there is one grave objection: only a few boys are able to receive communion. The catchment area of the grammar school generally covers a wide district and many boys, faced with a long journey to school, will have breakfast before they leave home, and so will not be able to fulfil the requirement of a three-hours fast. The only solution, apart from a further relaxation of the fasting law, is that mass should be celebrated at the end of the morning, so that the fast can take place later, say from nine to twelve o'clock, thus enabling most boys to receive communion. It goes almost without saying that, in a grammar school, where boys are learning Latin from their first year, the mass should be a dialogue one. It is true that the *Instruction* of the Sacred Congregation of Rites mentions other ways of participation in the mass, such as by prayer and song in the vernacular, but the way that is recommended wherever possible is the dialogue mass. If it were not thought possible to have it in a grammar school, then I suppose it would have to be confined to seminaries and the like. In the first year it may be better to limit the boys to the first two degrees, so that they make only the simple responses and say those parts assigned to the server. In the second year the third degree can then be attained, so that they will also recite with the celebrant the *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus-Benedictus*, and *Agnus Dei*. In the third year the boys should be ready to practise the fourth degree and will also recite with the celebrant the introit, gradual, offertory, and communion. From the very beginning, I assume that the boys will have joined with the priest in saying the Lord's prayer. Even more important, if the hierarchical character of the assembly is to be stressed, and a sense of community inculcated, is the participation of prefects and masters in the service. A suitable division of duties would be for prefects to read the epistle and gospel, and for a master to act as commentator. The epistle and gospel should be read from the lectern (there should be a lectern) and by a lector facing the people; the practice sometimes found of having them read quietly, almost apologetically, from a pew in the church, furtively behind the backs of the congregation, is liturgically

insulting to God. The reading of these lessons by the lectors is a solemn proclamation of the word of God to the people of God, and it should be invested with all the dignity and honour that it deserves. Father O'Connell says: 'Much will, of course, depend on the celebrant of the Mass, who must avoid all undue haste, and by the very tone of his voice lead and encourage the congregation. Since he speaks and acts for Christ and as the representative of the Church he must subordinate his own preferences and personal comfort to the welfare of those sharing with him the Sacrifice. The priest responsible for the conduct of public worship will need much zeal, patience, perseverance and tact, but his efforts will be richly recompensed when his people take their due part—ceasing to be mute spectators and becoming vocal actors—in the great drama of the Mass, as the Church so clearly and ardently desires'.³ If a master acts as commentator at the mass, and if we seriously want to carry out the suggestions made by the holy see then he certainly will, it should be remembered that it is no part of his duties to try to explain the rite of mass in detail and at length. This is a task for liturgical instructors in the pulpit or the classroom. His comments must be written out beforehand, and he does not have to write them himself, and he must so act that he merely leads and directs the external participation of the boys, especially after the *oremus* before the collect and the postcommunion, and at the doxology at the end of the canon. He must never act as if he were the spokesman of the community: that is part of the celebrant's function. At present most boys if asked what the celebrant does would reply that it is he who says mass. There is little recognition that everybody is saying mass together, and for this reason, if for no other, it is most important that the celebrant should pause between the fore-mass and the eucharistic sacrifice and come down and speak a few words to the boys in their own language. This homily should never last longer than five minutes; on feasts it should concern the saint of the day, and on ferias it should, as Trent urges, expound some point from the scriptures read that day. If mass has taken place at the end of the morning, the boys can be left to dismiss themselves and not marched away as might be necessary if a class followed immediately. There should be no lengthy recitation of prayers of thanksgiving after communion: they only bore boys, and the spontaneous prayer of each boy made privately is a much more fitting conclusion to the liturgy.

³J. B. O'Connell, *Commentary on the Instruction of the S.C.R., on Sacred Music and Liturgy*; Burns & Oates, London, 1959.

If mass is celebrated at the end of the morning, the chapel will then be available at the beginning of the morning for other uses. A morning assembly for the whole school there is most desirable, but if, as is likely, it will not accommodate the whole school together, then it could very profitably be used for a morning assembly for the sixth form. The morning assembly is a much neglected part of Catholic school life, largely because the mass is thought of as the only morning act of worship, and also because there is an innate fear of imitating protestants who are much given to sundry acts of worship in the morning. Some people think that the service should be entirely sacred, by which they mean that school notices and the like are out of place here. I do not think this is a valid objection, because the school notices, even if they are of a secular character, nevertheless pertain to the work of the school, and the work of the school is its liturgy. School notices have a most appropriate place in any act of worship, just like parish notices given from the pulpit during mass. Many orders of service can be devised, but what really matters is that they should express the idea of a community and should not be monopolized by any individual. The head prefect might open the service by leading the boys in the *Pater* and *Ave*, another prefect could then read a lesson from scripture, the headmaster could comment on this, then the deputy headmaster might read the notices, and another prefect could announce the title of the concluding hymn. One speaks of the headmaster's commenting, because long sermons (and I mean longer than five minutes) in church to children are a bad thing. Most of the boys do not listen, unless there is a diverting topic or an unusually gifted speaker, and they would be far better occupied in singing a hymn in our Lady's honour than in listening to a sermon about her. Nowadays also, when boys are accustomed to seeing and hearing a great many expert speakers on the television, they tend among themselves to be fiercely critical of the oratorical powers of both priests and masters. Long sermons also breed an unhealthy dislike of going to church in boys' minds, and on that count alone should be avoided.

A separate question which arises is the extent to which boys should be left free to decide for themselves whether they will attend services in the school chapel. The morning assembly is clearly a special case, where it is only reasonable that every boy should be required to attend. I think also that boys should be required to attend mass when it is provided for them on the school time-table, though there is a strong case for making such attendance voluntary in the fifth and sixth forms.

If the objection be made that probably most of them would not attend this mass, then that means there is something so seriously wrong with the Catholic life of the school, that it will only be disguised, and certainly not cured, by compelling the boys to attend. Apart from the need to instil regular habits of church-going, there is the equivalent need to train them to be self-reliant in this matter. This can be done for all boys by providing a service of benediction at the end of the school day, attendance at which is voluntary. The example set here by form masters and prefects will, as in so many other matters, be a far more potent force than physical compulsion. Such a benediction should not be unduly prolonged by the insertion of lengthy hymns and extra prayers: the Roman way is perfectly adequate, and there should certainly be no attempt at a sermon. In spite of the leakage, we can still indulge in flattering comparisons of our own well-filled churches on Sunday mornings, with those of our separated brethren. The important difference is not in the disparity between the numbers that attend in each case, but in the fact that the Catholic, unlike the non-Catholic, is bound under a grave obligation to attend mass on Sundays. Would our churches be so full if the Church ever relaxed this law? We must look to our schools to give training not only in attendance but also in voluntary attendance at church.

One often senses among teachers an excessive fear that the children will forget their faith if they do not learn catechism answers, will never understand their faith if they do not take courses in apologetics, and will eventually lose their faith if they are not made to go to church. It is perfectly true that they may forget, or fail to understand, or lose their faith, if they do not do all these things, but what the teacher has to guard against in himself is the danger of acting as if they had already lost their faith, and abandoned their religion. The faith is practised in many ways, but the most formative and stabilizing of all is the liturgical practice of the faith: we can say *lex orandi, lex credendi agendique*, for our prayers should reflect both our beliefs and our actions. In the liturgy we are glorifying God and sanctifying man, and these are heavenly and earthly ways of regarding the same truth. Where God is glorified and man is sanctified, there the liturgy is celebrated. All that we do, we do as members of the body of Christ, and this immense work of the members is the work of the Church, and the work of Christ. Do not the Benedictines say: *laborare est orare*.