

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

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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.

Often enough the subjects discussed are external adornments which in an ideal culture—or at least in a culture approaching nearer the christian ideal than our own—would not be thought about but would be spontaneously employed in the public worship of God. Men built Ely cathedral on an eminence looking as if it were lifting arms to heaven because the instinct for christian symbolism was bred in their bones. They did not need to think out beforehand how they should achieve this or that effect: they were accustomed, in a way in which we are not accustomed, to thinking symbolically. Their attitude of mind grew out of an understanding and respect for the sacredness of all creatures. Thus it was possible to use profane things in a sacred cause. We find no exclusively religious *genre* in letters or art: John Lydgate's mediocre rhythms adorn the Clopton Chapel and the Christ Church gargoyles are not exclusively sacred or divine.

With the secularisation of Europe has come the separation and even the antagonism between sacred and profane bringing about the impoverishment of the sacred and the sterilisation of the profane. Our forms of worship have grown dull and tawdry and shabby and our workaday lives become unrelieved drudgery: we cannot use the words, garments and gestures of secular life in religion, and have lost the art of turning work into worship. We have lost the sense of the significance of life and 'when the vision fades . . .'

But the vision is not allowed to fade so easily for the human spirit is too resilient, and if a civilisation cramps men and gives no natural form of expression to their worship then they resort to what would today be called private enterprise—private devotion. The Mass becomes a 'blessed mutter' through force of hostile circumstances, and the congregation are thrown back upon their 'private' methods of joining in Calvary. Our great-grandparents could not openly express their devotion in building cathedrals so they put their spires and pinnacles on their altars and statuary instead. This simplifies the facts, undoubtedly, but it does indicate their direction and significance. Mumbled prayers and 'wedding-cake' altars have come into the church as acts of worship and not, as we might sometimes appear to suggest, as blasphemies. They stand as authentic expressions—relics if you wish—of a period in the life of the Church. A drab period, perhaps, but drabness is not the same thing as death.

If today we have reached a turning point in the Church's life we must look first where the new road leads, and then we must take care of those who have travelled so far with us and not leave them to die at the cross-roads in order to lighten our load. The Church herself has given us what help we need in the first matter, but the second problem demands prudence and understanding. There are some who are too footsore to tread the (to them) hard road of plain-

song and gothic vestments. Nevertheless they take their full share in the Church's worship and we may not say that their way is fruitless because it is not the ideal way. The finest carvings have been done with blunt tools—and prayer is an art. Yet over-enthusiasm does sometimes betray us into suggesting that there is only one possible way of sharing in the Church's public worship.

There is, indeed, an ideal way whose value lies in the fact that it impresses the truth upon us through wealth of symbolism. But that is not the full value of the liturgy. We need more than an impression of the truth. The chief purpose is the union of the individual soul with Christ. We sometimes give the appearance of believing in a sort of buffer state, a *tertium quid* known as the mystical body, through which we reach Christ. Christ is the body and St Paul teaches that we are parts, and the perfection of the *Totus Christus* is attained in the perfection of the individual in union with Christ. There is a danger of over-emphasising the communal aspect of the doctrine just as there is danger at the other extreme. To claim that our perfection lies in independence is false. It is equally false—and at present it is perhaps the greater danger—to speak as if we are absolved from all personal responsibility, and that everything is done for us through a kind of executive which St Paul founded and called the mystical body and which speaks an uncompromising language of plainsong and gothic script. Sometimes we do appear to believe in this sort of 'nationalisation' of prayer when we attach an almost magical power to the external forms of worship. St Paul spoke of Christ and his Body and St Augustine spoke of the *Totus Christus*: and all the time the emphasis was on the fact that each of us is a living part of the whole Christ and the wholeness depends on us individually as it depends on us collectively.

There still remains however the practical problem of the man who 'fills up what is left over of the sufferings of Christ', apparently without any regard for the traditional forms of worship and who even finds them a stumbling block. That is neither his fault nor the fault of the liturgy. Few men can be expected to be moved easily to devotion by the formal gestures of the priest at Mass when the popular standard of beauty in gesture is epitomised in the 'jitterbug': the stark beauty of Lenten liturgy has little chance of appreciation in a world whose standards of beauty are set by the chromium glitter of the bathroom. When we examine the objects for sale in the chain store it is creditable that our standards of taste are not lower.

There are then two obstacles, one to be destroyed, the other to be integrated. The false standards of truth and beauty must be destroyed—but as all standards are now losing favour this should not be difficult: true standards must be set up. The 'blessed mutter' problem

however must be resolved with far more tenderness and care. Men may be endangered not through their own fault but through the rash enthusiasm which fails to see the greatness of their achievement in dark times and fails to appreciate the skill of working with blunt tools.

For the time being we might well insist on the simple fundamentals—attendance at Mass and Holy Communion and an understanding of them. Otherwise so much energy can be wasted on accidentals. If a parish priest were to spend his time encouraging his flock to come to Vespers while failing to see that they attended and understood the Mass he would be neglecting his duty. Liturgical 'movements' often enough do just this sort of thing. A great deal of energy and honest zeal can be devoted to the recitation of some minor portion of the divine Office by a 'liturgical group' thereby giving the liturgy the appearance of a specialist's hobby. There is only one 'liturgical group' and that is the Church. Her members need instruction in the fundamentals and part at least of the time devoted to the singing of monastic Vespers outside the monastery might be given to instructing a child or a convert in the meaning of the Mass. There are many people who follow the Mass perfectly well with their rosaries, for example, and who would gladly and readily benefit from instruction in the full meaning of the Mass. Though they have not been entirely neglected it has so happened that the idea of formal liturgy does not somehow bring them into focus. They are treated as a rearguard minority who must be left to struggle along as best they can—if they do not die at the cross-roads. This is clearly wrong and if any section of the Church's society has been excluded from the liturgy it is because the emphasis has been thrown too much on accidentals. Most of the discussion has been about the language of the Mass, the dress of the Mass, the music of the Mass. But before all this we have been told to 'pray the Mass'. Of course we can pray better in one language than another, better in one dress than another. But it is better to pray in dungarees than to give up praying for the want of a dress suit. The pity is that we have allowed so much energy to be spent on the trappings and this has even led sometimes to complete distortions. After all the monasteries and the cathedrals have been the traditional homes of the sung office and the rest of the Church shares this prayer. It is a romantic exaggeration to wish to imitate Buckfast or Prinknash in the parish church.¹ The parish church is not intended to be an imitation monastery and much of the energy that is spent in making it so could be directed into other channels less likely to turn the liturgy into the hobby-horse of cranks and more likely to

¹ I refer of course to 'stunts' such as sung Tierce or None, not to Sunday evening Vespers or Compline sung by the parish.

make it its true self, the public worship of the body of Christ.

Where, on the other hand, it is a matter of false standards of truth and beauty, work must start outside the Church. 'Le théâtre vit des passions qu'y apporte la foule', and the Church too in a measure thrives on the spirit the congregation brings in from outside. So we must begin not only with an artistic revival—a misused phrase—but with a social revival which is far more important. Unless the Mass is both the expression and the guide of social life we cannot claim even to have started reforming the liturgy. The problem must be tackled from both ends, as it were. There are already many ways in which the faithful—and this means the whole congregation, not the choir or 'liturgical group'—can take an active part in the Mass and the ceremonial. To begin with they could be taught to make the sign of the cross with the priest at the foot of the altar. They can take part by standing, kneeling and sitting at the proper times, by singing the ordinary of the Mass and by joining in the liturgical processions at funerals, in Holy Week and so forth. And all these things must be accompanied with *instruction* in the nature of prayer and in the meaning of these particular forms of prayer. The liturgy is a prayer, not a performance.

But all that is only one end of the problem. The same thing has to be tackled from the social end. That does not mean a gay round of dances, whist drives and picnics. It is something which goes deeper and comes near to making the parish a real christian family whose characteristics are charity, generosity, devotion, loyalty and many other virtues lost through familiarity. Problems of the social life of the parish have to be faced in terms of Christ the centre of the parochial family, and our links with that centre are forged every morning at Mass. If those who work together and play together also pray together daily with Christ sacrificed on their own altar then there is real liturgy. No crank's hobby-horse but the fire and spirit that turns engineers' lathes and housewives' tables into instruments of divine love. Then the dances and whist drives and picnics take on an eternal significance. It is easy to talk about sanctifying our daily lives: it is easy to talk about taking an active share in the Mass. But the thing that will bring Christ to walk once again in our towns and villages is the sanctification of home and workshop through daily Mass. This is real liturgy with a prospect wider and deeper than the original text of a plainsong motet. Unless we have that we have nothing. And as long as we think only in terms of the things that can be measured by human understanding, the length of the *quilisma* and the width of the vestments, we are in danger of forgetting those things which are immeasurable and without which the measurable things are lifeless. For the fruits of the liturgy are charity and peace.