

Are We Reforming the Liturgy? ⁴⁸⁴

by Nicholas Lash

The period since the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Liturgy* has seen, in this country as in every other, a considerable number of alterations in the ceremonies of the mass, the most obvious of which has been the introduction of English. These changes have been received with a mixture of enthusiastic approval, quiet acceptance and strongly expressed antipathy. But the time is overdue when we should have stopped asking: 'Are the changes going well?' and should have begun to ask: 'Are we reforming the liturgy?'.

It is the purpose of this essay to suggest that, whereas the nature of liturgical reform and the radical principles that must be kept in mind in working towards the goal have been clearly stated in various documents promulgated by the Vatican Council, they have not yet been sufficiently received into the general consciousness, with the result that there is still a danger that we shall fail to achieve the task set us by the Council. This failure would not consist simply in non-achievement. Now that the whole question of reforming the liturgy has been explicitly raised in the minds of all church-going Catholics, misconceptions concerning the goal and the radical principles of reform will, in turn, give rise to false ideas about the nature of the liturgy and, indeed, of the church herself. Once fundamental mistakes are made, it is too late to say: 'Let's start again; we will forget the past two years'. History moves one way, and takes an inexorable toll of wrong decisions.

Before presenting the case, three points must be made, to avoid misunderstandings. In the first place, it is *not* the argument of this essay that 'we are not moving fast enough'. On the contrary; there is a great deal of evidence that, in many ways, we are moving far too fast. In the second place, nothing that is said here should be understood as a disparagement of the often heroic efforts that are being made to execute the Council's programme. No form of criticism is so sterile as the attempt to 'blame' individuals for inadequacies in our group consciousness which are principally due to historical factors. In the third place, it is not possible, in a few pages, to cover all the necessary ground, or to avoid a great deal of generalization. My purpose is not to conduct a detailed analysis of the principles governing liturgical reform or of the current state of affairs in this country. It is simply to point to a danger and to ask a question.

That the danger to which I am pointing is not simply a figment of

my imagination is suggested by the fact that, in his report to the *Liturgical Consilium* on behalf of the English hierarchy, Archbishop Dwyer listed it as the first of the principal difficulties that had yet to be overcome in the implementation of the *Liturgical Constitution* in this country. He described the difficulty as consisting in 'The mentality of those who think of the new reform as a mere change in the rubrics, and who have not yet fully understood that the whole character of the mass has become that of a community celebration.'¹

As set forth in the decrees of the Council, the purpose of liturgical reform is a *pastoral* one; that is to say, it is concerned primarily with *people*, rather than ideas. It aims at making the church become more fully in reality what she is in the mind and gift of Christ, not only for her own sake, but for that of other Christians and of the whole world, in which she is 'the sacrament of instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of unity for the whole human race'.²

In a world in which the divisive and isolationist forces of sin have wreaked havoc, the church is the sacrament of that perfect *human* community which can only be achieved in the love of God through Christ in the Spirit. 'The circumstances of our time lend an urgency to this duty of the Church, if men, who are already more closely united nowadays by the bonds of society, technology and culture, are to achieve also the fulness of unity in Christ'.³

The purpose of the church is the building of community and, since '... the Eucharist is the direct source of life and growth for the Church',⁴ this is also the purpose of the liturgy, '... the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed (and) ... the source from which all her power flows'⁵ 'In these churches (local congregations) the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of Christ's gospel; in them, the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated "so that the whole brotherhood is linked by the flesh and blood of the Lord's body". Any fellowship of the altar ... is the setting in which the symbol is shown of that charity and "that unity of the Mystical Body, without which salvation is impossible"'.⁶

Once the centrality of liturgical reform in the overall programme of reforming the church is accepted, and once it is agreed that the goal of all church reform is the fuller realization of her essential nature as the loving community, it follows that whatever deeper insights into the gospel, whatever fresh emphases in our understanding of our faith, have been achieved by the Council in any area

¹Mentalitas eorum qui concipiunt novam instaurationem tanquam meram mutationem rubricarum et nondum plene intelligunt totam indolem Missae ut celebrationem communitariam mutatam esse (Cf *Notitiae* 7-8. p. 223).

²*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (cc), art 1.

³cc 1.

⁴cc 26.

⁵*Constitution on the Liturgy* (cl) 10.

⁶cc 26.

of its work, must be taken into account when planning the reform of the liturgy. So, for example, whatever is said about the historical nature of God's revelation in word and deed in the *Constitution on Revelation*, about the relationship between the local and universal church in the *Constitution on the Church*, about the priestly nature of the whole people of God or about the essentially 'diaconal' nature of christian ministry in the same document, about the relationship of various christian communities to the church of Christ in the *Decree on Ecumenism*, about the church and human culture in the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*; all these, and many more, are factors that must find their proper place in our understanding of liturgical reform.

The task we have been set is not one that can be achieved in a few years, after which 'the liturgy will be reformed'. To expect that the liturgy can be completely reformed in a few years (after which 'things will settle down again') is a more radical misconception than that of the 'hard-headed realist' who would dismiss the programme as idealistic. It *is* idealistic, or rather it is eschatological. In committing ourselves wholeheartedly to the work of liturgical reform we are committing ourselves to working for the coming of the kingdom. And this is a task which always demands everything of the christian community, and which remains for ever incomplete so long as we are on pilgrimage.⁷

The methods by which the programme of reform is implemented must be compatible with the church's nature as 'a society founded on love; governed by love'.⁸ For so very long we have been accustomed to authoritarian habits in the church that it would be unrealistic to expect new authority-subject patterns to emerge overnight. However, the documents of the Council are shot through with an awareness that new patterns *must* emerge, and quickly. Words like 'collegiality', 'dialogue', 'brotherly consultation' all express this awareness. We are painfully growing to a maturity that can accept that blind obedience is no virtue, and that *moral* authority is the only form of authority that is adequate to an adult community; that the explanation of his purposes by the man in charge does not diminish authority, but enhances it, that all the work of the church is work done in collaboration under obedience to the word of God.

Much of the resistance that liturgical reform has encountered in this country is due to the fact that it has been authoritarian: liturgical reform has been simply 'ordered'. And yet, quite apart from the theological reasons that make such methods questionable, they are self-defeating at the sheerly practical level. If the reform of the liturgy consisted in changes in the rubrics, it would be possible, even if undesirable, to say 'Do this', and achieve results. But if the reform of the liturgy consists in the first place of 'a change of mentality,

⁷Cf *Decree on Ecumenism* art 6.

⁸Paul VI: *Opening discourse to the Fourth Session of the Council*.

obtained by pastoral education',⁹ then such an approach is fundamentally improper. You cannot order people to change their understanding of sacramental theology; you cannot order people to acquire new attitudes of mind: you can only help them to do so. Above all, you cannot order people to have a new sense of community, you cannot order people to love.

It is true that the members, for example, of the Latin Mass Society show, in their statements, a sad lack of understanding of what the liturgy is about, a tendency to selfishness and individualism, a certain arrogance (with the implication that liturgical reform is suitable for the 'unlettered masses'), but it is also true that they are dedicated catholics with at least as deep a concern for the things of Christ as anybody else, and that they had a right in justice to some degree of consultation or at least of prior explanation, to ensure that they were able to play their full part in the enormous task facing the whole catholic community. An insensitive disregard for the personal rights and feelings of the subject is not the best way of persuading the subject that he, in turn, must acquire a deeper, more sensitive responsibility and care for the rights and needs of other members of the community.

Before the reform programme got under way it may have been true that many catholics at mass were almost unaware that anybody else was in the room. It may have been true that our communicants were 'as indifferent to each other as solitary eaters in a restaurant'.¹⁰ But it would be tragic if this state of affairs were replaced by one in which the members of the assembly became conscious of each other, not in love, but in mutual bitterness and irritation.

Of the means provided by the conciliar documents for implementing the programme of reform, one of the more important is the reform of the liturgical forms: words, music, gestures, ceremonies, church design and so on. Never in the history of the church has so thorough-going a programme of formal liturgical reform been undertaken. This has left us dazzled; a necessary preoccupation with formal changes can easily lead to an equating of such changes with the reform of the liturgy. But, as Archbishop Jenny said recently: 'It is not a question of passing from a worn-out ritualism to a ritualism that one could call modernised or adapted. It is a question of passing from ritual to life or, more precisely, of entering into life and the Christian mystery by means of rite'.¹¹

The reform of liturgy does not necessarily entail a reform of the

⁹From the 'Directives Pratiques' of the French Episcopal Liturgical Commission on the lay-out of churches (20th July 1965) Cf *Notes Pastorales Liturgiques* Oct 1965, p. 42.

¹⁰Charles Davis *Liturgy and Doctrine* Sheed & Ward, p. 50.

¹¹Interview in *La Croix* 24th Oct 1965.

forms at all.¹² It is at least hypothetically possible to imagine a state of affairs in which the forms, the language, the ceremonies, the distribution of liturgical function, seemed fully adequate to the day and age, and in which the liturgy itself were yet lifeless because these perfect forms were not, in fact, the expression of a living faith and shared love on the part of the worshipping assembly. This would be a situation in which liturgical reform would consist entirely in catechesis and prophetic exhortation. The fact that the forms themselves, the 'language' by which the christian community expresses and achieves its self-realization, are at the moment in such urgent need of adaptation, must not allow us to minimise the central place which such catechesis and prophecy still hold. 'Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects'.¹³ The implications of that statement are very far-reaching. One has heard of parishes in which the people have been told, well in advance, what 'changes (in the rubrics) are to be made', and have 'quickly got used to the new liturgy' when these changes have taken place. Now it is perfectly true that the liturgical forms themselves are, if they are healthy, a powerful educational force. But, on their own, without a profound biblical and doctrinal re-education accompanying ceremonial changes, they will not only fail, for the most part, to realize their educational potential: they will positively prevent it.¹⁴ The reason for this is that we are not working in a vacuum. The catholic community has, at the moment, certain deeply engrained habits of worship. If these are simply shattered (by ceremonial changes that call in question or render impossible older methods of prayer) the resulting spiritual damage will be considerable.¹⁵ In the first place, we shall be in danger of crushing genuinely religious activity instead of en-

¹² . . . une réforme liturgique ne consiste pas à modifier des choses, mais à changer des personnes, car le principal obstacle à la vie liturgique n'est point dans les rubriques inadaptées, il est dans la mentalité des chrétiens qui ne savent plus prier selon le rythme de l'Église (François Morlot, in *La Maison-Dieu* 78, p. 7).

¹³ CL 11. It follows from this (a point we shall return to later) that the preparation of priests must, to some extent, *anticipate* any changes, for ' . . . it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this (full, conscious and active participation) unless the pastors themselves, in the first place, become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy' (CL 14).

¹⁴ . . . la liturgie ne suffit pas pour préparer à la liturgie. Il y faut une catéchèse doctrinale et spirituelle qui, ordonnée à la liturgie, en demeure distincte (A. M. Roguet, in *La Maison-Dieu* 77, p. 28, commenting on article 9 of the *Constitution*).

¹⁵ L'historien constate que c'est un bien grand changement qui intervient après des siècles peut-être trop longs de fixité. Et l'historien constate qu'en dehors de l'Église catholique, ce changement s'appellerait une révolution. Pour les séminaristes, une révolution a beaucoup d'attraits; pour les historiens c'est un peu différent. En histoire, une révolution signifie généralement pas mal de destructions et beaucoup de morts; c'est-à-dire des gens qui ne survivent pas à la révolution (P. M. Gy, in *La Maison-Dieu* 80, p. 223).

sure that 'any new forms adopted . . . grow organically from forms already existing'.¹⁶ In the second place, the generosity of most Catholics, and their confidence in their leaders, will encourage them to expect that the 'changes in the liturgy' will have a profoundly beneficial effect on their understanding and love of the liturgy. But if the principle of conscious, organic growth is abandoned, they will find themselves in a religious waste land, they will become seriously disillusioned, and any further changes will meet an increasingly stiffening opposition.

Every priest is familiar with the need to urge upon his people the importance of frequent communion. But the reception of communion is a gesture, and therefore every priest is careful to try to ensure that it is not performed carelessly or thoughtlessly. Ever since the dialogue mass began to be a commonplace, and more particularly in the past year, people have been encouraged to answer 'Amen' to certain prayers, to speak or sing, to perform certain physical gestures (such as standing for the presidential prayers). But has sufficient care been taken to ensure that these words and gestures are authentic expressions of faith and charity? To encourage people to say 'Amen' to a prayer, whether or not they have considered the meaning of that prayer, is to encourage a ceremonial 'participation at any price' that can be very damaging; it is not unlike encouraging the indiscriminate reception of communion.

In every area of human existence, and religion is no exception, the effort to become authentically personal is always a struggle against the 'natural' tendency that reduces the personal to the formal, the significant to the trivial, the 'I-Thou' to the 'I-it'. The element of the 'prophetic' is therefore necessarily a permanent part of liturgical catechesis. But it acquires a particular urgency at a time when we are not only trying to escape from a dominantly ritualistic conception of public worship, but are acquiring, very suddenly, an enormous new 'vocabulary' in the process.

One of the principal doctrinal achievements of the Council was the recapturing of a *sacramental* understanding of the church. The church is not a society that 'has sacraments'; she is 'the sacrament . . . of intimate union with God',¹⁷ she is 'the abiding presence of that primal sacramental word of definitive grace, which Christ is in the world, effecting what is uttered by uttering it in sign'.¹⁸ The church is the community that visibly mediates the love of God, and those

¹⁶ . . . jamais la réforme ne devra apparaître comme une rupture avec le passé . . . Cela est très important du point de vue pastoral. Il est indispensable que le passage entre le passé et l'avenir se fasse sans heurt pour le peuple chrétien . . . Cela est non moins important du point de vue de la nature même de la liturgie. Celle-ci est vie, et la vie ne se propage pas d'ordinaire par mutations brusques (P. Jounel, commenting in *La Maison-Dieu* 77, p 48., on article 23 of the *Constitution*, from which the quotation in the text is an extract).

¹⁷CC 1.

¹⁸Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments (Quaestiones Disputatae 9)*, p. 18.

principal activities of the community that we call 'the seven sacraments' are 'the essential functions that bring into activity the very essence of the church herself. For in them she herself attains the highest degree of actualization of what she always is: the presence of redemptive grace for men, historically visible and manifest as the sign of the eschatologically victorious grace of God in the world'.¹⁹ In the *Constitution on the Liturgy* this doctrine finds one of its most lucid expressions in the article that describes the manifold presence of Christ in the liturgy: 'To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical actions. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister . . . but especially under the eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments . . . He is present in his Word . . . He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings'.²⁰

Sacramental actions are a complex of words and gestures. It follows from a sacramental theology of the Church that every word and every gesture ceases to be seen as 'ceremonial', and is seen as the visible mediation of the grace of God. Therefore, if the liturgy is truly to be the worship of God in spirit and truth, the words and gestures that structure the rite must, each and every one of them, be given the reverence and attention that is their due as the intelligible, visible signs of God's word of healing love to the worshipping assembly. ' . . . the prayers addressed to God by the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ are said in the name of the entire holy people and of all present. And the visible signs used by the liturgy to signify invisible divine things have been chosen by Christ or his Church. Thus not only when things are read "which were written for our instruction" (Rom. 15, 4), but also when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer him their rational service and more abundantly receive his grace'.²¹

It is by no means certain that this doctrine, and its implications, are yet clear to all Catholics. The following quotation is taken from a Catholic Truth Society pamphlet printed, with ecclesiastical approval, in February 1963: 'The non-Catholic ordinarily conceives of public worship as being a matter of hymns and psalms sung, of lessons read and sermons preached, of prayers read or extemporised by the minister, to which the congregation responds "Amen". And then he finds that Catholics do not go to church primarily to hear lessons or exhortations, nor even primarily to sing praises and say prayers (though they do all these things), but rather to take part in an *action*'.²² At first sight, the idea of an 'action' that does not consist of human words, songs or gestures, is simply unintelligible. On

¹⁹Rahner *op cit*, p 22.

²⁰CL 7 (Cf Fr Roguet's commentary on this article, in *La Maison-Dieu* 77, pp 25-7.)

²¹CL 33.

²²V. J. Matthews, *What's the Attraction?* p 13, author's stress.

examination, however, it becomes clear that what the author has in mind is a presence of the sacrifice of Christ (the 'action') which does not consist in the rite itself.²³ Here the basic principles of sacramentality have been abandoned. In their place we have an invisible and inaudible 'action', superimposed on which are prayers, readings and songs which are not an integral part of the action. This attitude of mind produces, on the one hand, an understanding of the presence and action of Christ which comes perilously close to magic and, on the other, a dead and ultimately irrelevant ritualism. Indeed, as the author admits, the visitor may be surprised by the fact that the prayers are often said 'in a way he does not consider "reverent" . . . (that) the priest seems to be going on his way detached from the people who, the onlooker thinks, are "taking no part"'.²⁴

It is worth considering, in more detail, one aspect of this matter of 'sacramental authenticity'. Following article 33 of the *Constitution*, it is clear that all the public prayers in the liturgy must be intelligible to the entire assembly (there are certain private devotions of the celebrant which do not come into this category, and which will probably disappear in the current reforms). It is this doctrinal demand for intelligibility that is the underlying reason for the increased use of the vernacular. Not, be it noticed, that it follows automatically from this principle that all public prayers *must* be in the vernacular. There may be other considerations which would militate for the retention of Latin (hence article 54 of the *Constitution*), but one such consideration could never be a denial of the people's right²⁵ to an intelligible worship 'so that they may offer him (God) their rational service and more abundantly receive his grace'.

St Thomas is quite clear, not only that public prayer should be intelligible, but that the primary justification for the use of words in prayer at all is not for the sake of God, who does not need them, but for the sake of the people, in whose name the prayer is being made, even when it is not formally addressed to them: 'public prayer is that which is offered to God by the ministers of the church on behalf of the whole faithful people; it therefore follows that such prayer should come to the knowledge of the whole people for whom it is offered: and this would be impossible unless it were vocal prayer. Therefore it is reasonably ordained that the ministers of the church should say these prayers in a loud voice, so that they may come to the

²³He continues: 'Once the doctrine of the Mass as a real and true sacrifice . . . is realized . . . it is clear why it does not matter whether the actual words which the celebrant says can be heard or not' (*loc cit*).

²⁴*op cit* p 12.

²⁵In case the word 'right' seems rather strong, cf CL 14: 'Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people . . . is their *right* and duty by reason of their baptism'.

knowledge of all'.²⁶ There are two areas where this principle is, in practice, frequently ignored or implicitly denied. The first is the use of chants sung in such a manner that the words are unintelligible to the congregation, either because the language is unknown to them, or because a form of polyphony is used which obscures the words. Certainly it is true, above all in a period of transition, that there is an excellent case to be made out for the continued use of Latin chants and polyphony, but there is no justification for the common argument that the function of the choir is not to inform the people, but to give honour and glory to God. God is glorified in the rational service of his faithful people.²⁷

The second area where this confusion arises is more important: the great eucharistic prayer itself. The last few decades have seen arise an impressive consensus amongst historians of the liturgy to the effect that the 'silent canon' came about by accident, rather than design, and that the 'explanations' given for the practice, whether ancient or modern, are largely rationalizations of existing custom. As one recent study puts it: 'The basic (remote) reason for the introduction of the silent recitation of the Canon was the slow disappearance in the liturgy of that vivid corporate worship which characterized the Mass of the primitive centuries'.²⁸ All attempts to turn this accident into a matter of principle fall foul of the basic principles of sacramental theology that we are considering. For if there is any prayer in the mass which is said by the ministers of the church on behalf of the whole faithful people, it is the proclamation of the paschal mystery in the great prayer of thanksgiving.

Earlier in this essay, we had occasion to notice Archbishop Dwyer's admirable statement of the aims of liturgical reform. When, however,

²⁶ . . . communis quidem oratio est quae per ministros Ecclesiae in persona totius fidelis populi Deo offertur; et ideo oportet, quod talis oratio innotescat toti populo, pro quo offertur; quod non posset nisi esset vocalis: et ideo rationabiliter institutum est, ut ministri Ecclesiae hujusmodi orationes etiam alta voce pronuntiet, ut ad notitiam omnium possint pervenire (*Summa Theologica* IIa IIae 83. 12).

²⁷ CL 112 describes the place of music in the liturgy as being that of a 'munus ministeriale'. To find the significance of this phrase, so far as the sung *texts* are concerned, one has only to refer to a number of frequently ignored texts of the ordinary magisterium. So, for example, Urban VIII in 1643: 'Music is at the service of Holy Scripture, not Scripture at the service of music' (quoted by J. Gelineau, in his commentary on article 112 in *La Maison-Dieu* 77, pp 198). Or Benedict XIV, in his encyclical *Annus qui* (1749): 'If it is true, as we are informed, that figured music presents itself to the listening assembly as an object of pleasure because of the learned way in which the music is composed; if what the people relish in it is primarily the play of rhythm, the melody, the sweetness of the voices, and if most of the time *the words themselves cannot be clearly heard*; if all this is so, then in future it must be the other way round. The very opposite policy must henceforth prevail in the Church's singing. The very first concern must be to ensure that the words can be clearly heard without any difficulty' (quoted by J. Gelineau, in *Voices and Instruments in Christian Worship*, p 147).

²⁸ Charles A. Lewis, *The Silent Recitation of the Canon of the Mass*; quoted by F. McManus in *Worship* 1962, p 660. For a fuller discussion, and bibliography, cf J. A. Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia* Vol III, pp 9-10 (in the French edition), and N. M. Denis-Boulet, in *L'Eglise en Prière* Desclée 1961, pp 384-5.

in the course of the same report to the *Consilium*, the Archbishop came to consider this precise question, his treatment seems difficult to reconcile with these principles. Speaking of the canon, he said: 'It is to be hoped that the rule will remain whereby it is normally said in a low voice by the celebrant; it seems not unimportant to form the christian people in the habit of contemplation and meditation. Moreover, when a part is reserved to the priest alone, the people are thereby instructed concerning the function of the ministerial priesthood. The function of the people, the idea of "the priesthood of all believers", already comes out well and sufficiently clearly in the liturgy of the word and elsewhere'.²⁹

In that passage, two distinct reasons are suggested as to why it is generally preferable for the canon to be said in a low voice. The first is that it is important to train the christian people in the art of contemplation and meditation. This is undoubtedly true. A mind that knows nothing of contemplative prayer will only with difficulty be capable of a participation in the liturgy that is anything other than superficial. Fortunately, the reform of the liturgy itself will lead to more, not less, contemplative prayer on the part of serious christians. Fed by the experience of a rich sharing in the sacramental expression of the christian mystery, they will find both an incentive to contemplative prayer, and the 'food' for it. Contemplation is an essential part of the christian life, but it is simply not the same thing as liturgical, common worship.³⁰ 'The spiritual life, however, is not by any means limited solely to participation in the liturgy. The Christian is indeed called to pray with his brethren, but he must also enter into his chamber to pray to the Father in secret'.³¹ But no moment in the liturgy is less suited, by its very nature, to being a time for practising private prayer (contemplation) than the proclamation of the saving mystery in the great eucharistic prayer. The logic of St Thomas' argument on the purpose of vocal prayer, and the movement of thought in article 33 of the *Constitution*, apply here with particular force. There are good arguments that can be presented for the retention (at least temporarily) of the 'silent canon', not the least of which is that people have perhaps not yet acquired a strong enough and deep enough habit of liturgical prayer. If this is the case, then the 'dislocation' of their current prayer habits that the saying of the canon aloud would undoubtedly involve, might render their partici-

²⁹*Sperandum est quod regula maneat ut normaliter submissa voce dicatur a celebrante; non parvi momenti videtur populum christianum formare etiam in habitu contemplationis et meditationis. Praeterea quando pars reservatur soli sacerdoti inculcatur populo doctrina de munere sacerdotali. Munus populo, notio 'sacerdotii omnium fidelium', bene et satis clare nunc apparent in liturgia Verbi et alibi (*Notitiae* 7-8, p 224).*

³⁰This is *not* to suggest that liturgical prayer should be any less personal, less deep, less *prayerful*, than contemplation. On this whole question, cf the papers of the Angers Congress of 1962 (published as *La Maison-Dieu* 72-73), especially those by the Bishop of Coutances: 'Peut-on prier dans la célébration liturgique?', and Père Gelineau: 'Les rythmes de la prière du Chrétien'.

³¹CL 12.

pation dangerously superficial. But the silent canon cannot be defended by an implicit denial of the principle that the purpose of using *words* in the liturgy is that those words should be intelligible to the entire assembly.

The second reason advanced in that passage is based on the fact that the saying of this prayer is the prerogative of the celebrant alone, and thus the reservation of this part of the mass to the priest will help to bring out the nature and function of the ministerial priesthood.³² It will certainly stress that there is a difference between the role of the priest and that of the people but, in the light of history, it is fairly certain that the resulting understanding of the nature of that difference will be a distorted and fundamentally non-Christian understanding of the concepts both of liturgy and of priesthood.³³ The whole liturgy pertains to the whole assembly: '... liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church . . . but they concern the individual members of the Church in different ways, according to their differing rank, office and activity'.³⁴ The liturgy knows nothing of a distribution of different parts of the mass to different people; it knows only of a distribution of function within the common action of the assembly. It cannot be that the priesthood of all believers is shown sufficiently in the liturgy of the word and elsewhere (excluding the canon), because this would suggest that this priesthood is only exercised outside the great eucharistic prayer. This is hard to reconcile with several passages in the council documents: 'Thus with no confusion, but each in his own way, they all play their own part in the liturgical action at the sacrificial offering and holy communion';³⁵ 'They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the immaculate victim not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves'.³⁶ In other words, both celebrant and people have a part

³²Jungmann (op cit III, p 10) records a tenth-century document in which this idea is formally stated (cf PL 105, 1326C).

³³This particular defence of the silent canon is only intelligible against the background of that tragic decline, in the Carolingian Empire, of an understanding of the mass as the celebration of the community, which Jungmann traces in detail (op cit I, pp 114ff). With the absence of a sense of the Christian assembly, with the loss of any sense of the mass as the act of thanksgiving of the Christian people, with the stress on the 'descent of the divine', there grew up a new *disciplina arcani*, which tried to shield the 'holy mysteries' not, this time, from the pagan world, but from the people of God themselves. To this end, infrequent communion, a low tone of voice, and an unintelligible language, were seen as positive advantages. 'Le prêtre seul peut entrer dans ce sanctuaire, tandis que le peuple, comme jadis lors du sacrifice de Zacharie, se tient dehors, attend et prie' (Jungmann op cit III, p 115).

It was this mentality that was so shocked by the phrase 'qui tibi offerunt' in the canon that it added the phrase 'vel pro quibus tibi offerimus'. The conception of priesthood that is at work here is certainly one that stressed the difference between the role of the priest and that of the laity, but at what a cost!

³⁴CL 26.

³⁵CC 11.

³⁶CL 48.

to play in the canon, as in the other 'presidential prayers'. The part of the celebrant is to 'make the prayer', on behalf of himself and of all the people. The part of the people is to listen attentively and to assent to the prayer made in their name by answering 'Amen'. In this way are the nature and function both of the ministerial priesthood and of the priesthood of all believers shown forth in all clarity, and the 'great Amen' that closes the canon can only acquire full authenticity if the entire assembly has heard, and understood, the prayer to which it is assenting.

We have discussed this question of the silent canon in some detail, because it provides an excellent test-case as to the seriousness with which the principles of the *Constitution* are being followed through. As Hans Küng has said: '. . . all the reasons now advanced for the celebration of some parts in the mother tongue can certainly be applied to the other parts as well; and here let it be said once more: If there is one part of the mass that needs to be simplified, made intelligible, and really *proclaimed*, then that part is the eucharistic prayer, the canon. Much that seemed impossible five years ago has become possible today. Much that sounds unfamiliar today will be taken for granted in five years' time. The only thing that matters is to go as resolutely and boldly on to the end of the road as the Council has resolutely and boldly set out on it.'³⁷

The problem of liturgical reform is, of course, a much wider one than we have been able to indicate in a short essay. We have concentrated on the need to heal the division between faith and rite if our liturgical celebrations are to become authentically religious. But, if our celebration of the liturgy is truly to become the source of all our other activity as that community which is the sacrament of God's healing love in the world, then there is an even more fundamental division to be healed: that between liturgy and life.³⁸ The reform of the liturgy is an ecclesiological problem, because the relationship between pastors and people that is shown in the celebration of the liturgy must be, in concrete fact, the relationship that obtains in the daily affairs of the christian community. It is an ecumenical problem, because no reform of the catholic liturgy would be adequate that ignored the development taking place in other christian communities. It is a cultural problem, because, if the biblical culture of the liturgical forms is to become the culture of a people, it must find its proper relationship to a wider contemporary culture. It is an educational and political problem, because the community attitudes that we express in the liturgy must be the authentic expression of attitudes and concerns that dominate our ordinary social and political life. 'This sacred Council has several aims in view: it desires to impart an ever increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times

³⁷*The Changing Church* Sheed & Ward, pp 78–9.

³⁸Cf Brian Wicker *Culture and Liturgy* Sheed & Ward.

those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church. The Council *therefore* sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the promotion and reform of the liturgy'.³⁹ '... it must be clearly understood that the aim of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is not simply to bring about changes in the liturgical forms and texts but rather to give inspiration and encouragement to that instruction of the faithful and that pastoral activity which has the Liturgy for its source and finds in the Liturgy the height of its expression... Bishops, therefore, and all who labour with them in the priesthood, should organize *the whole of their pastoral mission* more and more round the Liturgy'.⁴⁰

Simply to point to a danger, without in any way suggesting concrete remedies, would be unconstructive. It is clear that the prime need is for all members of the community, but above all priests, teachers and parents, to become conscious of the full implications of liturgical reform. It is difficult to see how this can come about until, at the national and diocesan levels, there are pastoral liturgical commissions adequately performing their indispensable task.⁴¹ In many dioceses such commissions are established. It is hardly too much to say that the success of the programme of liturgical reform in this country over the next few years is very largely in their hands.

In conclusion, we can quote the words of Bishop Maziers, Auxiliary of Lyons, whose witness is all the more impressive in that he is not renowned for being a 'liturgist': 'It is certainly urgently necessary to render texts more intelligible, gestures more eloquent, to make our assemblies more prayerful and more truly communities, but all liturgical reform is stillborn unless it is governed by the desire both to feed faith, and to share it. Liturgical renewal opens out into dialogue: the dialogue of men with God, the brotherly dialogue of men amongst themselves, the dialogue of those who believe with those who seek. The dialogue of christians in the eucharistic community is authentic in the measure in which it is shot through with a concern to break bread with those who are hungry'.⁴²

³⁹CL I.

⁴⁰Instruction *Ad Exsequendam* Sept 1964, pars 5, 8.

⁴¹Cf *Mediator Dei* 1947, par 116 (in CRS trs). *Musica Sacra* 1958, art 118. CL 45.

Instruction *Ad Exsequendam* para 47. Some recent documents of the French national episcopal liturgical commission are models of what such a commission can do. For details, cf *Notes Pastorales Liturgiques* 53, 56, 58. It goes without saying that documents alone are insufficient: but they are a beginning.

⁴²Il est certes nécessaire et urgent de rendre les textes plus compréhensibles, les gestes plus parlants, les assemblées plus priantes et communitaires, mais toute réforme liturgique resterait inopérante si elle n'était pas orientée par le désir de nourrir la foi, de la partager. Le renouveau liturgique débouche sur le dialogue: dialogue de l'homme avec Dieu, dialogue fraternel des hommes entre eux, dialogue de ceux qui croient avec ceux qui cherchent. Le dialogue des chrétiens dans la communauté eucharistique est d'autant plus vrai qu'il est éclairé par le souci de partager le pain avec ceux qui ont faim ('La Liturgie dans une Eglise en état de Mission', in *La Maison-Dieu*, 79 p 26).