

A Liturgical Reformer Sums Up by H. A. Reinhold

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It is quite evident that the 'new' Mass arouses so much comment and genuine interest that people approach many of us older 'pioneers' with a sincere expression of good will on their lips. Naturally they want to know how it feels to belong to the winning team! But could it be that we find it disappointing to witness what is only a superficial outward change? That the outward changes should attract so much comment, favourable and unfavourable, is only natural: we cannot look inside people and can only judge what appears. Nevertheless we maintain that a truly internal reform will follow naturally if things are left to develop. After all, that has always been our whole thesis. Things were left to the 'unliturgical' forces for too long and never had a proper chance to follow a theology inspired by the Bible and the sacramental system. *Quod erat demonstrandum* finds its first chance only now. While the unexpected vote on all phases of the Constitution on the Liturgy was in itself almost miraculous, we cannot pin our hopes of a 'follow-through' on another miracle. What we now need is hard work and intelligence (and, above all, prayer).

The slightest contact with the liturgical movements of forty years ago gave the impression that few 'liturgists' had any changes or reforms in mind which would give the people a more profound understanding of what they were supposed to *do* with their 'whole hearts and minds'. Pius X had told the world that he wanted popular participation and that he regarded the liturgy as the principal conveyor of grace and of the power to live a Christian life in the modern world. The saintly pope said these things to a world which was poorly equipped to grasp the newness of the task. His message was not exactly ignored but it found little response, because other tasks seemed more important, and Pius in any case died too soon to follow up his inspired message. His two immediate successors – Benedict XV and Pius XI – were taken up with other matters which seemed of greater concern to the Curia. The one man who really acted, Cardinal Lafontaine, Patriarch of Venice, like Pius X, was eased out of his real job in a true example of *promoveatur ut amoveatur* (which in English means 'being kicked upstairs'). He carried with him as a monument the accomplished reform of the Monastic Office which for years was the envy of us all, because of its near classical simplicity and its calendar which reduced the *sanctorale* to a shape that

did not disturb the true structure of the office, whose centre is Christ, the Risen God-Man.

In the meantime, we had two sets of dreams for the future which buoyed us up when times got bad. One I tried to express in 'My Dream Mass' (*Orate Fratres*, vol 14, p 265–270), the vision of an ideal mass, in English almost 35 years before it happened – and pretty accurate at that! For there was nothing at the time which could have foretold the advent of the vernacular in the liturgy by the 1960's. When you thought of the thousand years of Latin and the discouragement of your hopes all around you, you could not help feeling despondent. Even Europe was not hopeful. Then came the day on which Fr William Leonard, S.J., announced to us publicly, 'English is coming and nobody can stop it'. This was indeed a victory, because he was 'our Jesuit' and 'as they went', the rest would go. It was a victory on one front only, true, but with it all the other fronts would go. And they did.

Just to see the whole picture, let us remember the externals, for the spiritual growth was admittedly still ahead and *Mediator Dei* appeared in 1947. It had given us to understand that 'liturgism' was accepted with certain qualifications. To compare the present with the past gives the feeling one has after a decisive battle in a major war. Stalingrad was not the end of the Russian war, but victory was certain from then on. There were setbacks, like the ominous *Veterum Sapientia* on the very eve of the Vatican Council. The excitement (in America, at least) was tremendous. It looked as if doomsday had come; the blow was hard. In fact it may have attained the victory for us, by showing us the futility of stemming the tide. It showed the world what really was at stake.

The Liturgical Commission came to the Council as much the best prepared. It was no wonder that it should have been the first to finish and to set the tone for the Council. With the favourable vote something like two thousand to two hundred, it was a foregone conclusion that the bishops of the world were on our side, notwithstanding the caution and hesitations which became evident on their return to their sees. They were at first not very encouraging. But after all is said and done, we owe them now the victory which they with moral courage won for us. It would be churlish to call the Holy Ghost in and make him responsible for this change of attitude, which depended, too, on natural reason. The sense of the Church of the future – the missions, the proletariat of the leading countries of Europe, Asia, Latin America and other exposed battle fronts of the Church militant – had much to do with it. Most bishops seem to have generously thought of worldwide responsibilities, not their own. What hope had we then for seeing the liturgical reforms being actually carried through? In the beginning, to be blunt, very little.

There had been the promise of St Pius X that a reform of the liturgy was needed; it was prepared and there was the evidence that his

reform was only a truncated beginning. All that was actually carried through was the reflection of his new attitude towards early and frequent communion. But here it soon became evident that a gross misunderstanding prevailed. The idea of the pope had not been quantitative, simply more communions. What he had intended was not so much increased numbers, but a more thorough understanding and an integration of the mass-communion, communion *within* the structure of the 'Lord's Supper'. To this day only the one task has been mastered: frequent and numerous communions often without a change in attitude. A rebirth of the early Christian understanding of the Mystery in its wholeness was needed. This was poorly understood. There was a latent quietism. What was gained by merely adding communions to communions without getting to the root of the mystery? Did the pope have in mind something more thorough-going than the light-hearted way in which the average Christian received the sacrament under the new régime? To withhold the second species for the reasons given (the completeness of transubstantiation) was certainly dogmatically correct but in *genere signi* a makeshift affair and not all convincing.

This one instance shows quite plainly that the reforms of St Pius X, good as they were, had left open for cultivation a wide field of promise and continuation. It was Pius' merit that perspectives were thrown open through his reform and through the promises which were laid down in his decrees. They were rarely referred to, or at least only with great caution. And Benedict XV in a way turned the clock back and left the world with an uneasy feeling. His monument in this field was the famous incident of the separation of the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* which lasted long enough to give two generations of Catholics the idea that there was such a thing as 'a' *Benedictus*. The separation was a necessity in the prolix masses of latter days but was a nonsensical arrangement for a Requiem. But nothing was as obediently guarded as this misbegotten little 'reform'. It was a field day for the rubrician's passion for confusing liturgy with rubricism. This idea is still so widespread among the faithful that they are often uneasy in their newly won freedom: they clamour for rules and feel insecure with the new adaptable 'rubrics'. When the new dispensation offers three or four ways of reading or singing of the texts – at the ambo or the edge of the sanctuary or at the clergy bench or even at the altar – these rubric-fed men are unhappy and fear that the Church has been *given* a freedom to commit slow suicide. They refuse to be free, and their attitude will prevail unless they begin to understand that here we have a true case of education for freedom.

After forty years in the priesthood in Europe and America I feel a little shaken by the sudden blessings bestowed on us 'reformers' by Pius XII and Vatican II. In our most audacious dreams we hardly hoped to see the day when the Easter Vigil not only was moved into its almost-proper

place at midnight, but was also thoroughly revised, guided by a sense of history and tempered by pastoral considerations (or was it more correct to reverse the two, and thus make pastoral considerations the guiding spirit in all of this?). This action of Pius XII which came as such a surprise was clearly an indication of how the total reform of the liturgy could be handled. This was a great assurance for all in the liturgical movement. Certainly the Easter Vigil is not perfect. It is still too long for the average parish church, but when it was followed by the reform of the whole of Holy Week it was noticed that a few rough edges had quietly been adapted to the wishes of the clergy and people. But it is not enough, and we hope that the final missal, which we have reason to expect in five years or thereabouts, will contain a Vigil at the time of sunrise and a few more accommodations which will draw the faithful permanently, not only out of curiosity and once or twice.

These are the things we had hoped for and which had been kept alive through the private meetings of international experts in the European centres: Maria Laach, Louvain, Ste Odile, Lugano and Montserrat. The climax came in Assisi in 1956, especially when the American delegates appeared with a long list of wishes which was carefully released to the public before the meeting had even begun. This list was subjective and untroubled by historical considerations, but it certainly carried the banner forward, although the bearer, Archbishop O'Hara, died in Milan on his way to the meeting. His death could not have come in a more 'blessing in disguise' fashion than it did: the message he bore would certainly never have been read had he lived. Someone would have prevailed and dissuaded him from publishing it. This list of *reformanda* was comprehensive and certainly convinced the European liturgists of the determination of their American friends. The curious thing about the message is that the English and Irish Catholics were hardly to be found among its supporters.

The Holy Week reform which was received with such enthusiasm on one hand, and with such ill grace on the other, was a promise that the great reform was coming and would be in the right direction. This second consideration is of the utmost importance: just imagine what would have happened if the reform had been put in the hands of men with no understanding of history, people of great piety but without knowledge of the historically developed body of the liturgy! What would have happened can easily be guessed by a look at the damage already inflicted *via* the introit of the mass for the feast of the Seven Dolours and the collect of St Jean Baptiste de La Salle. Or the substitution of the feast of the Holy Family for the Christologically centred Sunday within the octave of Epiphany. Here we have two or three samples of 'liturgical' reform from which the Lord may protect us.

Once the Holy Week reform was assured there was a certain guarantee

that liturgical change would proceed along the same scholarly and pastorally-inspired lines, although there lurked the danger of incidents like the publication of *Veterum Sapientia*. Had the document been more moderate and less authoritarian, it might have been serious cause for worry. Those who read it carefully detected that it really was not the attack on the reform of the liturgy that had been long feared, but a blow at the ignorance of Latin in the schools that had itself fostered this attitude.

We are not yet halfway through the liturgy reforms. There is, therefore, no reason to shout victory. An inept handling of their introduction could lead to a stalemate which might continue for a long time and cool the enthusiasm of the supporters of such a noble endeavour. The sources of ideas can dry up by delay: the simple fact that scholars may die before the work is accomplished may affect its quality, and the resulting tiredness may create a taste for compromise according to the French saying *Ce n'est que le provisoire qui reste* ('only the makeshift lasts').

But as John XXIII said so often, he did not care for the prophets of doom, so a look of what is already a matter of history and achievement will be more constructive than apprehensions. Some irreversible steps have been taken and have made it impossible that they should be wiped out. The world has caught fire and the fire is spreading as the Holy Spirit spreads and sets the world on flame. It all goes together, even if it is not the liturgy itself which is being remade: the stabilizing of evening mass, the new regulations governing fasting and abstinence, the toleration of the ample vestments, so long forbidden and re-forbidden, concelebration and communion under both species, the redirection of the worship *through* the Holy Eucharist (as opposed to the devotion to the means instead of the end) and the consequent recognition that many forms of veneration of the Holy Eucharist have seen their day. So too, the cutting away of many excrescences, like the Leonine prayers after Mass and, even more remarkable, of the Last Gospel, which was far too weighty to be used in such a stopgap position. The reawakening of the sacred Great Doxology at the end of the Canon was considered 'impossible' and an idealist's dream; and here it is now in all its simple majesty. The visible reshaping of the parts of the great mystery into the Service of the Word and the Service of the Eucharist could not have been clearer, and yet shortly before it was adopted it was dangerous to mention it, as it was supposed to smack of 'Protestantism', which only proved that its Catholic origin and thousand years of use was unknown. The whole mass rite will become so simple and clear that its ancient historical beauty is already quite evident, even now in its still unfinished state. With the removal of the Service of the Word to the clergy bench or the ambo (formerly the pulpit), the Service of the Word has become an entity of its own, and quite compelling at that. The sacred text, the

Word of God, is no longer part of a mysterious rite, words muttered in the dark of the sanctuary, unless you were able to 'follow' it with your own private text in your missal. This private devotion was never comparable to the living participation in which all are addressed and taken into the celebrant's 'secret', openly pronounced and addressed to live and awake listeners.

The question arises: are the followers of the liturgical movement satisfied? Is it enough and are these the things we really hoped and prayed for? Is this the way in which we would have liked to have seen it introduced? To start with myself, I must say, that with few exceptions, I am deeply satisfied, and so must be those among us who accepted my book on the reform of the Mass (*Bringing the Mass to the People*, Burns & Oates, 1960). It was not too well received by the reading public, especially by several bishops, because it seemed too radical to them. They must have changed their minds, or else they voted with the minority of the Council. In view of the fact that it was written in 1958, it was most timely and it was sorely needed, because, as I said in the introduction, it was meant to be read by bishops and priests to prevent acute *admiratio populi*, something that happened to the unprepared clergy at the time of the restoration of the rites of Holy Week. I deliberately chose the most advanced positions taken by those who had expressed views on any kind of liturgical reform. I claimed neither a secret channel to Rome, nor 'leaks', nor special assistance of the Holy Ghost. It all happened in the most natural way: close attention to the liturgical writings and to liturgists, and a consuming interest in the matter at hand. When one has been forty years a labourer in the field one cannot avoid soaking up information in the field of one's interest. It helped that I was a life long friend of such mines of information as Dom Odo Casel and many more.

I remember the day when I first heard that the General Superior of one of the most influential and powerful religious orders had addressed a letter to his subjects bidding them to cease all opposition and destructive criticism of the liturgical apostolate and to co-operate instead. This had been done privately, yet the impact was immediately felt all over the world. We had been marching around Jericho blowing trumpets and the walls of the city had caved in. Other minor orders followed. What followed is history, especially since Pope John and his Council became ineradicable facts. And nowhere had the subject been studied more thoroughly than in the field of liturgy. No wonder the Liturgical Commission was asked to open the Vatican Council's work. Its vote of acceptance was so overwhelming that one was almost tempted to assume that it could not be true: it *was* the truth. We now daily see the victory of the historical and the pastoral when we offer Mass. What used to make the liturgy of the Church quaint and 'mysterious' has by

now yielded to our experience of a pure mystery of faith. The very fact of, for instance, the ending of the Mass (as it now temporarily stands, until the final reform) in a transition is a great discovery. After the celebrating members have received the Body of Christ there is a plain after-communion rite; the dismissal of the faithful and a blessing and that is the end. The long, or short, thanksgiving of the clergy and the laity is left to the individual. Holy Communion has been liberated from set formulas and is now on its own. It is strange that those who have such great fear of the impersonal character of the liturgy fail to see this and to seize it. Here is the great wedding of private and ecclesial piety. The first glimpse of this 'consecration of the private sphere' came with the understanding of the short silence after the *Oremus* before the declaration of the liturgical prayer. It had always been there, but as an empty ceremony only. It actually was there without being recognized for what it is.

This courageous cutting through the complexity of rubrics can be realized in more than a dozen similar places and will aid in the reinstatement of the private sphere of devotion. Instead of harnessing the private devotion to a special place outside the liturgy, it is now legitimately part and parcel of it. The only thing we regret is its reception by some of the parish clergy: it has been decidedly cool and without true understanding. Open rebellion is preached by only a few, but the very threat of the possibility is bad enough. How much of the Tridentine reform was to remain a dead letter! We can only hope that nothing like the movement of the Old Believers of Russia will happen in the West. There a few stubborn clergy led a rebellion against the introduction of a few mild reforms and stayed in schism for several hundred years.

The greatest gains, partly unexpected, partly wishfully thought of as remote possibilities, are the complete reform of the Mass, the acceptance of the vernacular (especially with such wide ranges as are provided by the Constitution), concelebration and the degree to which the *temporale* has taken the place of the *sanctorale*. But the whole attitude has changed. All this was foreshadowed by the reforms of Pius XII who conceived them long before the Council and put the boat on the right course. Not piecemeal patching but fully documented reform, that was his conception as is shown by the Holy Week and breviary reforms. He had the ideas, and John XXIII was the right man to execute them.

The amount of reform still to come is enormous, especially in the field of the liturgy. What we have seen so far is only what affects the congregation. The inner reform is yet to come. What has been done is an application of Vincent of Lerins' famous dictum: *Lex orandi legem statuat agendi* in reverse: the prayer of the Church will form the Church's thinking. Because, behind all the manifold changes made in the external, the visible and audible field of expression will reshape our concepts,

among which the most fruitful is the total complex of mystery. It is a pity, humanly speaking, that the pioneers are dead and have not seen in their lifetime what we owe them. Odo Casel, Lambert Beauduin, Abbot Herwegen are gone, and their task has been taken over by the next generation which is too numerous to enumerate. But that is human fate and it cannot detract from our joy. After all, the next generation stands on the shoulders, depends on the strong wills, minds, and hearts of its forerunners.

Newman on Clerical Education

'I have little belief in true vocations being destroyed by contact with the world – I don't mean contact with sin and evil – but that contact with the world which consists of such intercourse as is natural and necessary. Many boys seem to have vocations, in whom it is but appearance. They go to school, and the appearance fades away – and then people may say, "They have lost their vocation", when they never had one. In such cases, it is, on the other hand, rather a positive good that they and their parents were not deceived. What I shrink from with dread, as the more likely danger, is not the Church losing priests whom she ought to have had, but gaining priests whom she never should have been burdened with. The thought is awful, that boys should have had no trial of their heart, till at the end of some fourteen years they go out into the world with the most solemn vows upon them, and then, perhaps for the first time, learn that the world is not always a seminary; when they exchange the atmosphere of the church, the lecture-room and the study, the horarium of devotion, work, meals and recreation for this most bright, various and seductive world'.

Letter to Edward Bellasis: quoted in *Memorials of Mr Serjeant Bellasis*,
London 1893, pp. 151–2