A Lifetime of Liturgy

Maurice Taylor

A LIFETIME OF LITURGY

BEFORE, AT AND AFTER VATICAN II

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

To mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, the Church is celebrating a "Year of Faith". It began on 11th October 2012, exactly fifty years to the day from the start of Vatican II, and continues to the feast of Christ the King on 24th November 2013, just before Advent that year.

During the Year of Faith, we are recalling the events of the Council and studying its various documents. My particular interest being liturgy, I have spent quite a lot of time on that subject, re-reading the Council's document, the Constitution on the Liturgy, usually called *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (the first two words of its Latin text). I have been invited to lead several discussions and give some talks on the Constitution. My knowledge of the Constitution as well as my appreciation of its teaching about the liturgy, and especially on the Eucharist, are both being deepened as a result.

Moreover, I have been thinking more widely about the Church's liturgy and especially on my own experience of the way that we celebrate Mass and the various changes and adaptations that have taken place in it during my life. From those thoughts, the idea of this article emerged. One of its aims is to share with readers some of the memories I have. If you are old enough, they will probably revive your own memories; if you are not, you will, I hope, be interested in learning the varied range of ways, bizarre sometimes and laboured on other occasions, in which we used to celebrate the Church's liturgy and, specifically, the Mass. That is my purpose in the first part of this article.

The second part is a somewhat more serious attempt to review the Liturgy of the Eucharist as reformed by the Council, to explain the changes and to uncover the hidden riches of the Roman rite of Mass, as celebrated in accordance with the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of the Second Vatican Council.

SOME PRE-CONCILIAR RECOLLECTIONS

IN THE 1930s AND 1940s

Having been born in 1926, I first became conscious of going to church and being at Mass sometime in the early 1930s. As a family comprising father, mother and children we went to Mass every Sunday morning in St Cuthbert's church, Burnbank, Hamilton, which at that time was in the archdiocese of Glasgow. There were several Masses each Sunday morning: at 8 o'clock, 9.15, 10.30 (principally for schoolchildren) and 12 noon (the only one with singing).

We normally attended the first Mass, at which the church was only half-full although on two Sundays every month the Men's and the Women's Sacred Heart Confraternities occupied the central nave of the church. There were also monthly Masses for the Children of Mary (females, teenage and young adults) and the Boys' Guild (males, similar age range). The 10.30 Mass attracted most of the children who

were pupils at the local Catholic primary school. Some of the teachers supervised them while the head teacher led them, phrase by phrase, through Prayers Before and After Holy Communion, with a brief silent break during the Consecration. The last Mass was one that many people, including our family, avoided because (a) it was longer than the others with a choir which sang hymns (with some of the congregation joining in) and even some parts of the Mass: *Gloria, Credo, Sanctus* and/or *Agnus Dei*; and (b) only the priest received Holy Communion since the required Eucharistic fast was total, including even water, and from the previous midnight.

In those days, the attendance at Sunday Mass was much greater than now; at least double the numbers, I should guess. In particular, there were very few primary school children who missed Mass since, on Monday morning, they were brought to the front of the class to be lectured and shamed (and perhaps even given corporal punishment, although I cannot be sure of this). One or other of my siblings frequently was publicly scolded for not having been at the children's Mass, having attended an earlier Mass with the rest of our family.

The general view, in the 1930s and later, was that Mass in the Roman rite was unchangeable and fixed for all time to come; the Council of Trent and Pope Pius V had, in the sixteenth century, made all the changes that we would ever need. Certainly, there were liturgical seasons and there were three prayers said by the priest - Collect, Secret and Post-Communion – which varied from Sunday to Sunday. In addition, the Epistle, Gradual Psalm and Gospel were different each week. The passages chosen were appropriate at special times such as Lent and Easter, Advent and Christmas, but during the rest of the year they seemed to have been completely randomly selected and without any continuity in the passages from week to week. The rest of the Mass was exactly the same each week and, of course, only one Eucharistic Prayer, in those days called the Canon of the Mass, was available.

The entire Mass was in Latin (except for a few words in Hebrew and Greek). On Sundays, however, a break occurred between the Gospel and the Creed, when the priest left the altar, ascended the pulpit, read the announcements for the week, followed by English translations of the Epistle and Gospel already read in Latin, and gave a sermon, which often followed a programme of doctrinal catechesis set for the whole year and therefore unconnected with the Readings used at Mass that week. From time to time, this break in Mass also contained the reading of the names, street by street, of each parishioner or family and the amount each had given at the quarterly collections which the priest had gathered in house to house visits.

The priest celebrated every part of the Mass at the altar with his back to the people. Sometimes the Latin was said audibly; at other times, especially during the Canon, it was entirely silent. Holy Communion for the laity was under the form of bread only, received on the tongue, and kneeling at the altar rails; and mostly from hosts taken from the tabernacle and therefore previously consecrated. The congregation had nothing to say, except the second half of the Hail Mary, recited three times as a postscript at the end of Mass, followed by the Hail, holy Queen and a few other prayers said by the priest in English and ending with an invocation and response to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, all these being "for the conversion of Russia". The requisite responses during Mass, such as *Amen, Et cum spiritu tuo, Deo gratias, Sed libera nos a malo* and others, were said only by the (young male) altar server(s).

We never questioned or doubted the rubrics and rules for the celebration of Mass. No wonder that we spoke of the priest "saying" Mass and the congregation "hearing" Mass. Those verbs were only too true.

Although there is a basic and essential continuity between the Mass in those days and the Mass nowadays, there were also a great number of differences, of which the following are the main ones. The priest and server(s) started Mass by saying Psalm 42 and the *Confiteor* (at the foot of the steps leading up to the altar); the Scripture readings were, on most occasions, set down with little or no attempt at relevance or continuity; there were no General Intercessions; the "Offertory" was longer, more complicated and often used language that spoke of the unconsecrated bread and wine in sacrificial terms; the Greeting of Peace did not occur, nor did Communion from the chalice for the laity. The shallowness of our understanding of the Mass and its "Liturgy of the Word" and "Liturgy of the Eucharist" is demonstrated by the rule that, although to miss Mass on Sunday through one's own fault was a mortal sin, it was only a venial sin as long as one managed to be present for the Offertory, the Consecration and the Priest's Communion. Although the priest remained at the altar for all parts of the Mass and was mostly at the centre of the altar, he did move sometimes to one end of the table or the other. Finally, the priest had to learn to perform many different gestures as he "said" Mass; above all there were a great number of little crosses or blessings that had to be performed by the priest's hand over the elements, ten before and fifteen after the Consecration. Some priests performed these crosses so rapidly and vigorously that the effect, seen by the congregation, was of a violent agitation of the back of the chasuble.

An allegorical explanation of the Mass was popular in those days, various elements being thought to represent items or moments connected with Our Lord's Passion and Death. For example, the priest's vestments represented different garments with which his judges clothed Jesus or cords and ropes which bound him during his trial and journey to Calvary, although the chasuble, with a cross on the back, also stood for his cross; the steps to the altar represented the hill of Calvary. An amice and a cincture, now used only if the priest wishes, and a maniple were always worn. The last, of the same heavy material as the chasuble and stole, had originally (in the early centuries of the Church) been the celebrant's handkerchief, I believe. It was worn on the left forearm; for some odd reason, a bishop had the maniple put on his arm only after the *Confiteor.*

What did the congregation do during Mass? In theory, we paid attention to what the priest was doing. Some had missals in English that allowed them to follow what the priest was saying; there were Sunday Missals and Daily Missals for that purpose. Many people did not have missals but some had other prayer books to read during Mass: *The Key of Heaven* and *The Treasury of the Sacred Heart* were two such books that had some Mass prayers. Some of the congregation said the rosary quietly during Mass. In some parishes, during May and October, the rosary was recited publicly by the congregation while the priest celebrated Mass, although there was a break for silence at the Consecration. Of course, many in the congregation on Sunday gave no visible sign either of book or rosary but may have been trying to watch the priest with care and devotion. In the parish in which I lived as a child, the church pews were covered with carved names of various people, either of the carver himself or of a friend or foe, testifying to the skill in wood of some parishioners of generations past and present as well as to the distractions which had interrupted their attention to the Mass.

It is inaccurate to say that there was no active participation at all by the congregation at Mass in those days. We could leave our seats and go to the altar rails to kneel and receive Holy Communion and, of course, adults could contribute to the collections. My experience was of three collections each Sunday. The first was at the door of the church, as we entered; the second was as the plate was passed from seat to seat at the Offertory; and the last, as we left the church, was for the poor, into a box held by a member of the local branch of the St Vincent de Paul Society. The amount given at each of these collections was, by today's values, very small – a penny, a "threepenny bit", at the most a sixpence. It used to embarrass me that my father, on entering the church, would often place a sixpenny coin or a shilling on the table and wait to receive change from the passkeeper on duty. (References are to pre-decimal coins!)

For some years I was an altar server in our parish, probably from about the age of seven or eight until I was twelve (i.e., from 1933 until 1938). I enjoyed the experience, after I had got over early nervousness and had become familiar with the actions one had to carry out before, during and after Mass, as well as the various responses and other words, nearly all in Latin but a few in Greek, which one had to say. It was all quite complicated and, of course, reliability and punctuality were essential. There were any number of mistakes that could be, and were, made. Perhaps the most common, and one of which I remember being guilty early in my career as an altar boy, was to allow the Missal to slip off its brass stand and fall to the floor, as the server carried it from one side of the altar, down the steps, genuflecting at the foot, then up the steps to the other side of the altar. This manoeuvre was required because the Epistle was read at one end of the altar and the Gospel at the other.

Priests varied in their reaction to altar boys and their mistakes. Some were short-tempered and therefore feared although, of course, most were quite friendly, to varying degrees. Visiting priests were an unknown quantity and therefore caused us to be very nervous. Although the manner of celebrating Mass in those days was so regulated and unvaried, priests did have their idiosyncrasies and we had to be alert to spot our "cues" for action or response.

I had a great uncle who was a Benedictine priest. He came to see us only very, very occasionally; consequently, he was more of a legend than a reality but, on one occasion, when our family was on holiday in Millport, we were told that he was coming to spend a few days with us. He was elderly and ascetic-looking, but to me he looked ancient, grim and frightening. To my dismay, he was told by someone that I would serve his Masses in the local church. I was very nervous, unused to the church in Millport and most anxious to do well despite what seemed to me to be his strange way of celebrating Mass. Later, at breakfast with the family, someone asked him how I had done as his server. "He was all right and will probably be quite good when he has had more practice", he said. His verdict greatly hurt me (proved by my still remembering what he said). Of course, no one asked me how well I thought he had said Mass.

In pre-Vatican II days, the source which was consulted to be sure of the correct rubrics for the celebration of Mass in any of its various forms was Adrian Fortescue's meticulously thorough book, *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described.* I had never heard of the book until I went to the seminary in August 1942. I had completed secondary school and went to Blairs College, near Aberdeen, to begin two years of

the philosophy course for the diocesan priesthood. (Blairs, I should mention, was a junior seminary but, because the Scottish major seminaries abroad were closed during the Second World War, students for the first two years of tertiary education for the priesthood were accommodated in Blairs College).

At Blairs, our daily Mass (including Sunday mornings), for the forty or so philosophy students, was a "low Mass", similar to that with which I had been familiar at home. But, later on Sunday mornings, we went with the junior seminarians and a few local parishioners to the large and beautiful neo-gothic college chapel for a "high Mass". There was one celebrant (a priest member of staff), a deacon and subdeacon (both of these being priests and staff members), and full plainchant singing of the parts, both common and proper. Only the priest celebrant received Holy Communion since those were the days when a total fast from midnight was required and we had all been at an earlier low Mass at which we had received Holy Communion, although, of course, only under the form of bread.

For some reason, the sermon at those high Masses was delayed until after the conclusion of the liturgy, when another priest, who had merely attended Mass, appeared and preached. This anomalous practice allowed the further oddity that only two, or at the most three, priests took on the weekly responsibility of the sermon, the others seemingly glad to have one of their few willing colleagues carry out the duty for them. The sermon was often on the feast or season of the time and, on other occasions, at the choice of the preacher; but the idea of the homily, as we now know it, was unknown or ignored. Occasionally, we had the opportunity of serving the high Mass, either as torch-bearer or thurifer or, a special privilege, as master of ceremonies. In my two years at Blairs I had the privilege of being master of ceremonies twice; it was a duty which I performed nervously and carefully but with great personal satisfaction.

From 1944 until 1947 I was in the army, in turn stationed in Britain, Belfast, India and the Suez Canal Zone. On some Sundays I was unable to get to Mass – usually because none was available, rather than due to my duties – while at other times I had the pleasure of being at Mass more frequently than only on Sundays. I often got to know personally the chaplain or the local priest of the place where we were stationed. On such occasions the priest sometimes befriended me and I was delighted to have the chance of serving Mass and also acting as a kind of sacristan. There were no elaborate Masses, of course, and sometimes the Masses were celebrated under cramped conditions. I therefore have no distinct memories of noteworthy celebrations of the Liturgy of Mass during my years as a soldier.

On my release from military service, I was sent to Rome, and to the Pontifical Scots College there, to study the requisite four years of theology. We had low Mass seven days a week, very early in the morning, in the college chapel and then, on Sundays after breakfast, a high Mass if, among the students, there were deacons and/or subdeacons; if not, we had what was called a *Missa Cantata,* celebrated by one of the four priests who formed the resident staff of the college. The *Missa Cantata* was very similar to a high Mass but without deacon and subdeacon; but all parts, both proper and common, that were meant to be sung were sung. Only the priest celebrant received Holy Communion at these Masses and there was a sermon after the gospel, given, if possible, by a student deacon. Priests in those days seemed reluctant, at least in the seminaries where I was a student, to exercise the ministry of preaching.

Quite often, of course, we had the opportunity in Rome of being at Mass in one or other of the basilicas or churches of the city. Occasionally, it was the college community which provided the personnel (ministers and servers). More often, we were in St Peter's basilica for a papal occasion and so witnessed the liturgical ceremonies there. They were long, splendid and very elaborate. However, at least in retrospect, I think that they left a lot to be desired if measured by their prayerfulness. Of course, there was no congregational participation, but the activities around the altar were prolonged and intricate, containing innumerable marks of respect towards the celebrant. A cynic might have described the ceremonies as, largely, liturgical grovelling. The singing by the Sistine choir was no doubt of Mass settings and hymns by highly esteemed composers; for me, however, their rendition (*esecuzione* in Italian - an apt comment) was almost completely unpleasant, being long, tuneless and very noisy. I almost used the word "cacophony", but prefer not to comment further.

IN THE 1950s

My impression is that, in Scotland even in those early post-war years and, no doubt, in many other countries, the Mass of the Roman rite was accepted without any thought that it needed to be changed or even might be changed in the foreseeable future. Interest in the liturgy, and especially on the possibility of its reform, was regarded by most as rather eccentric.

At the same time, in spite of the very limited active participation permitted to the laity in those days, it would be wrong to imagine that there was a lack of respect or of devotion or that "going to Mass" was less central or less important than nowadays. In fact, people attended Mass in greater numbers than they do now and there was, I think, a greater sense of respect, even of awe, for the sacredness of the Eucharist and of "church things" in general. That does not, of course, imply any desire to revert to those days and to that rather deprived, and placidly accepted, role allotted to the lay people at Mass.

Contrary to the normal apathy and acceptance of things as they were and "always had been", there was slowly increasing interest in the Church's liturgy in some parts of the world. "The liturgical movement", as it came to be called, had begun in the early years of the twentieth century and very gradually had become better known, especially through the books and articles of a number of liturgists and the experience of various Benedictine monasteries. The use of plainchant became more common and there was a desire that it should be as authentic as possible.

The liturgical movement received encouragement during the pontificate of Pius XII (1939-58). Two of his encyclical letters, *Mystici Corporis* (1943) and *Mediator Dei* (1947) were influential. In addition, the same pope, in an Apostolic Constitution of 1953 and, even more, in the *Motu Proprio "Sacram Communionem"* of 1957, decreed that Mass could be celebrated at any pastorally suitable hour of the day (rather than restricted to the morning hours) and reduced the required fast before receiving Holy Communion (until then, from midnight) to three hours for food and alcoholic drink and one hour for other liquids, abolishing the fast entirely for water. These changes were welcome but, of course, they improved only the time of day at which Mass might take place and relaxed the severity of the fast prior to a Mass. The numbers receiving Holy Communion and the frequency thereof were thus much increased. But no alteration was made to the manner of the celebration itself.

It was mainly in France, Germany and the Low Countries (and also in St John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota) that the liturgical movement was most enthusiastically promoted. However, Assisi was the venue for an International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy which took place in 1956. This was a very influential event which became even more widely known because Pope Pius XII sent the congress a very positive letter. In it, he wrote: "The liturgical movement is a sign of the providential dispositions of God for the present time and of the movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church". The papers delivered at Assisi were published and read with great interest in many countries. Awareness of the need for reform of the Roman rite was by now widespread and changes began to be announced by the Holy See. In addition to the *Motu Proprio "Sacram Communionem"* from the pope, the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1958 issued its "Instruction on Sacred Music and Sacred Liturgy". This document introduced many changes but, in comparison with the changes brought about by Vatican II, these, though welcomed at the time, were relatively minor.

One area of liturgy in the Roman rite – that of Holy Week – had been attracting a great deal of criticism over a number of years. Pope Pius XII had responded to the dissatisfaction by setting up a commission to consider reform of the liturgies of that week. Its deliberations resulted in the Sacred Congregation of Rites issuing the decree or instruction entitled *Ordo Hebdomadae Sanctae* which changed and regulated the ceremonies of Holy Week and especially those of Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil. The decree was issued in 1955 and came into use the following year. The changes it introduced for Holy Week later had their influence in the liturgical reform of Vatican II.

In retrospect, the liturgies of Holy Week that we had prior to 1956 now seem strange and unsuitable; or, as a missal of the time remarked, "they disclose certain anomalies". I give a summary of those liturgies.

The first day of Holy Week was Palm Sunday, the term "Passion Sunday" being then attached to the previous Sunday, the 5th Sunday of Lent. On Palm Sunday, the "Blessing of the Palms" took place at the altar, the priest wearing a purple cope. After an opening prayer, he read a passage from the book of Exodus and the appropriate passage from St Matthew's gospel. Then came the blessing proper: a prayer, a preface followed by the Sanctus, five more prayers ending with the palms being sprinkled with holy water and incensed, followed by another prayer after which the palms were ceremonially distributed. A final prayer was said and then the procession with palms took place outside, ending with the person carrying the processional cross striking the church door with the foot of the cross to call for it to be opened and allow the procession to re-enter. The priest then changed from cope to chasuble and Mass began. The Passion narrative read was always that according to the gospel of St Matthew.

The Passion account according to the gospel of St Mark was read at Mass on the Tuesday of Holy Week and that according to St Luke on the Wednesday.

There was only one Mass in each church on Holy Thursday and it took place in the morning. The readings were accounts of the institution of the Eucharist

(1st Corinthians 11) and of Jesus washing the apostles' feet (John 11). However, the washing of feet in each church (or other suitable place), if it took place, was not done during the Mass.

The sacred oils were blessed by the diocesan bishop at his Mass (but there was no renewal of the priests' commitment). There was no specific "Mass of Chrism". The instruction given for the use of the different oils in the sacraments was as follows: "The oils are three in number: the oil for the sacrament of extreme unction; that for anointing those who are to be baptised, and also for anointing the priests' hands at his ordination; and the sacred chrism, a mixture of oil and balsam, used in the sacrament of confirmation and at the ordination of bishops". Now, of course, that instruction is obsolete since chrism is also used at baptism (unless confirmation is to be received immediately) and at the ordination of priests.

The Good Friday liturgy was called Mass of the Presanctified. Black vestments were worn. The ceremony began with two readings from the Old Testament, each followed by a prayer. The account of the Passion from St John's gospel was read. Then came the "Solemn Prayers", similar to the "Solemn Intercessions" of today. However, there were uncomplimentary terms used in the prayers for "heretics and schismatics . . . deceived by diabolical fraud, that, abandoning all heretical depravity, the hearts of the erring may regain sanity . . ."; likewise also for "the unfaithful Jews" (*'pro perfidis Judaeis'*), the prayer was made "on behalf of the blindness of that people that, recognising the light of thy truth, which is Christ, they may be delivered from their darkness".

The unveiling and veneration of the cross followed (as today). Then a Sacred Host, consecrated on Holy Thursday, was placed on the altar; so also, a chalice into which was poured wine and a little water. The priest turned to the people and said "*Orate, fratres* . . ." ("Pray, brethren . . ."), which on Good Friday received no response from the server(s). The priest (and he alone) received the consecrated host. He then consumed the unconsecrated wine (into which a small particle of the host had been dropped). The priest then "purified" the chalice with wine and water in the usual way and left the sanctuary.

The liturgy of Holy Saturday, until 1955, is best described in the words of a missal of the time, with my explanatory comments here added in italics and within brackets. "The ceremonies of this day begin early in the morning with the blessing (*three prayers*) of a new fire that has been kindled with flint and steel. From this fire, a candle with three stems, and placed on a reed, is lighted and carried up the church by a deacon (*or, if no deacon, the priest*), who three times chants the words *Lumen Christi.* The paschal candle is blessed (*viz., the 'Exsultet' or Easter Proclamation)* by the deacon, who fixes in it five grains of blessed incense in memory of the wounds of Christ and the precious spices with which he was anointed in the tomb, and afterwards lights it from the candle on the reed. The blessing of the candle is followed by the reading of the twelve prophecies (*each followed by a prayer*), and after that the priest goes in procession to bless the font. The water in the font is scattered towards the four quarters of the world, to indicate the catholicity of the Church and the world-wide efficacy of her sacraments; the priest breathes (*three times*) on the water in the form of a cross and plunges the paschal candle (*three times*) into the water (*and then*

breathes three times on the water in the form of Ψ, the initial letter of 'pneuma') for the Spirit of God is to hallow it and the power of Christ is to descend on it; lastly, a few drops of the oil of catechumens and of the chrism are poured into the font, in order to signify the union of Christ, our anointed king, with his people. On the way back from the font, the Litany of Saints is begun, and when it is ended the altar is decked with flowers and the Mass is begun in white vestments. The pictures and statues in the church that have been veiled since Passion Sunday are uncovered. The organ and bells are heard again and the joyful *Alleluia* is resumed."

The heavy emphasis on symbolism in the various actions of the rite will have been noticed. No provision for baptism on Holy Saturday was made, the Rite of Christian Initiation not being revived until 1972.

The Holy Saturday Mass began, as all Masses then did, with the *Confiteor etc.* The epistle was from Colossians 3 and the gospel from Matthew 28. The *Agnus Dei* was omitted and the communion verse was replaced by a shortened form of Vespers before the Post-Communion prayer, the blessing and *Ite, missa est, alleluia, alleluia.*

It was seldom that more than a very few parishioners attended the Holy Saturday liturgy in those days before the 1955-56 reforms, although a number of people would try to estimate when the Mass might start so that they could be there for that.
In the 1930s and early 1940s, I recall that that was our family practice. However, our main concern on Holy Saturday morning was to fill a bottle of "Easter water", a large zinc bath of which was left in the priests' garden after the liturgy. Our father sprinkled each room of our house with the blessed water. It probably also was used when one of us was sick, although the Easter water had, in those circumstances, a rival in the small bottle of Lourdes water which someone had given us.

When I was a student in Rome in the late 1940s and early 1950s, we (the Scots College community) used to be invited to celebrate the liturgies of Holy Week in the basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli, a large church built in the ruins of the Baths of Diocletian. The dramatic climax of the week took place during the Gloria at Holy Saturday Mass. While it was being sung and bells pealed, a large curtain was slowly rolled away from the reredos behind the high altar to reveal, to the eyes of faith as well, the risen Christ. Dramatic, even spine-tingling; theatrical but memorable.

That afternoon, at the request of the parish priest, the students who were already ordained visited all the houses in the parish to bless them with Easter water. Each of us was assigned a section of the parish and given a young altar server who carried the little bucket of water and a burse (which usually contained the corporal, a cloth laid on the altar, but on this occasion was to hold the monetary offerings which we hoped to receive at each house).

Holy Saturday at the cathedral church of Rome, the basilica of St John Lateran, was the scene of one of the longest liturgies of the Roman rite. Not only were the full ceremonies carried out but there were also ordinations. In those days, that involved candidates for tonsure, for each of the four minor orders, for subdiaconate, diaconate and priesthood. The ceremony began, I think, at seven o'clock in the morning and continued, without interruption, until about two in the afternoon. For years, the usual celebrant was Archbishop Luigi Traglia who held the office of vicegerent of the

diocese of Rome, a kind of workhorse for the daily tasks to be undertaken on behalf of the bishop of the city. The valiant archbishop was made a cardinal in 1960, a well earned and richly deserved honour.

In 1955, the last year on which the "old rite" was observed, I was assistant priest in a parish in Motherwell. The parish priest there had a novel way of celebrating the Holy Saturday liturgy to overcome its length and thus make it more attractive for parishioners. He told the senior curate to go near the baptismal font and "do" the lighting of the fire, the *Exsultet*, the blessing of water and the litany of the saints. I was directed to the back of the church, there to read the twelve prophecies and associated prayers. "While you two get on with those parts", he informed us, "I shall be celebrating the Mass at the altar". Ingenious and imaginative, but indicative of the need for liturgical reform and renewal!

THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (1962-1965)

PREPARATIONS

(In this section, I use the official documents as well as my own experiences and recollections. In addition, I have consulted two published works: Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (the future pope's accounts of the Council sessions, at which he was a *peritus* or expert and acted as a theological adviser to Cardinal Frings of Cologne) and Yves Congar OP, *My Journal of the Council* (the renowned theologian's massive and frank diaries of the events and personalities as well as of his own impressions).

Pope John XXIII was elected on 28th October 1958. Three months later, on 25th January 1959, he announced that he proposed to call a General Council. The news took everyone by surprise. Yet it was welcomed by many, especially those who were aware that the previous General Council, the Vatican Council of 1870, had left some important areas unfinished and therefore in an unsatisfactory state. I refer to the Church's understanding of itself. The Council had defined the nature and authority of the Supreme Pontiff, the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, but had done little more. There was a great deal more which needed to be considered and taught about the Church taken as a whole, about bishops, priests and laity, about the relationships that exist among them; and even about the pope's correct relationship to the other bishops in the Church. The reason for the abandonment of the Council was mainly political: the outbreak of war between the two great powers, France and Prussia; and the hostilities that ensued in the struggle for the unification of Italy and the consequent conquest of the Papal States, the occupation of Rome and the end of the Pope's temporal power.

It was only when the extent of the agenda which Pope John XXIII envisaged for "the Second Vatican Council" was known that we realised that he planned not only to complete the work on ecclesiology left incomplete nearly a century earlier, but also to deal with a great variety of other matters and, among them, the liturgy of the Church, its worship. Inevitably, therefore, the rite of celebrating Mass would be very prominent in the Council's deliberations.

The Second Vatican Council did not start until the month of October in 1962. But, in the three and a half years between its announcement and its solemn inauguration, much work took place. In particular, a number of preparatory commissions were established to organise the agenda and to draft working papers, called the *schemata* (singular: *schema*). The Central Preparatory Commission was very important. Its members were chosen by Rome and came from all over the Catholic world. From Scotland, the member was Archbishop Donald A. Campbell of Glasgow, also accompanied by Bishop James Ward (and, as adviser to the meetings, Mgr Charles Treanor, who was the rector of the interdiocesan major seminary, St Peter's College at Cardross, near Glasgow). The other preparatory commissions had more limited and defined areas of work; for example the Central Theological Commission and the Commission for the Liturgy.

A considerable amount of the preparatory work done by these commissions turned out to be largely a waste of time and effort. Among them, the commissions produced no less than seventy *schemata* for the Council. It was an impossibly large number, unless the Council Fathers were merely meant to rubber-stamp what had been put before them. In fact, that seems to have been the intention of the Curia in Rome. It was they who chose the subjects of the *schemata* and the people who would be members (all male) of the commissions that produced them. It became evident that the choice of membership had been very selective and had excluded men, even renowned scholars, who were known to have different theological views from those of the very traditional Neo-Scholasticism of the Curia and the Roman universities. The consequence of this crude and less than subtle gerrymandering was probably inevitable.

THE HESITANT START

The Council was solemnly inaugurated with Mass in St Peter's basilica on Thursday morning, 11th October 1962. The impressions of the two theologians, Fathers Ratzinger and Congar, are worthy of mention. The former saw the inaugural Mass as an example of the need for liturgical reform; the liturgy showed the rigidity of a rite encrusted with superfluous duplication and archaism; the language at Mass should be intelligible to those present but Latin was a dead language and not understood; the bishops had been mere spectators. Yves Congar was even less flattering. He thought that the Sistine choir should be abolished, there was no involvement of the congregation, the opulent splendour was grossly excessive and unsuitable. In fact, he could take no more and left after the epistle of the Mass.

The next meeting of the "Fathers" took place two days later, on 13th October. They were designated "Council Fathers" because, although most were bishops, either diocesan or auxiliary, and of the various eastern rites as well as the Roman rite, there were also superiors general of male religious congregations and abbots of major abbeys with a right to be there. Of the 2900 Council Fathers eligible, 2500 were present in the vast nave of St Peter's. These numbers contrasted with those at the 1870 Vatican Council, all of whom were accommodated in one of the basilica's transepts. In addition to the Council Fathers, there were over two hundred *periti*, experts nominated by the Pope and most assigned to advise those Fathers who wished to have advisers; and finally, there were a number of non-Catholic observers, invited to attend the Council sessions.

At the session on 13th October, papers were distributed to the Fathers. These intimated the various *schemata* that were proposed as the Council agenda. In addition, the Fathers were asked to complete a form distributed two days earlier, and thereby nominate those persons whom they wanted to be members of the commissions that would see to any changes or additions or deletions that might be proposed to the texts of the *schemata*. The names of the members of the corresponding preparatory commissions were appended to the forms, the inference being that the Council Fathers could simply re-nominate to the conciliar commissions the same people who had been on the preparatory commissions.

There was some suppressed consternation at these proposals or instructions. Then Cardinal Achille Liénart, archbishop of Lille, asked the presiding cardinal to be allowed to speak. Permission was reluctantly granted. He said that the proposals were unwelcome because (a) the Fathers had come to the Council to discuss and determine what would be decided, and not meekly to agree to texts already substantially written and (b) they needed at least some time to get to know one another before having to nominate members of the commissions. He therefore moved that the proposed procedure be rejected and the session adjourned. Cardinal Josef Frings of Cologne seconded the motion, which was then passed, acclaimed by an ovation. The session was adjourned after only half an hour and the Fathers found themselves leaving St Peter's a great deal earlier than they had expected.

The officials of the Curia were most disconcerted, probably furious, at this turn of events. It upset their plans to steer the Council's deliberations in the direction that they thought best but it was a defeat that was of immense importance for the future of the Council and indeed of the Church as well. Thereafter, it was clear that the bishops would have and would wield authority in the Council's work and would not simply do the Curia's bidding. The Council was not to be downgraded to a mere executive instrument of the preparatory commissions.

Fr Joseph Ratzinger writes very approvingly of the moves by Cardinals Liénart and Frings. He notes that, outside of their own bishops' conferences, there were hardly any proper "horizontal ties" among the bishops. Thus the idea of having on the spot nominations to the conciliar commissions was totally unrealistic. The young Fr Ratzinger (then aged 35) was very much on the progressive wing of opinion, criticising papal centralism, recognising that the Roman Curia needed reform and that the plan for the Council to give more or less unanimous approval to the prepared *schemata* would have meant an end to healthy dynamism and the unwise avoidance of new questions which were being asked and which many bishops, especially those from central Europe, saw as issues that must be considered.

In the Easter Vigil, during the great Proclamation, the *Exsultet*, there occurs a famous phrase:*"O felix culpa!"* ("O happy fault!"). The reference is to Adam's sin because that action was the cause of God the Son becoming man in order to be our Saviour. The same phrase might well be applied to the aborted work done in preparation for the Second Vatican Council since it led to an unexpected but excellent solution being found to validate and justify the Council's very existence.

Pope John had appointed ten cardinals as presidents for the sessions of the Council. Each of them took it in turn to preside. But the unforeseen development placed them and, behind the scenes, officials of the Curia also in a dilemma. "All these bishops

brought to Rome and our carefully laid plans for the Council now in ruins. What are we to do?" Something had to be done, and quickly. In the following days, much informal "horizontal" discussion among the Council Fathers took place and, of course, bishops also met in their own linguistic and/or territorial groups. Some tentative lists of commission members began to emerge. In particular, the suggested list of bishops that was compiled by a group of bishops from countries in central Europe had been carefully drawn up to be as international as possible and, in the subsequent formal voting, those whose names figured on it were in large number elected by the Council to the commissions.

Meantime, of course, a decision on another matter was urgent: on which subject should the Council resume, or rather, begin its deliberations? The decision was made, and it was fortuitously a very successful one, to bring forward consideration of the liturgy right away instead of in the later place previously assigned to the subject. This was done because there was a general feeling that the work done on the liturgy during the preparation for the Council made that document stand out as something of an exception, in being capable of immediate serious consideration. It was seen as "carefully balanced and courageous" and not, as much of the rest of the preparatory material, out of touch with the ideas and hopes of many of the Council Fathers.

Why was the document reckoned suitable? There are several reasons. Liturgy is not only an important subject but it is also a prominent one. Every Mass that is celebrated is a public liturgical act of the Church; likewise every time a sacrament is conferred and received. Joseph Ratzinger is eloquent on this matter. The decision to start with the liturgy *schema* was "a profession of faith in what is truly central to the Church . . . in the true source of the Church's life and the proper point of departure for all renewal . . . . The text implied an entire ecclesiology and anticipated (in a degree that cannot be too highly appreciated) the main theme of the entire Council – its teaching on the Church" (p.31).

Liturgy is something that has to be, by its very nature, in the very forefront of the practice of our faith. So, as already noted, in many countries and particularly in France, Germany and the Low Countries, there had been much discussion at meetings as well as in religious communities and many articles and even books had been written on the subject of liturgical reform. Perhaps 'ferment' is too strong a word for the interest that was increasingly shown in the decades before the Council but the subject was a live one for many people and much research had also been done on the development through the ages of the apparently unchangeable rites that we used.

Although Rome had tended to restrict the membership of the preparatory commissions to local people who were known and trusted by the Curia, there were some exceptions. Among those who had been invited by Rome to help with the preparation of liturgy material for the Council, there were several liturgists who had already become familiar with the ideas for reform that had been circulating in northern and central Europe and elsewhere and who were enthusiastic and confident that these ideas should be on the Council agenda. Thus, the material available to the Council Fathers on the subject of the Church's liturgy was up to date and acceptable to most of them and was deemed suitable for discussion; not to be simply accepted as it was but as matter for debate, amendment and improvement.

There were other very welcome results of this unforeseen change in the Council's schedule. The work done on the liturgy brought out two matters of great importance that were essential to the reform of the liturgy and were then realised to be of vital importance in every other topic which the Council was to discuss. The two were, first, that Scripture had to play an integral part in every aspect of Church life and, second, that the Church was not just the ordained but also all the baptised, male and female, young and old. Furthermore, Pope John XXIII had wanted a Council that would be pastoral, not one that defined and condemned. This aim was realised right from the start of the Council's deliberations and was maintained throughout, following the example set at the very outset by its work on the Constitution on the Liturgy.

Although when he became Pope Benedict XVI years later, Joseph Ratzinger gave the impression of having changed his attitude with regard to liturgical renewal, for example with his use of the phrase "hermeneutic of continuity" and the suggestion that "a reform of the reform" was needed, it is interesting that, when he bade farewell to the priests of the diocese of Rome shortly before his abdication, he told them "it was, let us say, truly an act of providence that at the beginning of the Council was the liturgy . . . . It [the Council] did speak of God! And this was the first thing that it did, that substantial speaking of God and opening up all the people, the whole of God's holy people, to the adoration of God, in the common celebration of the liturgy of the Body and Blood of Christ".

The Council Fathers were convoked again on Tuesday, 16th October. On that day, they were to hand in to the secretariat of the Council the lists of the names of the persons whom they proposed for membership of the nine commissions. On the following Saturday, 20th October, the results of the voting were announced. After some discussion, it was decided that, for each commission, the sixteen Council Fathers who received most votes would be members; to these, the pope added some more names of his own choice. The general impression of the composition of the liturgy commission was that a good range of suitable persons had been elected, although the nine further members chosen by the pope were all from the Curia and were rather conservative in outlook.

CONSTITUTION ON THE LITURGY

At last, on Monday, 22nd October, at the General Congregation, work began on the consideration of the draft liturgy *schema.* It was understood that, although all lawful rites in the Church are of equal dignity and to be preserved and promoted, the practical norms to be discussed would apply only to the Roman rite, unless by their very nature they also affected other rites.

That first day, the subject was the *schema* in general. There were twenty-five addresses, each speaker being limited to ten minutes. Most of the comments were favourable, especially from Fathers who were diocesan bishops; several critical comments were also made, by some Italian prelates and a few others, including Cardinal Spellman of New York.

General Congregations were held daily and, during that week, the subject was the first chapter of the seven chapters of the *schema* on the liturgy. The chapter is entitled *"General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy".*

Although there was no shortage of those wishing to speak, the topics debated were relatively few. The one which exercised the Fathers most was the question of the use of "the vernacular". Should local languages be approved for the liturgy or should Latin be retained? If the former, how much was to be permitted? Perhaps the Liturgy of the Word in the vernacular and the Liturgy of the Eucharist kept in Latin? And who should have the right to decide – each local bishop, the conference of bishops, the Holy See?

Yves Congar makes the observation in his *Journal* that the Council Fathers who spoke in favour of the vernacular (and that was the majority) used arguments based only on pragmatic reasons; whereas, as he insists, the fundamental reason was ecclesiological, namely, that the laity were members of the Church and sharers in the priesthood of Christ and therefore had a right to participate as fully as possible in the liturgy of the Church.

Joseph Ratzinger writes on the same subject in his *Highlights* and quotes extensively from the address made, paradoxically, by a bishop not of the Roman rite – the Melchite Patriarch Maximos Saigh, one of the stars of Vatican II: ". . . The Latin language is dead, but the Church remains alive. So, too, the language that mediates grace and the Holy Spirit must also be a living language since it is intended for men and not for angels. No language can be untouchable . . .". Ratzinger stresses the importance of the debate on the language of the liturgy since "language is not merely an external, superficial and accidental thing but rather is the incarnation of the human spirit which thinks and lives in its very speech . . . . The sterility to which Catholic theology and philosophy had in many ways been doomed since the end of the Enlightenment was due not least to a language in which the living choices of the human spirit no longer found a place. Theology often bypassed new ideas, was not enriched by them and remained unable to transform them" (pp.36-38).

On the other hand, Cardinal Antonio Bacci, the great Latinist of the Roman Curia, wanted no vernacular in the Mass. He argued that, otherwise, certain texts, for example the Susanna story (Daniel 13), would be understood by the people; and there might be conflicts in multilingual countries such as Canada, Belgium and Switzerland. So, for the laity's benefit, there could be people's missals or sermons or parts of the liturgy read to them by an approved reader.

The question of how much, if any, of the local language should be allowed in the Roman rite and, specifically, in the celebration of the Eucharist, dominated the discussions in those early days. It was by far the topic that proved to be most debated.

The Council Fathers, after considering the first chapter of the liturgy *schema* for a week, moved on to the second chapter, "The Mystery of the Holy Eucharist", at the General Congregation of Monday, 29th October. Various possible innovations in the celebration of Mass attracted some attention: the value of a homily after the Scripture readings; the re-introduction, after many centuries, of the Prayer of the Faithful; the usefulness of allowing concelebration on occasions when it seemed appropriate or convenient . . . .

But, as with the previous week's debates, there was again one subject that captured the attention more than any others – whether the laity at Mass should be permitted to

receive Holy Communion under both kinds. There was a considerable degree of hesitation on this matter. Curia officials, led by Cardinal Ottaviani, were opposed; so also were Italian bishops, particularly Cardinal Ruffini of Palermo. Cardinal Spellman of New York was not in favour. And, perhaps surprisingly, from Great Britain and Ireland, Cardinal Godfrey (Westminster) and Archbishop McQuaid (Dublin) were reluctant. The Scottish bishops are not on record as expressing an opinion. In fact, not one of the Scottish bishops spoke on any occasion throughout the four sessions of the Second Vatican Council.

Some of the reasons against allowing lay people to receive Communion under both species were given by Cardinal Godfrey in his speech at the General Congregation. He said that the Church would be seen by some as trying to correct a doctrinal error if it authorised the practice; there was also the question of hygiene and of smears of lipstick; and what about children and alcoholics and teetotallers?

The third chapter, on "The other Sacraments and the Sacramentals" (the latter being various devotions, rites etc. which, although not sacraments, have some similarities to sacraments and are therefore called "sacramentals"), was discussed briefly at the General Congregation of Tuesday, 6th November. On that same day, the announcement was made that the Commission on the Liturgy had had to divide into sub-commissions since, for the Introduction and Chapters One and Two of the Constitution, no fewer than 2000 amendments to the text of the *schema* had been handed in by the Council Fathers and each of them would have to be studied.

The following day, the fourth chapter, "The Divine Office", came under consideration by the Council Fathers. Most of the speakers welcomed the draft *schema* which proposed, for diocesan priests, a shortening of the daily obligation and a simplification of many of the "hours" into which each day's Office is divided. The speech by Cardinal Paul-Emile Léger of Montreal seemed to strike the right note with many; he suggested that reading the Office should be permitted in the vernacular tongue and that the serious obligation for diocesan priests be reduced to the hours of Morning Prayer (Lauds) and Evening Prayer (Vespers), with twenty minutes of *lectio divina* (meditative reading of some spiritual written material) also to be done. (The Constitution on the Liturgy follows the proposals of the *schema* and the general feeling of the Fathers on the subject of the Divine Office. Subsequent regulations issued soon after the Council specified the details that had been decreed by the Constitution. See Paul VI, *Apostolic Constitution*, 1st November 1970, and the accompanying *General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*.)

Around this time, in the second week of November, Yves Congar's *Journal* speaks of a sense of lassitude among the Council Fathers; there is no proper organisation, a lack of direction or method, very inadequate information available, a feeling that the Council's work in the General Congregations is without any apparent order or plan and seems to be going nowhere. Many of the Fathers, their advisers and the non-Catholic observers are complaining and much of the earlier enthusiasm has disappeared.

On Tuesday, 13th November, Congar notes: "This morning, at St Peter's, a not very glorious end to the scheme on the Liturgy. The discussion was brought to a close well before all those wishing to speak had done so. A decision of the Pope was read out

stating that, in response to the request of four hundred bishops, St Joseph was to be inserted into the Canon of the Mass . . . . The problem is that, while the Council is in session, and when that Council is discussing the Liturgy, the Pope, on his own authority, decides something . . . . Good John XXIII keeps on combining some lovely gestures with others that are regrettable or retrograde" (p.165).

The next day, Wednesday 14th, the Council voted on two propositions: 1) that the guiding criteria for the *schema De Liturgia* be approved; 2) that the amendments be considered one by one by the Commission. There were 2215 voting, 2162 in favour, 46 against, 7 spoiled votes.

Joseph Ratzinger reports the same voting figures but is clearer on the motion itself: "the liturgical debate that many thought had dragged on too long . . . ended with a vote for the basic adoption of the *schema,* with the necessary changes left up to the commission". He adds that the vote "was a decision that both looked to the future and showed encouragingly that the forces of renewal were stronger than anyone would have dared hope" (pp.39-40).

The same day, 14th November, the Council began consideration of the next *schema*, that on the Sources of Revelation. That day and subsequently, the new *schema* received a mauling from many of the Fathers and the subjects with which it dealt were absorbed into other *schemata.* However, that is not our concern here.

To complete the story of the progress through the Council of the Constitution on the Liturgy, some important facts must be noted. The commission, to which the Council had remitted the *schema* in November 1962, finished its work in November 1963 (that is, towards the end of the second session of Vatican II). On Monday 18th November 1963, Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro, Archbishop of Bologna and chairman of the commission, read to the Council Fathers the account of the commission's decisions on the many amendments which had been remitted to it.

The final day of the second session of the Council was on Wednesday, 4th December 1963. Among the many items on the agenda that day was the formal definitive vote of the Council Fathers on the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, on the Sacred Liturgy. The result: *placet* 2147; *non placet* 4; a result that was greeted with applause in the basilica. Then Pope Paul VI made the solemn promulgation of the document, declaring that, since "the Fathers have expressed their agreement with the decrees just read out . . . . We, in virtue of the Apostolic authority passed on to Us from Christ and in union with the reverend Fathers, approve, establish and ordain them in the Holy Spirit . . . ."

The definitive text of the Constitution on the Liturgy has an Introduction and six Chapters, the first four of which have been noted above. The fifth chapter is "The Liturgical Year" and the sixth "Sacred Music". There is also a brief Appendix on "Revision of the Calendar" in which the Council states that it would not oppose the celebration of Easter on a fixed date annually, "provided that others whom it may concern, especially the brethren who are not in communion with the Holy See, are agreed on this matter".

IMPLEMENTING THE CONSTITUTION ON THE LITURGY

It is wise to begin by stating what we mean by the liturgy of the Catholic Church. For that purpose, we cite the teaching of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (§7), words repeated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§1070):-

"The liturgy then is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man's sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses, and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In it full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree".

More briefly, the liturgy is the public worship of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, Head and members.

Among the aims of the Council, the Constitution on the Liturgy states, is the desire "to impart an ever increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful . . . and to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC)* 1). "For the liturgy", the document explains, ". . . is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church" (*SC* 2). Thus, renewal of the Church is linked closely to renewal of its liturgy.

Fundamental purpose of the Constitution

Since the sacrament of baptism confers membership of the Mystical Body of Christ on its recipients, it follows that all members of the Church have a right to take part in the celebration of the liturgy and especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is this truth that is absolutely basic in the Council Fathers' wish to reform the Church's liturgy. The Council's Constitution on the Liturgy not only taught what the various celebrations of the liturgy are, but also decreed changes in the manner of celebration in order to ensure that lay people, in particular, would not be left as mere spectators of liturgy performed by clergy, but would be enabled to participate in it in an appropriate manner and to the full correct extent.

The Constitution, therefore, declares this purpose and intention several times; the laity or, as appropriate, the congregation must be able to participate in the celebration of the Church's liturgy fully, actively, externally, devoutly (e.g., *SC* 11, 14, 19, 21, 30, 48). This is "demanded by the very nature of the liturgy" (*SC* 14). These declarations, moreover, remind us that our involvement should be not only external but also interior. Such participation, if it is achieved, will enable all those who are present to have a better understanding of what they are celebrating and the proper involvement to which they have a right.

At his final meeting with the priests of his diocese, Pope Benedict referred to this primary purpose of the Constitution on the Liturgy, adding his customary word of caution. "Then there were the principles: intelligibility, instead of being locked up in

an unknown language that is no longer spoken, and also active participation. Unfortunately, these principles have been misunderstood. Intelligibility does not mean banality, because the great texts of the liturgy – even when, thanks be to God, they are spoken in our mother tongue – are not easily intelligible, they demand ongoing formation on the part of the Christian . . . [to] arrive at understanding".

[Personally, I agree with Pope Benedict's statement. However, the translation of the Roman Missal, from Latin to English, made by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), of which I was a member at the time, and approved in 1998 by all the English-speaking bishops' conferences which set up ICEL, was then denied the necessary *'recognitio'* by the Holy See. If the Pope is alluding to that translation when he says that "intelligibility does not mean banality", I disagree with the insinuation and believe that he was badly advised.]

This right to understand and to participate in the Church's liturgy is based, of course, on the laity's status as baptised persons and members of the Church and who are therefore entitled to be active in the Church's worship of God, i.e., the liturgy. Perhaps that right was not always recognised in such theological terms in times prior to Vatican II; but there was an acknowledgement that the congregations should be given something to do during Mass or else they would be bored and distracted or even stop attending on Sundays. So various means were employed to keep the minds of the congregation occupied while the celebrant "got on with saying Mass". Such means included the public recitation of the rosary (especially in May and October), hymns, opportunities for confession during Mass, prayers to prepare and give thanks for Holy Communion (especially for children), Holy Communion itself distributed by another priest after the Consecration; and, of course, some of the more thoughtful parishioners brought prayer books which, to differing extents, tried to replicate some of the words that the celebrant was saying in Latin; and some of the more conscientious said the rosary "into themselves". In retrospect, the reforms of the Council were long overdue.

It is important to remember that we are called and enabled to participate not just in the rite of Mass but thereby, through the prayers, readings, actions and even silences, we become present to, and involved in, the one great Liturgy of Christ, his Paschal Mystery of offering himself to the Father (see Peter Cullinane, Bishop Emeritus of Palmerston North, New Zealand, *Openings to Renewal*, p.73).

The full participation of all present at Mass requires, of course, a certain amount of catechesis so that people will understand what occurs and why it does so. Such explanation will have to refer not only to the prayers and Scripture passages that occur but also the various actions and movements as well as the correct use of music and silence. Perhaps giving the catechesis is a challenge, ensuring not only that the material is suitable and helpful but also that opportunities exist for it to be given. A certain amount can be included in homilies and in explanatory comments (either spoken or written) but a satisfactory outcome will be very gradual and ongoing, and will demand patience and perseverance.

To achieve the desired aim of enabling everyone present at Mass to be active in the celebration, the Council decreed that a number of changes be made and some new elements introduced. Many of the changes are specific and affect only one or other part of the Eucharist. However, before considering these, there are some more general measures which the Council decreed and which should be mentioned first. There are four of them.

Four general directives

First, the recognition that, at Mass, there are, in addition to the priest (and, if present, also a deacon), other ministries and roles which can and should be devolved to lay persons (*SC* 28, 29). These will include readers for the Scripture passages prior to the Gospel, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, cantors for the Responsorial Psalm, readers for the General Intercessions, choir, musicians, servers, bringers of the gifts of bread and wine, passkeepers and welcomers (being watchful and helpful, though not intrusive); moreover, everyone present can be participative through the varying bodily postures, joining in the communal prayers, both sung and said, receiving Holy Communion as a member of the worshipping community and, even, showing interest in the others present by affability and approachability both before and after Mass. Those who go to Mass should see themselves as forming a community or, more properly, a communion of the faithful. It is hard to describe the requirements for this to be verified. But one useful criterion is the following: when a regular attender is absent, is it noticed and, if it is, do people care?

It is obvious that all ministers and everyone with a special task to fulfil at Mass should take the responsibility seriously and carry out the work as well as possible. I think that there is a special duty on readers and on leaders of music. They must be competent and prepare sufficiently beforehand. Of course, if a person is unable to achieve the competence needed but is already fulfilling any of these special tasks, it is extremely difficult for anyone, in particular the priest in charge, to rectify matters. The requisite improvement is very unlikely, yet ending the incompetent person's tenure of the post is extremely difficult. Perhaps recourse to prayer is the only feasible option.

A second general change is the introduction of the vernacular into the Church's liturgy. This innovation is the one that aroused greatest interest and debate among the Council Fathers and, indeed, among Catholics at large. The issue had been much discussed and enthusiastically urged by some for decades in several countries, especially in France, Germany and the Low Countries as well among liturgists. But it was not seen as a matter of urgency in Scotland. In fact, I recall the possibility of English in the Church's liturgy being a subject at seminary debating societies and the overwhelming verdict being negative; indeed, a positive opinion was regarded as slightly ridiculous, mainly on the grounds that, by retaining Latin, the Mass was in the same language and therefore understandable wherever you went in the world. Very faulty reasoning (perhaps for "understandable", we really meant "equally unintelligible") but easily convincing. However, when it became known that the Council Fathers were seriously debating the issue, many more people began to take the matter as a serious possibility.

We have already seen how the Council Fathers showed so much interest in the suggestion of liturgy in the local language that it became, by far, the most debated issue of the Council's discussion on the liturgy *schema*. Authors and scholars noted and criticised that nearly all of the speeches on the subject at the Council concentrated on practical issues about the benefits or problems that would follow the introduction of vernacular languages; very few of the Fathers spoke of the relationship between liturgical language and the overall purpose of the reform of the liturgy, namely, the full participation of all who are present.

The Constitution is tentative and cautious on the extent to which Latin could be superseded in the Roman rite by a local language. "The use of the Latin language is to be preserved . . . . But since the use of the mother tongue is frequently of great advantage to the people in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments and other parts of the liturgy, the limits of its employment may be extended. This will apply in the first place to the readings and directives and to some of the prayers and chants . . . " (*SC* 36). And again, "In those Masses which are celebrated with the people, a suitable place may be allotted to their mother-tongue. This is to apply in the first place to the readings and the Prayer of the Faithful but also, as local conditions may warrant, to those items of the liturgy which pertain to the people . . . " (*SC* 54). The document then reiterates the continuing importance of Latin and indicates the procedure to be followed if an extended use of the mother-tongue appears desirable.

Despite the limited permission for the use of local languages conceded in the Constitution itself, only a few years later, authorisation for the use of the vernacular was extended to the entire liturgy. This concession of the Holy See was widely welcomed but, of course, it made the responsibilities of translators even more onerous.

On 17th October 1963, representatives of ten English-speaking bishops' conferences met in the Venerable English College in Rome and decided that a common English translation would be made and used in all of the countries represented. The ten bishops' conferences were Australia, Canada, England and Wales, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, Scotland, Southern Africa and United States of America. Thus was formally constituted the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). Soon, the Philippines became an eleventh member and there are a further fifteen bishops' conferences which have associate membership.

ICEL completed its first translation of the Roman Missal in 1972; it was approved by the bishops' conferences, received the *"recognitio"* of the Holy See and was published in 1974. Because it was felt that the first translation could be improved, ICEL produced a second translation in 1998; this also was approved by all the eleven bishops' conferences who are full members of ICEL but the Holy See announced in 2002 that it was refusing *"recognitio"*.

The ostensible reason for the denial was the introduction in 2001, by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, of a document with new and much stricter rules for the "right implementation" of the Vatican II Constitution "on the use of vernacular languages" in the liturgy. The document, known from the first two words of its Latin text as "*Liturgiam authenticam*", was much criticised for being arbitrary in its criteria and imposing a theory of translation that was much too literal and almost word for word, to such an extent that the vernacular language lost much of its own character and style and became laboured, tedious and even, in some cases, unintelligible. One must also be aware of the fact that the Congregation's attitude to ICEL, previously friendly and cooperative, had become very critical and even hostile.

In his book, *Openings to Renewal*, Bishop Peter Cullinane (now retired bishop of Palmerston North, New Zealand) offers a measured but critical judgment on *Liturgiam authenticam*.. [It] "is more concerned with the individual words of the original text and is ambiguous about the need for the texts to be easy to understand.

Consequently, the translations in the new (third) edition of the Missal tend to be rigorously literal. They better reflect the nuances of the Latin originals and their biblical allusions. This adds a richness beyond what we have been used to. Their main weakness, however, is that their syntax is often still in Latin even though the vocabulary is in English; for example, long sentences with multiple relative clauses. In a culture of sound-bites and shorter attention spans, many will find these prayers difficult to follow. Proclaiming them prayerfully and intelligibly will require serious preparation ahead of every celebration" (pp.78-79).

It may also be claimed that the *"recognitio"* had been wrongly interpreted by the Congregation as equal to "approval", whereas the Council's Constitution enacts that, while decrees of bishops' conferences about which texts will be translated require "to be approved, that is confirmed, by the Holy See", the resulting translations need only the approval of the conferences (*SC* 36 §3, §4). I shall explain this later.

With the deplorable decision of the 2002 refusal, many of ICEL's top officials (including its chairman and its executive secretary) left. A largely reconstituted commission began work on a translation that is conformed to the demands of *Liturgiam authenticam* and which received the approval of the bishops' conferences and the ready "*recognitio"* of the Congregation. Publication of this new translation of the missal took place in 2011. Is that the end of the story of a struggle for an acceptable and permanent translation? Assuredly not. To put it mildly, our latest translation has not been received with unanimous acclamation and, besides, English is a living and a changing language and, sometime in the future, sooner or later, there will be a call for a revision of our English translation of the missal.

Since I was intimately involved in the preparation of the rejected translation and in ICEL's relations with the Congregation during those difficult years, I have written more fully about the entire sorry business in my book, *It's the Eucharist, Thank God* (2009).

Perhaps it is not surprising that the subject which occupied so much time during the debates and discussions on the liturgy at the Second Vatican Council continues to be a matter of great interest and even of dissension. Translations into other languages also have their story which cannot be told here. But it perhaps should be noted that the English translation has special importance, not only because so many Catholics throughout the world use it, but also because it is the translation which, with the Latin original, is most often and most widely employed as a guide by those with the responsibility of translating the missal into many other languages in the developing world and elsewhere, that is, into languages apart from English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.

The third of the general measures decreed by Vatican II for the reform of the liturgy involves the arrangement of various furnishings and the consequent location of participants (cf. *SC* 128). Specifically, for the Eucharist, there should be, in different areas of the sanctuary, the altar, the ambo and the presidential chair. The first should be free standing to allow the ministers to walk around it and the celebrant to face the people during the Liturgy of the Eucharist; the second is for the proclamation of the Word of God and a natural focus for attention at that time; and the third is a symbol of the celebrant's office of presiding and the place where he is during the Liturgy of the Word. In addition, the tabernacle should not be on the altar but should have a place of honour, separate from the altar, and either in the sanctuary or in a side chapel,

readily visible and suitable for private adoration and prayer (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)* 299, 309, 310, 315).

"The choir should be so positioned . . . that its nature may be clearly evident, namely as part of the assembled community of the faithful undertaking a specific function" (*GIRM* 312). The celebration of Mass also calls for certain processions or movements of participants: the entrance procession, the gospel procession, the procession bringing the gifts to the altar, the procession for receiving Holy Communion and the recessional procession, as well as the varying postures of standing, sitting and kneeling corresponding to different parts of the Mass.

The customary arrangement of a church with a sanctuary and a large nave is not ideal in trying to have a sense of everyone actively participating; the impression is too easily conveyed of the congregation spectating as the priest and ministers perform. Perhaps it would be better if the congregation could move around, to be near where the action is at different parts of the Mass. But, given the normal situation, at least on Sundays, with a large number of people and fixed pews, that is hardly possible.

The fourth general measure introduced into the liturgy by the Council is that of inculturation. The Constitution is relatively, even remarkably, profuse on this subject (*SC* 37-40) and encourages "the competent local ecclesiastical authorities" to make adaptations; if such adaptations are "even more radical", the Holy See's permission has to be obtained. Specifically, "provision is to be made, when revising the liturgical books, for the legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples . . . provided always that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved" (*SC* 38). In Europe and North America at least, there is little if any evidence of adaptations on grounds of inculturation – and the extremely precise and strict directives of *Liturgiam authenticam* would probably deter anyone courageous or imaginative enough even to envisage proposing such adaptation. The severity of the document just mentioned would seem to make a mockery of the Constitution's assurance that "Even in the liturgy, the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not implicate the faith or the good of the whole community" (*SC* 37).

Before proceeding to consider the specific changes introduced into the celebration of the Eucharist, we should state three criteria which the Constitution declares must govern the choice of such changes.

Three criteria to govern the reform

The first of these criteria is of massive importance since it was on account of this norm that so many changes were made and so many elements which were in the Mass prior to the Council were deleted. The Constitution declares that, to promote intelligibility and participation, the liturgical rites have to be made simpler and clearer. The relevant sections of the Constitution (especially *SC* 34 and 50) are unambiguous: "The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear and unencumbered by any useless repetitions . . ." and "The rite of Mass is to be revised . . . that devout and active participation by the people may be more easily achieved. For this purpose, the rites are to be simplified; elements which, with the passage of time, came to be duplicated, or were added with but little advantage, are now to be discarded; other elements . . . are now to be restored to the vigour which they had in the days of the holy Fathers (*that is, the early centuries of the Church*), as may seem useful or necessary".

Joseph Ratzinger, writing during and after the Council, welcomes the decision. He speaks of "the pruning of certain accretions often enough concealing the original liturgical nucleus" and that "simple structure had to replace the rampant overgrowth of forms". "Ritual rigidity", he adds, "which almost obliterated the meaning of individual actions, had to be defrosted" (*Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, p.32).

In *It's the Eucharist, Thank God*, I give a detailed description of the rite of Mass before Vatican II. Here, therefore, is a brief account of the changes in Mass that occurred as a result of the Council's instruction that the Roman rite be simplified and made clearer. The Introductory Rites were made shorter and simpler; the Scripture readings were reorganised; the General Intercessions were restored to Mass; the Preparation of the Gifts became much shorter and simpler; the existing Eucharistic Prayer (Roman Canon) was retained, but others were made available to give choices; the Communion Rites became more inclusive of the congregation; and the Concluding Rites were shorn of their "quasi-appendices". Several of these changes will be examined more closely in the following pages.

The second of the three criteria is found in the Constitution on the Liturgy (*SC* 23) and can be summed up in this extract: "Care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing". The document explains that, in order "that sound tradition may be retained and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress, a careful investigation is always to be made into each part of the liturgy which is to be revised". In other words, changes are not to be wanton or made for capricious motives but for reasons that are founded on scholarly grounds and which take account of theological, historical and pastoral considerations.

This is a wise ruling although, if inculturation had been more widespread than it actually is, it is very likely that the correct interpretation of the criterion would have occasioned much debate and even disagreement. Even as things are, this instruction of the Council lacks precision and can, or could, be given rather widely differing interpretations by those who wanted a generous number of changes or as few as possible. The vagueness of the wording and therefore the possibility of disagreement about its exact meaning brings to mind the phrase that Pope Benedict used in order to explain the intention of the Council Fathers; it was necessary, he said, for us to employ "a hermeneutic of continuity", a phrase that itself, I submit, is not without ambiguity.

The third criterion (*SC* 22) exists perhaps for the reason of avoiding such disagreements and even a descent into chaos. The Council decrees that regulation of the liturgy belongs only to the Holy See and, in certain cases, to bishops' conferences and even to the individual bishop. "No other person, even if he be a priest, may remove or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority". I am of the opinion that strict observance of this ruling is better, not only in obedience to authority but also to avoid any confusion to others, especially to concelebrating priests during the Eucharistic Prayer.

In fact, given the Council's teaching, especially that the liturgical rites be made simpler and clearer to foster understanding and participation, I find it difficult to welcome recent legislation that permits, and even seems to encourage, the use of liturgical rites which the Council clearly meant to be superseded. I refer, especially, to

what is called the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, using the Missal of Pope John XXIII (in other words, the Tridentine rite of Mass in use from the sixteenth century until the Liturgy Constitution of Vatican II).

The thoughts of the late Cardinal Franz König, Archbishop of Vienna and one of the great figures of the Church, both at the Council and subsequently, are relevant. In *Open to God, Open to the World* (2005), chapter 1, he writes: "To many, however, both inside and outside the Church, the renewal of the liturgy was the Council's most striking reform. Misunderstandings arose because the change was too abrupt and the faithful were not prepared gently enough. Many Catholics were so deeply attached to the liturgical forms they had grown up with and had been familiar with all their lives that the fact that the liturgy was no longer in Latin but in the vernacular and that the priest faced the faithful etc. was almost more than they could cope with. Elderly priests found these changes particularly difficult."

The comments of Joseph Ratzinger on those with authority for "the regulation of the liturgy" are most interesting. He welcomes such authority, within limits, being given to bishops' conferences. "An especially important development is the decentralization of the liturgical decision-making . . . and this not by delegation from the Holy See but by virtue of their own independent authority". He declares, "Now that they (*bishops' conferences*) possess in their own right a definite legislative function, they appear as a new element in the Church's structure and form a kind of quasi-synodal agency between individual bishops and the pope . . . . This small paragraph, which for the first time assigns to conferences of bishops their own canonical authority, has more significance for the theology of the episcopacy and for the long desired strengthening of episcopal power than anything in the *Constitution on the Church* itself". By this measure, "the Church had produced a work fundamental in the renewal of ecclesiology" (*Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, pp.34-35). The young Fr Ratzinger's enthusiasm for this element of decentralisation and the exercise of subsidiarity is admirable but was not, it seems, sustained throughout his life. There is little evidence of it when he became prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith nor did he seem, as pope, to foster such measures in the activities of the Roman Curia.

By the way, it might be asked how many bishops' conferences or, indeed, individual bishops have availed themselves of the right, given by the Council, to introduce measures that "regulate the liturgy" "within certain defined limits" and "as laws may determine" in their territory or their diocese (*SC* 22). Are the limits of that right known by conferences or by bishops? Do they even know that they have that right?

Specific reforms of the Eucharistic liturgy

Now let us move on to consider the more important of the specific changes that we now have in the celebration of the Eucharist in the Roman rite. Before going through the Mass from its beginning and looking at various different elements during the celebration, we should consider an element that to an extent should pervade the celebration – music.

The Constitution devotes a chapter to this subject (chapter VI, *SC* 112-121) and, since then, there have been other developments. So the following remarks are not merely comments on the Council's teaching but also a consideration of the part music does, or should, play in our celebration of the Eucharist, at least on Sundays and the great feasts.

The first point to make is that, although there is a place for hymns in the celebration of Mass in parishes, the principal purpose of music is that parts of the Mass itself should be sung. In fact, there is nowadays clear encouragement that singing should be welcomed for the three presidential prayers (Collect, Prayer over the Gifts, Post-Communion Prayer), as well as for the Preface and even the entire Eucharistic Prayer. It is perhaps too much to expect all of this at every Sunday Mass, not only since many priests feel that their vocal talent is limited, but so also is time and the congregation's patience. But at least the acclamations should be sung: Gloria, Gospel Acclamation, Sanctus, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, Lamb of God and, if at all possible, the Responsorial Psalm. Congregations should be urged to sing these parts and not listen to a choir. Consequently, settings have to be attractive and should become familiar to the people but not limited to one setting relentlessly and monotonously used Sunday after Sunday. Choirs have a role in the liturgy, to sustain the singing and provide support, with an occasional specially prepared piece of their own if they wish. I suspect that habitual singing, each weekend, of the Creed, the responses to the General Intercessions and, perhaps also, the Lord's Prayer can be tedious for many good people and therefore unnecessarily conscientious.

The Constitution on the Liturgy stresses the special place of plainchant and also polyphony in the Church's music. "The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy; therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical functions. But other kinds of sacred music, especially polyphony, are by no means excluded from liturgical celebrations . . ." (*SC* 116).

The same points continue to be urged nowadays, although it has to be admitted that, except in the cathedrals and other churches of large dioceses, it is not easy to make great use of Gregorian chant and even less of polyphony. It is possible and, in some parishes, not uncommon for the Proper of the Mass, or parts of it, to be sung in Latin and using plainchant settings on special occasions; even more at diocesan or national liturgies. Polyphonic motets also feature now and again, properly prepared and practised by choirs. But usage of the classical polyphonic settings of the Mass is a rarity; apart from the inherent difficulty of their performance, the length of the different sections, composed to fill the silences while the celebrant continued with "his" parts, are not at all suitable for today's reformed liturgy.

Hymns? Well, yes. But perhaps we tend to overuse them. It is not decreed that there should be any, but they can and do embellish the celebration. It seems clear that, for many people, the words of a hymn can be very meaningful and provide consolation, inspiration, hope in sadness, appreciation of God's love for us and such like. So let them be well chosen and appropriate for particular seasons and/or themes. There is no rule that there ought to be four at Sunday Masses. Consequently, wise and thoughtful choices should be made, not only what hymns to have but also when they should be sung – at the entrance, during the collection and at the procession of the gifts, during and/or after Holy Communion, recessional: all are possible, but not compulsory, times for a hymn. And all singing is much more attractive when it is not dragged! That last point is something that is also important for the instrumentalists, whether organists, guitarists or others. Is the excuse that "I need to keep with the congregation because, if I play at the right speed, they simply stop singing" a valid reason?

Musicians are long-suffering and insufficiently appreciated and thanked. On the other hand, perhaps there are cases of parish organists who have been faithful for fifty years or more, not because there is no one to take over but because there is no one brave enough to inform them gently that perhaps they might like to allow another and younger musician to be given at least an occasional opportunity to play at Sunday Mass. Enough on the subject of music. I am not a musician but I know enough to realise that music in the parish is not only important and beautiful but also can be a matter of the utmost delicacy where even immense discretion and tact can fail . . . .

Now to the important changes in different parts of Mass in the Roman rite; first the Scripture readings. The Constitution (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 51) calls for more readings, more varied and better ordered. Previously, the Scriptures at Mass were an Epistle (from the New Testament) and a Gospel extract, with a short passage called "the gradual" between the two. The readings were in Latin, of course, with the priest with his back to the congregation, although usually on Sundays he would go to the pulpit after the Gospel to make announcements and then read the day's Epistle and Gospel in English. Except on particular occasions, the two readings would have little relevance to one another, to the Sunday or to the readings of the previous or following Sundays. The result was a limited selection of passages, with no variation from year to year, no continuity from Sunday to Sunday, and many parts of the Bible, including the entire Old Testament, neither read nor heard.

The position on weekdays was even worse. Most days were saints' feasts, usually with the Scripture from the appropriate "Common"; ferial days used the readings of the previous Sunday, while a great many priests preferred to celebrate, as often as they could, daily Masses specifically for the dead and with the same very brief Epistle and Gospel. Nor were the passages read a second time in English on weekdays. They had degenerated into a routine and in danger of losing their essential purpose.

The situation badly needed reform, which was further emphasised by the increased awareness of the importance of the Scriptures among Catholics in general and the Council Fathers in particular. So, in response to the Council's wishes, a totally revised lectionary was drawn up. At weekday Masses, there was be a first reading, varying between extracts from Old and New Testament books. Then follows a psalm, proclaimed by a reader with a response for the congregation after each verse; this so called Responsorial Psalm is to provide a suitable reflection on the first reading. The second weekday reading is a passage from one of the gospels, introduced by an acclamation. Although the two readings are not interrelated, each follows a day-to-day continuous extract from a book of the Bible. In the first reading, the different books are allotted a number of days, few or many, depending on their length and importance. To allow a wider selection, the weekday first reading has a two-year cycle. The weekday gospel passages are read each year and proceed through the three synoptic gospels, Mark in springtime, Matthew in summer and Luke in autumn (approximately). John's gospel is used at various special times of the year, especially Passiontide and Eastertide.

The arrangement of Sunday Scripture readings is somewhat more complicated. In the first place, there are three readings with a responsorial psalm and a gospel acclamation spaced between them. The first reading is usually from the Old Testament, except during the Easter season when it comes from the Acts of the

Apostles. When from the Old Testament, it does not follow a semi-continuous path from week to week since the passage is chosen because it has some relation to the Gospel of the day. The second Sunday reading is usually from one of St Paul's letters or the other New Testament letters. Over a number of Sundays, these follow continuous extracts from the one book, but without any explicit relation to the first reading or the gospel. Both the first and the second Sunday readings have a three-year cycle, each year of the three being also devoted to continuous readings from one of the synoptic gospels. There are exceptions to these arrangements, occasionally on a special feast but more commonly at Advent/Christmas and at Lent/Passiontide/ Eastertide. At these two seasons, John's gospel is very prominent. For six weeks during the summer of a "Year of Mark", John chapter 6 is inserted, since Mark, being a shorter gospel, "needs help" to cover all the available Sundays.

It is obvious that the new arrangement is a much better one than before Vatican II, and especially the programme for weekdays; but the Sunday arrangement is not perfect. Two related problems may be mentioned. The second reading on Sundays bears no real relation to the other readings and serves to divide them and therefore to distract from the relation that the first and third readings have to one another; and three readings plus a responsorial psalm and a gospel acclamation is fare that is too rich and too rapidly delivered, even if there are short silences. Omission of the second reading is not a solution because then we should have little or nothing of St Paul. Keeping the second reading until the end of Mass (as we used to have a "Last Gospel") would probably find no favour as being liturgically clumsy. Perhaps there is no good solution and we should just be grateful for the amount and variety of Scripture made available and the orderly way it is presented to us.

The readings from Scripture are complemented by the homily, the importance of which is strongly stressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (*SC* 52). In fact, a homily is obligatory on Sundays and days of obligation "and should not be omitted except for a serious reason". The homily is a specific exercise of a priest's and a deacon's ministry of the Word. As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (*GIRM* 65) explains: "It should be an explanation of some aspect of the readings from Sacred Scripture or of another text from the Ordinary or Proper of the Mass of the day and should take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners". Proper fulfilment of this instruction about the homily requires serious effort by the priest or deacon. This involves not only good choice of a subject and adequate preparation, but content and delivery, neither too short nor too long, but able to maintain the interest of the listeners and be of some advantage to them. While sermons are usually about what we should do, homilies tell us what God is doing. "The discovery of God's marvellous, surprising, unmerited love generates our desire to love and to live gratefully in return. It liberates and empowers us for even more than the law asks of us" (Peter Cullinane, *Openings to Renewal*, p.83).

A satisfactory homily is not easy to achieve, especially since the average congregation has such a diverse range of people. Meeting "the particular needs of the listeners", as the General Instruction of the Roman Missal requires, is a real challenge for the priest. "The homily provides an opportunity to flesh out the meaning of God's words in terms of everyday life", writes Kevin T. Kelly, *Fifty years of Receiving Vatican II*, p.56, "yet sadly it is an opportunity we priests rarely make the most of – our words are often up in the air and rarely connect with the 'down-to-earth' lives of

people". He continues, "Perhaps this is partly due to the fact that a combination of celibacy and clerical culture leaves us largely out of touch with the nitty-gritty of most people's everyday lives".

Nowadays especially, the homilist will be compared, too easily to his disadvantage, with other modern means of communication. In some parishes or dioceses, there also seem to be too frequent occasions when the homily has a rival and is omitted; for example, a letter to be read, an appeal to be made or some other matter to be announced or explained on "a special occasion". I am tempted to "anecdotalise" at this point, but will resist the temptation and proceed to the next subject.

One part of Mass which dates from the earliest centuries but had disappeared for a long time before its restoration by the Council is the Universal Prayer, also known as the Prayer of the Faithful, or the General Intercessions or, more familiarly, the Bidding Prayers. "By this prayer, in which the people are to take part, intercession will be made for Holy Church, for the civil authorities, for those oppressed by various needs, for all mankind and for the salvation of the entire world" (*SC* 53). The missal notes that, at the Prayer of the Faithful, the people are "exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood" and that "it is desirable that there usually be such a form of prayer" (*GIRM* 69). The missal offers some examples but there is freedom to compose and use words specially prepared and suitable for the occasion; however, it should be borne in mind that the Prayer of the Faithful has to retain a certain character of prayer for the whole Church and for all of humanity. The Intercessions are introduced by an invitation to pray and a concluding prayer by the priest, while a deacon or lay person announces each intention, allows a short silence and then invites the congregation to respond to a phrase such as "Lord, hear us" with, for example, "Lord, graciously hear us". The intercessions should be limited in number (not more than four to six) and in length, because each is the announcement of the intention and not itself a prayer, even less a mini-sermon.

The Prayer of the Faithful had disappeared from the liturgy of Mass many centuries ago but traces of it, so it is said, found their way into the Roman Canon, thus making that Eucharistic Prayer very cluttered, as we shall see.

There are other elements in the first part of the Mass which we have not mentioned, such as the Rites of Introduction (which are still fairly complicated and variable, since a suggested radical simplification was not carried out), the Collect (the first of the three "presidential prayers", said by the priest in the plural and in the name of the assembly, the people responding in each case with the acclamatory assent of "Amen"), the Gloria and the Creed (each said only at Masses of some notable commemoration or feast). The Creed has reverted, in the 2011 translation, from "We believe" of the 1972 translation to "I believe", as a more correct translation of the Latin "*Credo*" but one which was regretted by many as losing the communal sense valuable in a formal Profession of Faith.

After the Prayer of the Faithful, which concludes the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, its complement, begins with the Preparation of the Gifts of bread and wine. These two elements are brought to the priest, along with the collection of money offerings if such has occurred. It is good that some of the congregation take the bread and wine to the priest with a certain appearance of a formal procession, to

indicate that they come as an offering from the people. The priest then says a form of dedication for the bread and the wine, both of which will soon be consecrated and offered to God. But this part of Mass, which ends with the second presidential prayer (the Prayer over the Offerings), has been greatly simplified from the prayers and actions used before the Council. These were not only needlessly fussy but also couched in language that gave the impression that it was the bread and wine, as such, that were being offered to God in sacrifice. In *It's the Euchaist, Thank God*, I have given more details of this part of Mass as it used to be.

The most solemn part of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer, then commences. Its first part consists in a short dialogue between priest and people, a paean of praise and thanksgiving to God called the Preface (somewhat confusingly named, because it is an integral part of the Eucharistic Prayer), and ending in an acclamation by all. This first part has been largely unaltered, except that the range of different Prefaces to suit various seasons and feasts has been further increased in the new rite of Mass.

Then comes the principal part of the Eucharistic Prayer, recited by the priest alone. Before Vatican II, the Roman rite used only one unchanging form of this major part of the Eucharistic Prayer. When, after the Council, the official commission, charged with the task of implementing the Council's wish that the liturgical texts should be made simpler and clearer, came to consider the so-called Roman Canon, they found it impossible to effect the necessary reform; the text was too complex and too intricate, with the consequence that any attempt to update it would have destroyed it. Part of the problem is due to the fact that, over the centuries, various additions have been made which have interrupted or damaged the logical flow of the text or have duplicated elements in it and have obscured others. In particular, the prayer makes no mention of the Holy Spirit and includes no explicit epiclesis. So the decision was made to preserve the Roman Canon with only a very few minor changes, to designate it "Eucharistic Prayer I" and to introduce others into the Missal, most entirely new and others adapted from very early and later abandoned forms of the prayer.

The newcomers include Eucharistic Prayers II, III and IV, the Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation I and II, the Eucharistic Prayer for use in Masses for various needs (forms I to IV), and the three Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with Children. All of these prayers have the same structure. Following the Preface and its acclamation, there is an address worshipping God, an epiclesis invoking the Holy Spirit to come so that the bread and wine may be consecrated into Christ's body and blood, the institution narrative, elevation and acclamation, an anamnesis relating the Mass to Calvary and offering our sacrifice to the Father, a prayer that those participating may be filled with the Spirit, invocation of the saints, a prayer for the living and the dead, the solemn doxology and final acclamation. The three acclamations in each Eucharistic Prayer, one ("Holy, holy . . .") after the Preface, another (with three alternative wordings) after the elevation and the third ("the Great Amen") are the responses made by the entire congregation.

The introduction of a variety of Eucharistic Prayers has been generally welcomed. By the very nature of things, the normal ones used are numbers I, II, III and IV, with numbers II and III said more often than the other two. Not only are they shorter and simpler but, at least as translated in the present English version, numbers I and IV are seen as less pleasing in some respects. The Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation and

for Various Needs are normally not to be used on Sundays and feast days but at least they should be used occasionally on other appropriate days, even though rather longer than numbers II and III. Personally I have reservations about the use of the Eucharistic Prayers for Children. In addition to the text said by the celebrant, they also have more acclamations at various points, presumably to maintain the children's attention. But the language of these Prayers still seems no more intelligible to children than that of the "adult" Prayers; moreover, a correct and decorous inclusion of the extra acclamations seems seldom achieved.

The Lord's Prayer introduces the Rite of Communion as it did before Vatican II, but now the entire assembly says the prayer. The theme of Christ's gift of peace to his disciples is very evident throughout the Rite of Communion and there is provision for the exchange of a Sign of Peace among those present at Mass. This action used to be seen at Masses at which the priest was assisted by a deacon and subdeacon and the priest offered the Sign of Peace to the other two. Now, however, all participants are invited to exchange the gesture with one or more of these who are nearby. It signifies the wish for peace as well as ecclesial communion and mutual charity (*GIRM* 82).

Sometimes, the gesture embarrasses those unaccustomed to it or, at other times, the exchanges can become too prolonged if attempts are made to reach many or even all present or if the gesture becomes the opportunity for exchanging news. But, if carried out with dignity and warmth, the Sign of Peace expresses something important and useful. The suggestion has been made that the Sign of Peace might find a new location in the liturgy, namely at the start of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The reason for this is Our Lord's injunction: ". . . go and be reconciled with your brother first and then come back and present your offering" (Matthew 5:24). However, the proposal has not been taken up, perhaps because the Sign of Peace is by no means limited to seeking to be reconciled.

Holy Communion is Holy Communion, but there have been changes in the way that the congregation receives it. Of course, the regulation of fasting from all food or liquid, even water, from the previous midnight, has now been drastically mitigated and reduced to one hour before reception, with water and medicines unrestricted (Code of Canon Law, *CIC* 919). The procession of people towards the altar indicates that it is the local ecclesial community or communion which takes part in Mass, not just a number of individuals. Reception can be in the hand rather than on the tongue, and while standing instead of kneeling; Holy Communion under both kinds, although not giving us any more of the risen and living Christ, is a more complete sign of what we receive and, by receiving from the chalice, reminds us of the new and eternal covenant sealed by Christ's shedding of his blood.

It is noteworthy that the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* reiterates the previously official teaching: it is "strongly commended" that the faithful "receive the Lord's body from the same sacrifice", a practice which the Constitution describes as "that more perfect form of participation in the Mass" (*SC* 55). The habit, through carelessness or on purpose, of keeping a large number of consecrated hosts in the tabernacle to be used in future Masses, is clearly wrong and to be deplored.

Finally, in 2008, various versions of the words of dismissal were provided. This follows a request made at a recent Synod of Bishops that the words should indicate not merely that the celebration has come to an end but also that we are being sent forth with a mission to bring God's infinite love and care, mediated through Jesus Christ, to those whom we meet. The laconic "*Ite, missa est"* has been adjudged too abrupt; besides, it defies accurate translation.

Appreciating the Eucharist more fully

That concludes a review of the more important or more drastic changes in the Roman rite of Mass, resulting from the Constitution on the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council. There are also some aspects of the Eucharist that were not included in the Council's Constitution or are there, but more implicitly than explicitly. These points do have importance, especially for a deeper appreciation of the riches that have been bestowed on us through the gift of the Eucharist. I want, therefore, to describe at least some of them.

The celebration of the Eucharist involves not only looking forward to Christ's second coming "at the end of time" and the eternal life he promised us, but indeed is the pledge and foretaste of that destiny. Two of the three acclamations after the Consecration declare: "We proclaim your death, O Lord . . . until you come again". And many of the Mass prayers explicitly look forward to eternal life and ask God to grant us that supreme favour. Specifically, Holy Communion is seen as an anticipation of heaven and, when the celebrant shows the consecrated elements to the people as an invitation to receive Communion, he says "Behold the Lamb of God" and refers to "those called to the supper of the Lamb" or "the wedding feast of the Lamb", quoting the phrase used in the Apocalypse as a metaphor for the happiness of eternal life with God: "Happy are those who are called to the wedding feast *(some versions:* "supper"*)* of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:7).

We have already noted that we attend and celebrate the Eucharist not as individuals but as members of the Church, worldwide and local, and therefore as a community or, better, "the communion of saints" here on earth. What does the latter term add to the word "community"? It signifies all that "community" implies, namely a conscious sense of union or relationship with others, a love and care for them, an interest in their welfare, a hope of their reciprocating similar feelings for us; but it also implies that the bond that unites the community is Jesus Christ himself, that together we form his Mystical Body. So, when we are at Mass, we pray for one another and act together with each other. We manifest this at various moments by our bodily postures of standing, kneeling and sitting carried out together as well as by our participating in any procession that occurs, especially in bringing the bread and wine to the altar (a group representing the entire congregation) and in approaching the altar to receive Holy Communion. Perhaps most clearly the "communion" is visible at the Sign of Peace as, in preparing to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, we express our unity in words and in a gesture of peace and fellowship.

Although the "institution narrative" is to be found in the three synoptic gospels (and in the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians), it is not in the gospel according to John. Instead, that gospel, and it alone, recounts the event at the Last Supper when Jesus washed the feet of the apostles. Clearly this was a very significant action, so why is it repeated only once a year, at the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening? The response which I like to offer to that question is as follows.

A precise repetition of Our Lord's action at the Last Supper, if carried out at each Mass, would mean that our love would be expressed to a very limited number of people and to the same people (especially at weekday Mass) and with a gesture that is not clearly significant, at least in our culture. Jesus speaks of himself, and therefore of his disciples, as present "to serve, not to be served". And, in the Apostolic Letter, *Mane nobiscum, Domine*, Pope John Paul II, writing of our duty of concern for all people in need, declares: "This will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations will be judged" (no. 28). So our constant readiness to serve all and any of our brothers and sisters in need is the appropriate and effective way of continuing Our Lord's gesture of washing the feet of the apostles.

Another important element, and one that is sometimes overlooked, is that, in celebrating the Eucharist, we affirm once more the new and eternal covenant between God and his people, a covenant inaugurated on Calvary and sealed with the blood shed by his Son. The extension of Holy Communion under the form of wine has therefore special added significance for communicants, allowing them to make a personal renewal as members of the community or communion covenanted to God. In Sacred Scripture, God insists on his having a covenant with his people. It is God's chosen way not only of expressing the bond that exists but also of wishing to have fidelity and permanence as qualities of that relationship. Further, the covenant with God implies not only lasting friendship but also a pledge of help and support from God and of honour and obedience from us. In the Old Testament, the covenant had to be several times re-established due to the infidelity of the chosen people; but the New Covenant is essentially eternal because of the unbreakable fidelity of Jesus Christ and the unending efficacy of his self-sacrifice. In the Eucharist, therefore, we have the privilege of being united to Christ and sharing in his eternal bond with the Father.

The relationship between Christ's Paschal Mystery of his death and resurrection on the one hand and the Last Supper as well as Mass itself on the other is something not considered in the Constitution on the Liturgy. There is an identity among all three (Supper, Calvary and Mass) and clearly Jesus does not offer himself in sacrifice again each time we celebrate Mass. The term "re-presentation" is often used, not "representation" since that might suggest that Mass was only a symbolic depiction of Calvary, much as a passion play is. Is it legitimate to suggest that Jesus, being God as well as human, can abstract himself from the limitations of time and location to which mere humans are subject and so "telescope" Holy Thursday, the Sacred Triduum and every Mass into one and the same action? Would that help to explain the mystery? Because mystery it is and perhaps we have simply to agree that the explanation is beyond us and that we accept the Eucharist as a mystery and a gift for which we can never be grateful enough.

The celebration of Mass is such a rich activity that we are inclined to feel uncomfortable at its length, being aware that people can become impatient and uneasy if anything lasts too long. Perhaps this explains the lack of pauses for silence that ideally should take place at various moments of the Mass. There are several such moments – at the Penitential Rite, after the "Let us pray" before the Collect, after the readings and after the homily, after each intention of the General Intercessions, after Holy Communion. I think we could do better in this respect, but it would take some courage – and some moderation – on the part of the celebrant.

It seems to me an acceptable practice if people can talk to one another, and not only about "holy subjects", both before and after Mass and inside the church, if they wish to. After all, we are human beings, living in the world, with worldly concerns that it helps to share with those whom we may meet only at Mass. However, in some parishes, the custom is to ask the assembly to be silent for two or three minutes before Mass begins and thus give everyone the chance to think about, and prepare for, Mass.

While on the subject of preparing for Mass, it is a kindness to the congregation if those who have a ministry or duties to perform during the celebration do what is needed by way of preparation before Mass starts. This, of course, implies being at the church in good time and not rushing in at the last minute; but it also means that we should not be in the habit of fussily carrying out during Mass what should be done earlier. In particular, the different pages of the missal should have been marked, the lectionary should be open (or at least have been marked), things needed for music and singers and passkeepers already in place and, of course, candles lit and bread, wine and water already prepared. All of this is, or should be, done out of respect to the congregation. Even looking for the correct place in the missal should have been done before Mass and not allowed to be a distraction during it; and (a very minor matter but also out of respect to the congregation) the priest, while in dialogue with the congregation, should look and listen to them rather than occupying himself with some trivial matter that calls for attention. Last but not least (and that cliché is truly appropriate in this case), punctuality is an important and virtuous habit where Mass is concerned; it is a question of showing respect and courtesy to the people attending. The plea that being a few minutes late allows the latecomers to arrive before Mass begins is not a good reason for delay.

Personal observations

There are a few further remarks that I should like to make. They allow me to add some personal observations, the first of which is my opinion and the other two I believe to be factual.

The first concerns statements, often heard or read, to the effect that, since the Vatican Council, abuses are frequent in the Church's liturgy and especially in Masses. The implication is that some priests take advantage of the reform and renewal of the liturgy to include further changes that are of their own making and that are an abuse of the priest's office as presiding celebrant. For example, a former Archbishop Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments claimed, in an interview, that "liturgical free-wheeling has become the order of the day" (cited by Peter Cullinane, *Openings to Renewal*, page 81, footnote). My firm impression is that, although no doubt there have been some unauthorised changes or additions or omissions, the practice is very infrequent indeed and the complaint is much exaggerated. It sometimes appears that the accusation is made gratuitously and as a pretext for criticising the very reforms of the rite of Mass (and of other rites) authorised and promoted by the Council.

Secondly, surprise is sometimes expressed that the changes in the Church's liturgy, and especially at Mass, seem to have exceeded those which are mandated in the text of the Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium.* The assumption is correct but the changes, though not in the Constitution, are authorised by the

subsequent official documents of the Holy See. After the Council ended, the Holy See issued and indeed, from time to time, continues to issue formal instructions on various details concerning the manner of celebrating the liturgy. I suppose the most glaring example of subsequent practice exceeding the Council declarations is with regard to the use of the vernacular. The Council decreed its use but, although not imposing limits on the extent of its use, gives the impression that it did not foresee the subsequent situation which later official documents have authorised (see especially *SC* 40 & 54).

By way of illustration, here are some examples of official documents of the Holy See issued subsequent to the Council and which make specific provisions about the celebration of the liturgy: Instruction on the Proper Implementation of the Constitution of the Liturgy (26th September 1964); Decree on Concelebration and Communion under Both Species (7th March 1965); Instruction on Music in the Liturgy (5th March 1967); Second Instruction on the Proper Implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy (4th May 1967); Instruction on the Manner of Distributing Holy Communion (29th May 1969). The practice continues of official documents being issued, usually by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, intimating changes, clarifications etc. in the performance of the Church's liturgy.

The third of these observations is also again on the subject of translations into the local languages. A careful reading of the Constitution (*SC* 36) shows that, while a decree of "the competent ecclesiastical authority" (a local bishops' conference) about the extent of the use of the vernacular requires "to be approved, that is confirmed, by the Holy See (§3)", the actual translation requires only approval "by the competent local authority" (§4).

However, within six weeks of the promulgation of the Constitution on the Liturgy, the Holy See, in an official document, *Sacram Liturgiam* (25th January 1964*),* declared that, "as provided in article 36 §3", both *which translations* as well as the *translations made* "require due approval, that is, confirmation, by the Holy See". This erroneous statement has, ever since, been enforced by Rome. Whether the extension of the need for Holy See approval was done deliberately or by mistake, the error has usurped the authority of bishops' conferences. In particular, it caused the English translation of the Roman Missal, completed at the behest of English-speaking bishops' conferences and approved by all of them in 1998 but refused '*recognitio*' by the Holy See, to be summarily discarded. Consequently, another translation was made and in 2010 readily received the '*recognitio*'; despite widespread and severe criticism generally and specifically by liturgy scholars and many expert authorities, it is now in (reluctant) use.

Perhaps it is worth mentioning that, after the latest translation was approved by the bishops' conferences and went to Rome, it was subjected to multiple alterations by "Vox Clara", a group set up by the Holy See to help the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The translation was then given the *'recognitio'* of the Holy See! A further infringement of the prescribed and correct procedure?

Some suggestions and reminders

These points, I hope, will be of use in helping us to celebrate Mass as correctly and devoutly as possible, and in accord with the wishes of the Fathers of Vatican II as expressed in the Constitution on the Liturgy. The points are mainly for use on Sundays. They are a revision of the ones which I included in *It's the Eucharist, Thank God* (pp.93- 95).

1. Everyone, and especially those who have ministries or other roles to carry out, should be properly prepared and should be present for some time before Mass is due to begin. This applies to priest, readers, servers, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, musicians, cantors, choir, passkeepers and welcomers.

2. The entrance procession should be accompanied by suitable music, either instrumental or sung.

3. A Liturgy of the Word for children can take place sometimes, but not on every Sunday. Suitable material and content of sufficient maturity should be prepared and used. Pre-school children may have a separate assembly.

4. The Penitential Rite can be varied. (A rite of sprinkling with holy water can be used occasionally.) The invocations, if the third form is used, can be varied as appropriate; they are a litany to Christ – not to the Trinity and not in a form such as "For the times that we . . .".

5. Parts of the Mass should be sung. Top priority should be given to the 'Ordinary' and especially to the acclamations (Gloria, Gospel Acclamation, Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, Lamb of God). The sung text of these should be the same as, or close to, the words prescribed. Although there is a role for a choir at Mass, the congregation must be allowed and encouraged to sing.

   It is laudable for the priest to sing parts of the Mass (Presidential prayers, Preface dialogue, Eucharistic Prayer), provided this does not impose a considerable burden upon him or the congregation.

6. At the Collect, there should be a short but definite silence after 'Let us pray'.

7. Readers should be intelligent, prepared, audible, able to make eye contact. There should be sufficient numbers to allow variety. In particular, different readers should be used when there are two readings before the gospel. Some practice is necessary (including practice in moving to and from the lectern). The proper books should be used, not missalettes. The question should be asked: is there a courteous and effective manner of dealing with poor, inadequate or unreliable readers?

8. The psalm should be sung, if possible. Some variation from the prescribed psalm is allowed, as also are metrical versions (but not a non-psalm hymn).

9. General Intercessions: the items are *intentions* for which we are asked to pray, not the prayers themselves. Hence, after each intention and before the invitation for a communal response, there should be a short but definite pause for individual, silent prayer.

   How many intentions should there be? Four or five are enough.

   How long? Quite short; they are intentions, not prayers or disguised sermons.

   They should include topical, important concerns, either local or more general.

10. The Eucharistic Prayer begins with the dialogue before the Preface. The Preface is part of the Eucharistic Prayer.

11. There are other Eucharistic Prayers in addition to nos. 2 and 3.

12. Since the celebrant announces the Memorial Acclamation but does not lead it, a decision about which one to use has to be made beforehand. On weekdays, a convenient method is: Mondays & Thursdays: 1st; Tuesdays & Fridays: 2nd; Wednesday & Saturdays: 3rd.

13. During the doxology at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, the consecrated bread and wine are raised in a gesture of offering them to the Father, not of showing them to the people.

14. The Sign of Peace should not be prolonged unduly or involve a lot of movement or chatter.

15. "Blessed are those . . ." before Holy Communion. The Eucharist is a pledge and foretaste of eternal life which, in the Apocalypse, is described as a banquet or supper. The liturgy takes up the eschatalogical theme (e.g., as in the Memorial Acclamations and "Lamb of God . . .") so 'supper' here refers to heaven, not this Mass.

16. The hosts should be those consecrated at the Mass being celebrated. This is not fully achievable, but the tabernacle should not contain full ciboria "ready for the Sunday Masses".

17. Holy Communion from the chalice should be offered to all the communicants, allowing them to drink "the blood of the new and eternal covenant".

18. A sacred silence should be observed after Holy Communion. If it is, there is no need to pause after 'Let us pray' before the Prayer after Communion.

19. Dismissal: the words indicate the mission with which we leave Mass.

20. Hymns at Mass are often given undue importance. Suitable hymns can be sung at appropriate moments but sometimes silence is preferable. Hymns should have some relation to the liturgy of the day and should not take so much time that they delay unduly the liturgical action.

Concluding thoughts

The Mass is something so familiar and so intimate in the lives of so many people that its fortunes at the Second Vatican Council are of great interest to us; one might even speak of its story during those years holding a fascination for us when we learn the details.

The botched preparations for the Council's deliberations projected the Church's liturgy into the leading place and an unexpected prominence when the Council got under way. In retrospect, the result was favourable not only for the liturgy itself but also for putting down markers for the later debates and discussions on other subjects.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist which we now celebrate in the Roman rite is, to a large extent, taken for granted by most of us and for most of the time. But it is useful to be aware of two things. First, to have some knowledge of the Mass as it was celebrated for centuries before Vatican II; and second, to realise that the Council Fathers only decreed a reform and renewal of the liturgy and set the process in motion, a process to be continued lawfully and authoritatively in the Church.

As we enjoy the privilege of greatly enhanced participation in the Mass, we must know that our Eucharistic celebration is more than a beautiful spectacle or a fulfilling human experience. We remember that, above all, the Mass is a spiritual and religious gift of our Saviour that enables us to be in the closest relationship possible on this earth with Jesus Christ and, through him and by the power of the Holy Spirit, with the Father. That relationship is one which we enjoy because we are members of the Church, united with our brothers and sisters in the communion of saints on earth.

Fr Anscar Chupungco OSB, an erudite and influential liturgist, offers some very basic thoughts on liturgy, declaring it to be "the source of the Church's spirituality because Christ and his saving mystery are present and active in it . . . . The liturgy quickens our spiritual life: in the liturgy we experience spiritual rebirth, communion with the Lord, reconciliation and spiritual comfort". He recalls the teaching of Pope St Leo the Great: "What was visible in Christ (*his person and mission*) passed into the sacraments of the Church" (*Sermon* 72) and then continues: "The liturgy is the summit to which all the other activities of the Church are directed . . . . If the Church engages in the apostolate of education, ministry of healing, political liberation, and the moral and social uplifting of the people it is in order to lead them to the fount of spirituality, which is the liturgy" (*What, then, is Liturgy?*, p.236).

The 2012 Synod of Bishops makes similar points, also based on the Constitution of the Liturgy, no. 10. "The worthy celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, God's most treasured gift to us, is the source of the highest expression of our life in Christ. It is, therefore, the primary and most powerful expression of the new evangelisation. God desires to manifest the incomparable beauty of his immeasurable and unceasing love for us through the Sacred Liturgy and we, for our part, desire to employ what is most beautiful in our worship of God in response to his gift . . . . Evangelisation in the Church calls for a liturgy that lifts the hearts of men and women to God. The liturgy is not just a human action but an encounter with God which leads to contemplation and deepening friendship with God. In this sense, the liturgy of the Church is the best school of the faith" (*Proposition 35*).

Even after the Year of Faith, we remain People of Faith, called to share in the new evangelisation. So, renewed and strengthened in faith by the Eucharist, let us “go and announce the Gospel of the Lord!”

For all that the Mass means to us, and has meant to countless millions through the centuries, thanks be to God!