



THE ROMAN RITE old and new

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The Roman Rite: Old and New - IV

The theology of the New Mass: crisis in faith in the Real Presence, Sacramental Priesthood, and the Ends of the Mass

In the fourth part of our presentation of Don Pietro Leone's "The Roman Rite: Old and New", the author continues his analysis of the several problematic aspects of the theology of the New Mass, as compared with the Traditional Rite. Are there deficiencies in the way the New Mass presents the Real Presence, the Ministerial Priesthood, and the very ends of the sacramental sacrifice?

We now proceed to compare certain general features of the Mass in the Old and the New Rites.

3. The Real Presence

We have already quoted the Council of Trent to the effect that Christ Himself is offered in the Mass. In the 4th canon of the 13th Session, the doctrine of the Real Presence is expressed in the clearest terms: **"If any-one were to deny that in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist is contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore the whole Christ; but were to say that he is present in it only as a sign, a figure, or a power: Anathema sit [1]"**.

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4. The Sacramental Priesthood

In the Old Rite the sacramental priesthood is clearly distinguished from the laity.

In the Offertory the priest speaks in the first person singular in the *Suscipe Sancte Pater* (the offering of the host) and in the other prayers.[8]

In the Canon, the sacramental priesthood is distinguished from the laity by the words *minister* or *servus* in the first case and *familia* or *plebs sancta* in the second, and singled out by the phrases *qui tibi offerunt hoc sacrificium...* and *nobis quoque peccatoribus* (MD p. 345).

The same distinction is made by the double Confiteor at the beginning of Mass (repeated at the end, depending on circumstances), the first Confiteor of which is said by the priest, the second by the faithful. Here the priest also exercises his priestly ministry in acting as judge, witness, and intercessor, and by imparting the absolution. The priest is differentiated from the people also in

the double Holy Communion, in the first of which “the High and Eternal priest and he who acted in His person were fused into the most intimate union” (Critical Study V 2).

The sacramental priesthood is also manifest to the ears and the eyes of the congregation: in the former case by the silence of the canon (as we have seen at 2 (ii) above) and in the latter case by the following elements: a) the seven vestments which the priest is required to wear when acting in persona Christi ; b) by the celebration at a distance from the people in an area separated off from them by altar-rails, which expressed his function as mediator; c) by his celebration in front of the tabernacle where the ideas are associated of Christ in His Real Presence and Christ in His minister; d) by his celebration alone, and not together with concelebrants where the uniqueness of the priesthood of Christ is obscured; e) and by the fact that he distributes the sacred Hosts himself, as befits the one who has consecrated them (cf. St. Thomas Aquinas Summa III Q.82 A.13) and as befits the sacerdos, who is etymologically the one who gives the sacred.



We have already seen that according to Protestant beliefs the priesthood does not have a sacrificial character deriving from the priestly ordination but is rather a property of all the faithful, and that during the liturgy the celebrant is considered to act solely as a president.

In the New Rite all the verbal distinctions between priest and laity in the Offertory and the Canon have been removed, with the exception of the orate fratres (which was retained despite opposition from the majority of the Consilium - MD p. 324). The double Confiteor and

communion have been replaced by single ones, where there is no longer a distinction between priest and people, and the formula of absolution has been removed as it had been by the Protestants.

Some of the vestments have been suppressed; others made optional. In certain cases alb and stole are considered sufficient for celebration. The priest is usually no longer segregated from the people by his distance from them or by the altar rails; he no longer celebrates facing the tabernacle, and often not even near the tabernacle; frequently he concelebrates and does not distribute the Holy Communion himself, or does so in company with the laity (male or female). Furthermore, in the third Eucharistic prayer: the phrase “populum tibi congregare non desinis, ut a solis ortu usque ad occasum oblatio munda offeratur nomini tuo: you do not cease to gather a people to yourself so that from the rising of the sun to its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name” intimates the priesthood of the people in harmony with the statement of the General Instruction: “missa est sacra synaxis seu congregatio populi: The Mass is a holy assembly or gathering of the people”.

5. The Ends of the Mass

The Council of Trent declares (s.22 canon 3)[9]: **“If any-one should say that the Sacrifice of the Mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving... and not a propitiatory sacrifice...and should not be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities: Anathema Sit”**.

In other words the Council teaches that the finality of the Holy Mass is not merely praise (adoration) and thanks,[10] but also expiation and petition.[11] This declaration was made in response to the Protestant denial that the Mass was a Sacrifice, and as such expiatory and petitionary in character.

In fact, since the Protestants deny that the Mass is a Sacrifice, the service with which they replace it is not only signally lacking in the finality of expiation but also in that of adoration.

The New Rite in its turn is also much impoverished in this regard. The finality of adoration, that is to say, the adoration of the Most Holy Trinity, has been all but totally suppressed. The Gloria Patri which appeared three times in the Old Rite (: in the initial prayers, the Introit, and the Lavabo) has been entirely removed, the Gloria in excelsis Deo is recited less frequently, and the Trinitarian formula per Dominum Nostrum Jesum Christum... which concludes many of the prayers in the Old Rite, has been dropped in all cases except for the Collect. The prayer at the Offertory, Receive O Holy Trinity, Suscipe Sancta Trinitas..., and the prayer at the end of the Mass, May It Please Thee, O Holy Trinity, Placeat Tibi Sancta Trinitas..., have been abolished, and the preface of the Holy Trinity is no longer recited every Sunday, but only once a year on the respective feast day. In short the Most Holy Trinity is invoked 23 times in the Old Rite and three or six times in the new, depending on whether the Mass is sine or cum populo.

The finality of expiation has also been much reduced. As the Critical Study explains (III), the accent has been shifted from the remission of the sins of the living and the dead, to the nutrition and sanctification of those present. The following elements have thereby been suppressed: the prayer that God might give us life (in the psalm at the foot of the altar); the prayers *Aufer* and *Oramus Te* in which the priest asks to be pardoned for his own sins; the Confiteor recited by the priest with a deep bow and with the faithful on their knees; the Offertory prayers that the Immaculate Victim offered for “my innumerable sins, offenses, and negligences may be accepted by God” and that the chalice may rise with “the odour of sweetness for our salvation”; all the prayers of humble supplication in the Roman Canon which no longer appear in the new canons; and the thrice-repeated prayer *Domine non sum dignus* prior to the Communion, both of the celebrant and of the faithful.

In the same vein, the memento of the dead and the mention of the souls suffering in Purgatory have been eliminated from the three new Eucharistic prayers, as well as the entire Requiem Mass in all its extraordinary catechetical power.

As the finalities of adoration and expiation retreat into the background, the finalities of thanksgiving and petition advance into the foreground (and the more charismatic the Mass, the more notably so), but with a certain detachment from their principal object, that is, the remission of sins through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Indeed the term “Holy Sacrifice of the Mass” has been largely replaced by the term “Eucharist” (meaning thanksgiving), and a section of petitionary prayers, known as “the prayers of the faithful”, has been added to the Mass (often for merely temporal or material advantages), as if the Mass were not itself a prayer of petition.

In fact, it may be more accurate to say with the authors of the Critical Study, that the real finalities are suppressed and new finalities are invented: “the spirit of communion between those present and the spirit of a Charity banquet” (III), where again we witness the shift from the concept of a sacrifice to that of a meal.

[NOTES:]

[1] “Si quis negaverit, in sanctissimae Eucharistiae sacramento contineri vere, realiter, et substantialiter, corpus et sanguinem una cum anima et divinitate Domini nostri Jesu Christi ac proinde totum Christum: sed dixerit, tantummodo esse in eo ut in signo vel figura, aut virtute: A.S.”

[2] *Hostiam puram, Hostiam sanctam, Hostiam immaculatam, panem sanctum vitae aeternae, et Calicem salutis perpetuae.*

[3] whereas any-one rash enough to deny that adoration is due to the Blessed Sacrament incurs Anathema (Trent Session XIII can.6).

[4] We observe at this point that Communion in the hand effectively diminishes belief in the Real Presence among Catholics. The principal evil of this practice, however, is that it dishonours the Eucharistic Lord, in placing Him in unconsecrated hands; in facilitating the removal of Hosts from the church for sacrilegious purposes, out of caprice or pure ignorance; and in allowing fragments of the Most Blessed Sacrament to drop or to be brushed off fingers, in which Christ exists totally and entirely (“Totus enim et integer Christus sub panis specie et sub quavis ipsius parte...existit. for Christ exists wholly and entirely under the appearance of the bread and under every part of it” Council of Trent S.13 cap.3) - see the last of the shortcomings of the New Rite enumerated at the end of this essay.

[5] Iota Unum 269, p.594.

[6] reflecting one or more of three distinct errors: that the Mass is a meal; that mortal sin is unlikely to occur in everyday life; that if it does, then a non-sacramental act of contrition will always suffice to cancel it.

[7] Iota Unum 269. We observe, however, that since the publication of the work quoted, there has been a certain return to such practices.

[8] Two exceptions are the offering of the wine, where he speaks in the plural because the prayer derives from that form of Mass where he would be assisted at this point by the deacon; and the prayer in Spiritu Humilitatis, where he prays that “our Sacrifice” may be pleasing to God, which, coming after the Suscipe Sancte Pater, refers to the oblation of the congregation together with the Divine Victim (MD p.323).

[9] Si quis dixerit, Missae sacrificium tantum esse laudis et gratiarum actionis...neque pro vivis et defunctis, pro peccatis, poenis, satisfactionibus et aliis necessitatibus offerri debere: A.S : if any-one were to say that the sacrifice of the Mass is only that of praise and thanksgiving...and should not be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities: A.S.

[10] that is a sacrificium latreuticum and eucharisticum.

[11] that is a sacrificium propitiatorium and impetratorium.