



AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF LITURGY

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# AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF LITURGY

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# AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF LITURGY

*Volume 4    Number 4    October 1994*

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*AJL* is the journal of the Australian Academy of Liturgy and exists to further the study of liturgy at a scholarly level and to comment on and provide information concerning liturgical matters with special reference to Australia.

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## EDITORIAL

Social justice, pastoral care, ritual, the arts, intercessions, koinonia, Christian unity, and the celebration of history – all these are either an aspect of liturgy or related to liturgy and they all figure in the contents of this issue. Fr Knowles observes that “there are many lenses through which one may view liturgy”. To this we could add that liturgy is a lens through which one may view many things. If there is a theme connecting the various articles and other items in this issue it is: Liturgy in context; the context of the church and the context of society. Liturgy is never celebrated, nor should it be studied, in isolation. It is by its very nature contextual and it is good that its relation to various aspects of its context is being viewed through many different lenses by a variety of scholars.

The articles by Fr Knowles and Pastor Renner have been prepared for publication from papers read at the Academy Conference in Sydney in January 1994. Canon McPherson’s paper was read to the Victoria Chapter of the Academy in July.

From time to time over the years there have been assistant editors of *AJL*. Some have had specific functions, but all have been representatives of different Christian traditions and different states of Australia to help the editor keep a balanced view of the broad membership of the Academy. The representative function of the assistant editors has fallen away as for some time the only one has been the Revd John Baumgardner who is, like the editor, an Anglican from Melbourne. We have begun, therefore, to put together an editorial panel. The process is not complete as it is not yet fully representative in terms of gender and geography, but this will be fixed. In the meantime, let me introduce those appointed to the panel so far.

The Revd **John Baumgardner** is Anglican and is Vicar of Box Hill in Melbourne. He is Assistant Editor and is responsible for production of the journal.

The Revd **Robert Gribben** is Uniting Church and at present General Secretary of the Victorian Council of Churches and is to become minister of Wesley Church in Melbourne in 1995. He has taught liturgy at Lincoln Theological College in England and the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne. He is a former President of the Academy.

The Revd Dr **Russell Hardiman** is Roman Catholic and is Parish Priest of Waroona in Western Australia. He is editor of *Pastoral Liturgy* and teaches liturgy at Murdoch University and the University of Notre Dame Australia in Perth. He is Past President of the Academy.

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The Revd **Paul Renner** is Lutheran and lives in Brisbane. Now retired, he has been President of the Lutheran Church of Australia, Queensland District. He is a former Secretary/Treasurer of the Academy.

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Strathmore Vicarage  
St Martin's Day 1994

R.W.H.

## WORSHIP FOR THE COMMON GOOD

*Tom Knowles*

'Not only is there no rest for the wicked, there's no rest for the good either. We can't even pray in peace'. So complained Marie Tehan, the Victorian Minister for Health, after attending Mass in her local parish on Pentecost Sunday last year, if the Melbourne Age is to be believed. Her exasperation was provoked by a sermon which raised questions about the economic policies of the State government. In his report of their conversation, Doug Aiton wrote: 'Marie Tehan was furious. "I thought it should have been a spiritual event", she said. "And I thought he could have talked about the Holy Spirit. Instead he was raving about the deprived Turks and Vietnamese of Richmond. I looked around the church and could see only middle-class Catholic conservative Australians"....She is still angry with that priest for bringing his politics to the pulpit when she was there simply for worship'. I quote this example not to denigrate Mrs Tehan's faith or call her integrity into question but to illustrate at the outset the perceived tension, if not conflict, between liturgy and justice indicated by the divergence of views between her and the preacher. Here I am taking the liberty here of letting 'liturgy' stand for not only formal church worship but also prayer and spirituality, and 'justice' stand for politics as well as social action.

Let me proceed to a second story. In September last year I visited my fellow religious in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately I was unable to be there a week earlier for the ordination of two of our students to the presbyterate. The day after I arrived both the secular and the Catholic press carried reports of the sermon preached by the ordaining prelate, the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to Sri Lanka, the Most Reverend Francois Bacque. Addressing the two candidates he is reported to have said: 'Catholics are invited to be aware of their social and political responsibility as good citizens...It is not the responsibility of the priests to become directly involved in political action and social organisation...Jesus never wanted to be involved and He fled away from every attempt that was made in order to draw Him into earthly questions and affairs...The summit of your vocation is the celebration of the Eucharist, of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in bringing Jesus present on the altar under the species of bread and wine transformed to be the body and blood of Christ which is the spiritual food of a Christian'. The Pro-Nuncio, echoing the admonitions of Pope John Paul II, was clearly speaking specifically of the inappropriateness of direct political action on the part of Catholic priests but his words suggest a general discontinuity between liturgy and social action.

To these two examples may I add a third, more informal report of a conversation with a friend of mine who has just completed her BTh and is

planning to proceed to doctoral studies. She brings to her studies a keen concern for the environment, an expertise in the field of Society and Culture, and an active sympathy for the disadvantaged. When I told her about the title of this paper she responded immediately, 'But what have liturgy and justice got to do with each other?'. So there you have a trinity of observations from a Minister of State, a high-ranking ecclesiastic and a private individual, all suggesting that worship and justice (as loosely described above) do not belong together.

## Historical voices

Let me contrast these points of view with those of a significant figure in the liturgical movement, the American Benedictine scholar Virgil Michel, who in 1938 died at the untimely age of 48 and who is most easily introduced as the founder of the journal *Orate Fratres*, predecessor of *Worship*. 'As a young student in Europe', writes James Dallen, 'Virgil Michel had discovered the reality of the church as Christ's Mystical Body...This he came to see as the key to reforming society. He also gave the traditional Benedictine love of liturgy a new orientation: liturgy as the way to convert individuals into apostles of social reform by steeping them in the Spirit of Christ's Body'<sup>1</sup>. Michel concluded that 'the liturgy is the indispensable basis of Christian social regeneration'.

It is interesting to note that Bede Polding OSB, the first Catholic bishop of Australia, showed a powerful commitment both to the Benedictine liturgical tradition and to justice for aboriginal people. In 1845 he made the following statement to the NSW Parliamentary Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines:

In the first place I conceive that there is established in the mind of the black population a sentiment that the whites are essentially unjust; there may be exceptions as they find individuals who are good and kind to them, but I apprehend that it is the leading idea, founded on that fact of the whites coming to take possession of their lands, without giving them what they deemed an equivalent...(The) Aborigine will demand 'what right have you to come here? We have not asked you to come, and you take away our lands, you drive away our means of subsistence'. We do not of course feel as they feel, nor argue as they argue; they have instinctive justice, we argumentative.<sup>2</sup>

Another witness I would like to call upon is Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement in the United States. Writing of her, Theodore Ross has this to say: 'Dorothy Day had a special, almost unique, role in the movement of integrating liturgy and social justice'. While others pursued the paths of reform by research and organisation, 'Dorothy Day...was different. She followed her heart. Day could not go to Communion and be insensitive to the reality that



someone was hungry; she could not enjoy the warmth of Eucharistic consolation and know that she had a blanket while her brothers and sisters did not; she could not “go to the altar of God” and be aware that someone was sleeping over a grate on the sidewalk...This is not to say that her response was merely affective and personal. It was grounded in the theological. But the rational and intellectual came after the response of the heart, the prod of merciful grace<sup>3</sup>.

If Virgil Michel and Dorothy Day each affirmed the link between liturgy and justice, others nearer to home have protested at liturgy which is experienced as betraying the exigencies of justice. In Adelaide last year and the year before, a group of people has gathered on the lawns outside St Francis Xavier’s Cathedral for an additional service prior to the Chrism Mass. Since the decision of Pope Paul VI to incorporate into this Mass a renewal of priestly commitment by the ordained, it has become an important occasion for the clergy. The outside vigils in Adelaide have sought to affirm the full range of ministries to which the baptised are called and thereby to protest at the excessively male and clerical focus of the liturgy within.

### **Contemporary tension**

In spite of the impressive testimony of figures such as Michel and Day, long prior to Vatican II, it has to be said that the Council failed to forge effective links between liturgy and justice. To see this, all one has to do is examine the first and last documents of the Council. The first, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, simply does not situate the reform of the liturgy in the context of the aspirations and preoccupations of the human community, and is generally culturally and anthropologically naive. While the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* does focus on the struggles of humanity for a better world but without paying attention to the role that liturgy might play in this work of transformation.

The divorce (or rather, one hopes, the temporary estrangement) between liturgy and justice that is reflected in the Council has persisted for decades since. In the late ‘70s, for example, it was felt so acutely by a number of people in Melbourne who were engaged either in a contemplative prayer life, on the one hand, or in action for justice, on the other, that they set about establishing a dialogue together in order to search for a more organic understanding. They called their project ‘Smouldering Wick’ after the text in Isaiah which is applied to Jesus in Matthew 12.18-21. These conversations proved difficult. As one of the participants, Andrew Hamilton, commented later, ‘The lack of meeting of people who shared the same concerns was painful and frustrating. The lack of a community of language was very painful...many testified that they could find

more in common with non-Christians than with the church...(and) the usefulness of “God-language” was queried’. However he went on to say, ‘The wick started to give out some light when the division between us, our difficulty in touching and understanding each other, was recognised. There was some sorrow and a little anger’<sup>4</sup>. In time the project gave rise to a newsletter which at its peak had a circulation of several hundred; it encouraged other groups of prayer and action; it led to radio talks, further research and writing; it gave birth to a house of prayer for people working with the aboriginal community in the inner-city Sydney suburb of Redfern. However it did eventually founder on what appear to have been irreconcilable differences, and so whatever contribution the Smouldering Wick project made to the church in Australia, the challenge remains before us.

Neil Brown, writing in *Australasian Catholic Record* on papal social teaching, puts it this way:

But even more crucial to the cause against injustice in the world is the need to promote a genuine alternative experience within the Church to that of our contemporary consumer-oriented society, one that will provide a context for the new insights, values and attitudes required to lead to the real changes needed in lifestyle and to the effective motivation required to live a ‘preferential option for the poor’.. .Currently there is little sense of participation or dialogue as a right: women are excluded from any vital role in Church life; collegiality has become a dead letter; and there is no practical admission of the role of the Church as a whole in developing the truth of the gospel.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately Brown does not even allude to the role of liturgy in providing ‘a context for new insights, values and attitudes’. In this respect he seems to have plenty of company.

To illustrate my claim I would like to quote from a brief article I wrote for *Liturgy News* in 1991 to commemorate the centenary of the first modern papal social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. ‘A survey conducted by the Christian Research Association in 1987, involving over 6000 people from 100 parishes around Australia (Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Pentecostal and Uniting) found that most people saw worship in terms of their personal relationship with God; very few – about 12% felt there should be more emphasis on social issues’<sup>6</sup>. You may think that 12% is a reasonably promising proportion. I suggest that you interpret it in relation to the figures presented in the Association’s latest publication, *Religion : A View from the Australian Census*, by Philip Hughes<sup>7</sup> which indicate that only a minority of Australians are regular participants in church worship. Catholics make up 27% of the total Australian population; of these nearly half (47%) worship less than once a month, and another 14% never, leaving only 40% who worship at least once a month. For Anglicans the figures are more dramatic: only 15% worship more than once a month, while 55% do so

less than once a month and 30% never. For the Uniting Church the results are more encouraging and closer to the Catholic figures, with 34% worshipping once a month or more. So, less than one quarter of Australians engage in worship more than monthly and most of these see little connection between worship and social issues. Hence, if we as liturgists want to take the initiative in wooing justice to the altar with us in the hope that a fruitful partnership will ensue, we have to face the fact that we have a more immediate problem on our hands, that of engaging Australian Christians in regular worship in the first place.

The importance of this challenge is highlighted by Mary Collins' remark:

...the overwhelming majority of Catholic Christians everywhere know what they know about the mystery of salvation, the mystery of the church, and their role in these mysteries, from what they do or do not do within the liturgical assembly. Neither occasional nor systematic instruction about Christian life and doctrine or about ministry for justice will have cogency for most believers unless that instruction sheds light on or rises from what they experience symbolically through participation in the eucharistic assembly over a lifetime<sup>8</sup>.

The problem is intensified if we also heed Ed Foley's warning that it is self-defeating to define liturgy in terms of Sunday eucharist alone. We must move 'towards a more encompassing and authentic definition of liturgy. Such will help us to understand that liturgy is not fundamentally concerned with vesture or worship aids but with mission and justice'<sup>9</sup>.

## **The risks**

There are several dangers in this current state of affairs. One is the risk of irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between liturgy and justice. In the words of Kevin Seasoltz, 'The temptation on the part of liturgists is to retreat from the world's problems into a safe, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing past and to convert liturgical worship into thematic celebrations of abstract universals that supposedly please God but have little to do with responsible life in the world. The temptation on the part of social activists is to reject the liturgy as totally irrelevant, as a distraction of valuable time and energy which should be spent solving the world's problems'<sup>10</sup>.

A different risk is that of a rapprochement between the two parties only to have one dominate the other, either by liturgy which recognises but then assimilates the cause of justice, smothering the cry of the oppressed and anaesthetising the pain, thus diabolically substituting ritual for ethical action, or by a passion for the just cause which commandeers worship to support and promote a narrow ideological position. A third risk – no, it is not a risk but a stark reality – is that of the liturgy itself betraying justice by reinforcing unjust

structures or attitudes. It does this by, for example, upholding an oppressively clerical and/or patriarchal order, or by excluding or attenuating the voice and experience of women, and by failing to acknowledge and integrate the presence of ethnic and other minorities. Liturgy that is poorly prepared, unimaginatively celebrated and constrained by impoverished language about God and human beings is equally unjust.

What then is the way ahead? How might the ancient axiom ‘lex orandi, lex credendi’ be completed by the ‘lex agendi’? I want to say that it is not a question of mending a broken coupling between liturgy and justice as if each enterprise was flourishing and only needed to be reconnected with the other. Nor is it even a matter of encouraging the two to interact and in the process assisting at the birth of a new and organic union. Rather it is a matter of being so immersed in one or the other or both that a common wellspring of faith is tapped. At the heart of liturgy there is a power for transformation to which the resurrection of Christ is the most striking testimony, and at the heart of action for justice there is a spirit of prayer, to be refracted into the diverse forms of praise, thanksgiving, confession, lament and intercession.

Since I have to confess that I myself am not involved in any explicit form of action for justice, and since we are meeting here as members and friends of the Australian Academy of Liturgy, I am going to focus on the role of liturgy in contributing towards a integral partnership with justice. How can liturgy play its part in transforming the world that we know? Let me first present a somewhat idealised picture of liturgy before acknowledging some of the disabilities under which it functions these days.

### **Liturgy: dynamic of divine justice**

What we do in worship is nothing less than the enactment in word, symbol and rite of the rule of God in our midst. Liturgy bodies forth the mystery of the God who in creating, sustaining, redeeming and ultimately transfiguring creation is revealed as a loving communion of persons – the Unoriginated Lover, the Sole-Begotten Beloved and the Love of them both – into whose embrace humankind is invited. The church’s collective memory keeps alive the story of the self-revelation of God, God’s self-gift in our flesh, Jesus Christ, and the tragi-comedy of our relationship with God in the course of history. It is primarily in the narrative of liturgy that this memory communicates its liberating power because it is narrative that respects the historical character of human experience and employs diverse forms of discourse to disclose but never define the mystery.

For liturgy is not a Platonic imitation of heavenly realities or a ritual re-enactment of cosmic myths but a celebration of Grace, a confession of faith and

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sin and praise offered to God at once transcendent and utterly engaged in the human enterprise and the destiny of creation. It incorporates the best and worst of us – our noblest love and our most shameful betrayals, our deepest insights and our most wilful blindness, our zest and our apathy, our daring and our fear, our artistry and our brutality, our unbounded hope and our blank despair. In word, symbol and ritual we express our faith that grace and glory abound in a world which seems the arena of sin, struggle and suffering. This faith finds its primary expression in the Cross, pregnant symbol of the power of God at work in human weakness. The Cross testifies to the trust of the Suffering Servant in the face of annihilation, to the meaningfulness of life in the face of absurdity, and to the validity of self-sacrificing love in the face of the urgent claims of the ego. It represents the paradoxical wisdom of God manifest in Jesus and above all in his death and resurrection. Of this wisdom David Power writes: ‘...the resurrection community of discipleship, the raising up of Christ and his transformation in the Spirit are testimony to that wisdom whereby the God who dwells in the cosmos dwells in a people who through the pathos of suffering and compassion become a community in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, no male and female. This persuasion shapes the world in which, in the name of Christ, Christians are invited to live, and to which they can, in the same name, invite all humanity to enter’<sup>11</sup>.

The liturgy serves as a paradigm of this world in which God dwells. Theresa Koernke puts it this way (in another lengthy quote):

‘When the Church gathers [for ritual action] it is not simply to be given information, or to put on a play or to have a counselling session, or to be entertained...but to call to heart, again and again, what is ultimately known: Christ crucified and risen in whom we dwell for the peace and salvation of all the world. When the Church gathers, it does so in order, not so much to draw a picture of the way the world is, but to “see better”, to give full reign to the memory of our hearts, to imagine what the world would be like if we believed that the justice of God has become flesh; to rehearse the Justice of God until we get it right’<sup>12</sup>.

Liturgy seeks to symbolise the world as redeemed by Christ and transformed by God’s Spirit. It speaks the language of imagination; it conjures up a vision of a graced humanity. ‘Like metaphor’, writes James Dallen, ‘liturgy blurs the normal lines of human activity to challenge the imagination to see how God is making the whole of creation new’<sup>13</sup>. What it does not do is to generate a specific political or economic programme. Michel said it back in 1935: ‘The liturgy does not offer a detailed scheme of economic reconstruction or anything of the kind. But it does give us a proper concept and understanding of what society is like, through its model, the Mystical Body’<sup>14</sup>. That is, it offers an anticipatory

experience of a new world which can set our imagination free and move us to reflect on the possibilities, to analyse the way things are and to put strategies and long-term plans resolutely into action.

Mark Searle saw it this way: 'The liturgy, then, is intended, like the parables of Jesus, to generate insight and to offer a call rather than impose moral imperatives; or rather, the moral imperative arises from within the person as a free and personal response to the insight that Jesus gives'<sup>15</sup>. But while our response to the moral imperative is meant to be a free and personal choice, the imperative remains an imperative. The 1971 Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World stirred up controversy with its claim that 'action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel'<sup>16</sup>.

### **Recent diagnoses**

Such are the sorts of claims some of us might wish to make for liturgy. If they seem extravagant and if they are not being realised in practice then we must ask why. Early in his perceptive essay on liturgy and culture, M. Francis Mannion admits that 'while there continues to be a great deal of energetic discussion today about the commitment to justice in the Church, this discussion does not appear to be matched by effective results'<sup>17</sup>. He attributes the loss of the liturgy's transformative power to three negative cultural dynamics – the subjectification of reality, the intimisation of society, and the politicisation of culture. Admittedly he is writing about American culture but I believe there is sufficient similarity for his critique to be applicable here.

By the subjectification of reality he means the shift of focus from God's presence in the world (the public domain) to the God experienced primarily in the inner self; individual subjectivity becomes the norm for meaning and value and 'in the process, the liturgy loses its power to embody a vision of social transformation, and its ability to elicit commitment to the social project is vitiated'<sup>18</sup>. The second negative feature of contemporary culture he calls the 'intimisation of society', which he describes as 'the process by which social complexity is eschewed in favour of a model of human coexistence that puts ultimate value on bonds of intimacy, personal closeness and radical familiarity'. This is tantamount to a withdrawal from the public sphere of social structures, institutions and processes because they 'embody impersonality, public distance and relational complexity'<sup>19</sup>. Thus the liturgy 'is shorn of public, social symbolism...Consequently it no longer stands as a model of redeemed society and for that reason retains little ability to generate enthusiasm for social and cultural transformation'<sup>20</sup>.

Thirdly, Mannion decries the reduction of broader cultural and social concerns – eg the arts, education, civic and family life – to political and legal problems. Here ‘the effect of politicisation is essentially one of narrowing and even overriding the intrinsic social vision of the liturgy itself and of redirecting its transforming power into political and legal channels..Even the liturgy itself becomes the subject of ideological and politicised critique’<sup>21</sup>. In conclusion Mannion calls not for a rejection of subjectivity but its reconnection to the public realm; not for the dismissal of intimisation but its moderation in recognition of the broader social bonds that characterise the church as (in Parker Palmer’s evocative phrase) a ‘company of strangers’; not for a denial of political action but its relocation in a social mission which allows for ‘the great variety of ways by which the transformation of society and human culture can be achieved’<sup>22</sup>.

Other authors offer alternative or complementary diagnoses of the failure of liturgy comprehensively to engage and empower Christian believers. Ralph Keifer writes of the privatisation of liturgy<sup>23</sup>; Archbishop Rembert Weakland criticises perceptions of liturgy which identify it with private devotion or with entertainment, and he goes on to ask whether an underlying neo-Platonic world-view is distorting our understanding of liturgy and even, by contrast, whether a neo-Pelagianism is blinding us to the primacy of divine action<sup>24</sup>. W. Jardine Grisbrooke names individualisation and secularisation as ‘the two most insidious dangers which beset western Christian worship today’<sup>25</sup>. Ronald Grimes complains: ‘What worries me about post-Vatican II liturgy is the kind of attention and bodily attitude it cultivates...so much is aimed at eye and ear and so little at belly and foot...Always erect, never on the floor, seldom in the dark, never truly hungry, never really sated, how does a people develop a physiology capable of being in the presence of a God who shakes no hands and speaks only in conundrums or in flesh?’<sup>26</sup>. In sum, to the extent that there is a rationalist, reductionist, literalist, minimalist mind-set, especially on the part of presiders, then you have a liturgy that is ineffectual in symbolising a world transfigured by the Spirit of the Lamb.

### **A justice diagnostic**

Let us finally seek to view liturgy through the lens of social justice. For this exercise I would like to draw on the statement prepared under the auspices of the Catholic bishops of Australia after the October ’87 stockmarket crash. It was published after five years of public consultation and debate under the title *Common Wealth for the Common Good, A Statement on the Distribution of Wealth in Australia*. While the focus of the document is much narrower than our broader concerns for justice, it does incorporate a summary of social justice



principles according to the Catholic tradition which I trust will be accessible to all.

### **The common good of persons**

Firstly I would like to link together five elements of this tradition – the dignity of the human person, freedom, the common good, solidarity and the preferential option for the poor. This constellation of values draws our attention first to the primacy of persons: ‘Society’s structures, institutions, laws and customs exist for persons and for their full authentic development, not vice versa... A just society is one in which nobody’s rights are ignored, denied or sacrificed to another’s advantage’<sup>27</sup>. Persons have a basic right to freedom but one which ‘is necessarily limited by the rights of others’. It is to be exercised in view of the common good, described by Vatican II ‘as the sum of those conditions of social life which allows social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment’<sup>28</sup>. Solidarity, a term used frequently by Pope John Paul II, is the ‘firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good ...(it) applies to every level of human behaviour, from one’s immediate family and neighbourhood to the relationships between nations and in a particular way between the industrialised world and the so-called developing world’<sup>29</sup>. Solidarity and the common good in turn lead to what has been controversially called the ‘preferential option for the poor’. This is described as the attempt ‘to understand the perspective from which the poor see the world and their own situation. It also means a willingness to take action to remove the injustices which deprive them of their rights and offend their God-given dignity’<sup>30</sup>. While these features of the social teaching of the church seem to form a seamless garment there are clearly tensions between them, eg between individual freedom and the common good, or between solidarity and the preferential option for the poor, tensions which at times can be acute and extremely difficult to resolve.

A just liturgy incarnates these values, upholding them, celebrating them, reinforcing them, reconciling them. It affirms the human person as individually unique while being inherently social; it manifests and calls for a deep solidarity between people and challenges them with the gospel imperative to serve and not to be served and to care for the least of Christ’s sisters and brothers.

This being the case, we are confronted with a series of challenging questions. What about the specific exclusion of women from ministerial leadership in some of our churches? And the relativisation of women’s experience by the various languages of worship? How can we respond to the claim of Australia’s indigenous peoples and ethnic groups for liturgical rites which reflect their traditions, customs and spirituality? What can be done to recognise minorities

such as the deaf and otherwise handicapped? Is the discipline governing access to sacramental communion truly just? Can we claim that the liturgy we celebrate enhances our freedom by enabling us to become fully human – loving, trusting, hoping, enduring – and by delivering us from fear, guilt, narcissism, illusion and enslavement to power, wealth, success and pleasure? Does our liturgy liberate or does it simply reinforce existing defences and attitudes? Does it draw us out of the isolation of our private worlds and subjective states? Does liturgy help resolve the conflicting claims of individuals or groups versus the common good? Does it enable us to see the poor as a gift, as bearers of the gospel for us? Does it promote sharing, whether material, cultural or spiritual?

### **The value of goods**

A second complex of principles in this social justice tradition concerns material goods, i.e. private property, labour and capital, stewardship and economics. Whatever degree of ‘communism’ may have been exercised in the early Christian community in Jerusalem (Acts 2 & 4) or encouraged by the Fathers of the Church, the mainstream Christian tradition has upheld the right to private property but has qualified it more and more by the recognition that the whole earth and its goods are God’s gifts to all humanity (what Pope John Paul II calls ‘the universal destination of the earth’s goods’)<sup>31</sup>. An allied principle is that human beings are entrusted with the stewardship of creation to ensure firstly that it is not exploited beyond sustainable limits and secondly that there is a just distribution of the fruits of the earth, meeting the basic needs of all. In addition, ownership of and investment in the means of production should respect the ‘human rights and the essential dignity of the person contributing his or her work to an enterprise. In itself work, whether it is paid or unpaid, should be seen as ennobling and as contributing to the fulfilment and self-realisation of the worker, whose right to share in the fruits of that work must be recognised’<sup>32</sup>. Fourthly, human life must not be reduced to economics; Pope John Paul II warns of the danger of ignoring the ethical and religious dimensions of the socio-cultural system and of enshrining the production and consumption of goods as society’s central value<sup>33</sup>. In effect he is calling for a new consciousness of ‘humanity’s participation in, rather than domination over, cosmic history, and a consciousness that humanity’s own history will be determined by the capacity to live in harmony with the vital energies that pervade all things, great and small’.<sup>34</sup>

There are pertinent questions for liturgy here as well. Does our worship celebrate human labour and incorporate the fruits of that labour? Do the symbols and rites of liturgy express the grace of human artistry? Does liturgy deepen our reverence for the world in which we live and promote harmony with the environment? Is liturgy a mere toy of the economy, tolerated as a momentary

interlude in the course of a working week? Does liturgy get hijacked for the sake of fund-raising programmes in the parish? Is efficiency the paramount consideration, leaving no room for play?

### **Subsidiarity**

Finally the Bishops' Statement reaffirms the principle of subsidiarity, viz. that responsibility and initiative should be devolved to subordinate organisations or to individuals rather than be assumed by higher organisations or authorities. This finds its liturgical parallel in the assertion of Vatican II that 'in liturgical celebrations each person, minister or lay, who has an office to perform, should carry out all and only those parts which pertain to his (her) office by the nature of the rite and the norms of the liturgy'<sup>35</sup>.

These principles direct us to consider whether we have succeeded in recognising the assembly of the faithful as the true subject and celebrant of liturgy rather than the ordained minister. Is there a full range of ministries exercised by the baptised or does liturgy still suffer from clerical imperialism? Do all those who exercise a ministry understand that they are at the service of the community and the quality of its prayer? So the list could go on but it is time to draw these reflections to a close.

### **Conclusion**

In the course of this paper I have sought to sketch out something of the problematic concerning liturgy and justice, calling on a variety of past and present witnesses. I then went on to offer a descriptive account of worship before turning to a contemporary Catholic document for a synopsis of the social justice tradition. Finally I sought to bring the latter to bear on our liturgical praxis. There are many other lenses through which one might view liturgy. For the moment let me conclude with the words which Kathleen Hughes employs to bring her own essay on liturgy and justice to a close:

Liturgy and justice have an intrinsic relationship to one another precisely because liturgy places us before the Just One to whom we say 'Amen'. We need not change the liturgy in order to highlight themes of justice. We need simply to celebrate the liturgy with genuine participation and allow the Just One gradually to work a transformation in us. With every Amen we join ourselves to the paschal mystery and pledge ourselves to that vision of justice and love that is inherent in the celebration. Amen is an act of faith and an act of commitment. Full, conscious and active participation in the celebration of the liturgy demands that we will, indeed, live what we proclaim.<sup>36</sup>

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# CHRISTIAN RITUAL IN PASTORAL CARE

*H. Paul V. Renner*

Most pastoral care persons are involved in two important ministries for people entrusted to their care: the ministry of pastoral counselling and the ministry of ritualisation. Unfortunately, too often there exists a hiatus between the two services so that each is impoverished and often both are at variance with each other.

Ritualisation often lacks warmth, empathy, sensitivity. It sometimes stanches feelings, generalises a patient's experience, reduces ministry to the "magical" and automatic. Counselling, on the other hand, too often occurs in a vacuum, is temporary and palliative, privatises a patient's experience, fails to "tie off" disrupting emotions and returns a patient to his/her catalytic situation.

A proper partnership between the two services hopefully will enrich each and provide a patient with a more effective and coordinated service. The object of this presentation will be to show how ritual can be effectively used in pastoral care as a close partner to pastoral counselling.

In order to achieve that we shall be looking briefly at the following:

- 1) Some crucial features of pastoral counselling.
- 2) What is ritual? In particular its nature, function and goals, especially in pastoral care.
- 3) Bridging the hiatus between counselling and ritualisation .
- 4) Some principles for the shaping and use of rituals in pastoral care.
- 5) Intrinsic values of regular rites for pastoral care.

## **Some Crucial Features of Pastoral Counselling**

For our purposes we shall assume pastoral care to be the cluster of services brought to people on behalf of, and in the name of, the chief pastor – the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ himself.

Within that cluster of services, pastoral counselling is an important one. Through it people in crisis (in emotional, psychological, spiritual stress and disturbance) are brought that kind of help which belongs to the ministry of the Good Shepherd. For that to happen an encounter needs to occur between a patient/patients, ("sufferer") and a pastoral counsellor.

At the risk of constructing a schema, which is dangerous to do, given the fact that the trajectory of a counselling encounter is quite unpredictable, let me mention some critical stages or principles in the counselling process. It is possible to see in them the "footprints" of the incarnate Good Shepherd.

In pastoral counselling it is important:

- 1) to enter the world, actually and metaphorically of the patient, especially of his/her feelings;
- 2) to establish koinonia with a patient – a fellowship especially in suffering;
- 3) to facilitate catharsis – the flushing out of emotional spiritual distress/disturbance, careful that it is therapeutic and not hysterical catharsis;
- 4) to peregrinate emotionally/spiritually along the path the patient needs to follow, never however losing sight of the goal he/she needs to be helped towards;
- 5) to help the patient reach dia-emotional rationality, i.e. to pass through the “cloud” of confusing emotional distress into the light of clearer thinking;
- 6) to help the patient make a realistic assessment of his/her situation, i.e. to view accurately his/her inner and outer world;
- 7) to provide in one’s being an authentic presence of the Good Shepherd himself – “ontic counselling”;
- 8) to help discover and release the resources within the patient, and to assemble those resources from outside the patient, for his/her recovery;
- 9) to select and apply appropriate faith resources (scripture, hymnody/psalms, history, past, present, esp. hagiographical history, rituals) to the patient for his/her recovery. Here the counsellor becomes the ritualist;
- 10) to assist the patient’s re-entry into a stable and supportive community.

### **What Do We Mean by Ritual – Its Nature, Function and Goals?**

For our purposes, against the tendency to confuse ritual with routine <sup>1</sup>, I shall define ritual as activity which is formal; which is agreed upon interplay between at least two persons or animals, one of which may be God; which is repeated at meaningful intervals; which is re-enacted in similar circumstances; which is symbolic and beneficial; and which differs from interpersonal behaviour limited to technological and pragmatic goals.

Ritual has shape and design. As such it has body cells. They are such things as substance e.g. water, wine, fire, stone, vegetation etc.; word e.g. readings, vota, prayers, responses, legend etc.; action e.g. leading, carrying, eating, marching, destroying, blessing, anointing; gesture e.g. kneeling, bowing, laying on hands, consignment, embracing; sound e.g. music, song, wailing, screaming, detonating; silence e.g. the moratorium on sound, stillness; grouping etc. etc.

Ritual has quality, character, in fact characteristics. There is decorum in ritual i.e. it is formalised, stylised behaviour. There may be spontaneity in ritual i.e. within its formal structure it may allow for individual, topical, unrehearsed, spontaneous, casual interplay between participants. There is playfulness in ritual i.e. it allows pretence to portray the pretended. There is celebration in ritual, i.e.

hallowed exuberance is vented. There may be ceremony in ritual, i.e. corporate, majestic, pompous commemoration and celebration of tribal/national/ecclesial import. There is formality in ritual, i.e. it is a devised structure where the contrived, the spontaneous, the traditional and casual are harnessed and congealed into fixed patterns.

Ritual often has its roots in a genetic event of special significance for an individual or a community where fundamental values were expressed and salutary energies released. The Passover celebration of the Jews goes back to the amazing genetic event when God released his people under Moses' leadership, from Egyptian captivity and its inevitable genocide and gave them their life, their freedom and their identity. The passover is more than a recollection of an historic event enshrined in history. It is that. But it is also the anamnestic release of the divine energies that exploded into history at the original event. and the reaffirmation – in a sense the recreation – of Jewish identity, repeatedly under threat of genocide.

Similar things could be said of the Christian eucharist. The components of ritual, like good vocabulary, carry a content which, in discreet use, is redistributed whenever they are used. There is purpose, serviceable goal, in ritual, especially in rites of passage which help to transfer persons from a preliminal (to borrow the Herz-Van Gennep expression)<sup>2</sup> through a liminal on to a post-liminal status. Beside the obvious and specific goals expressed in their titles<sup>3</sup>, e.g. Rites of Technology, of Therapy etc., the principal purpose of rituals are the following: to “tie off” especially by means of stable, yet fulfilling forms, deep, powerful and potentially destructive emotions<sup>4</sup>; to provide a secure platform for patients to fall back on, preventing regression, especially in crisis situations, where the inclination is to regress to an earlier, less mature developmental stage of coping; to fasten a patient to his/her immediate community, preventing disintegrating isolation; to reduce anxiety; to facilitate the attainment of a new, advanced status; to make public the attainment of that status cf. marriage, ordination, graduation, healing<sup>5</sup>; to link a patient's experience with the communal experience<sup>6</sup>; to embed a patient securely in his/her culture/faith: in Christian terms to lodge the patient into the body of Christ.

### **Bridging the Hiatus between Counselling and Ritualisation**

If we are to bridge the hiatus between counselling and ritualisation and establish a partnership between the two, we must understand that both address human need, and both have an important role in meeting and relieving it.

The principal function of counselling is to bring to the surface, to exhume, the disturbing, distressing, and even debilitating emotional, dramatic and trauma(passion)-laden content of a patient's experience, and begin to bring to



bear upon it resources that will contribute towards the survival of the patient, the management/containment/conquest of the disturbing precipitators so that the patient emerges a healthy, re-integrated, more mature and competent person. Among those resources, counsellors need to know, are rituals and components of ritual that are laden with therapeutic capabilities (energies).

The principal function of ritualisation for patients is to gather the disturbing, distressing and even debilitating emotional, dramatic and trauma-laden content of a patient's experience, exhumed in the process of counselling, formalise it and encase it, "tie it off", confine it in a safe combustion chamber where it does not serve to disintegrate the patient, but where it is given safe and serviceable forms and becomes a useful resource for the patient's future encounters.

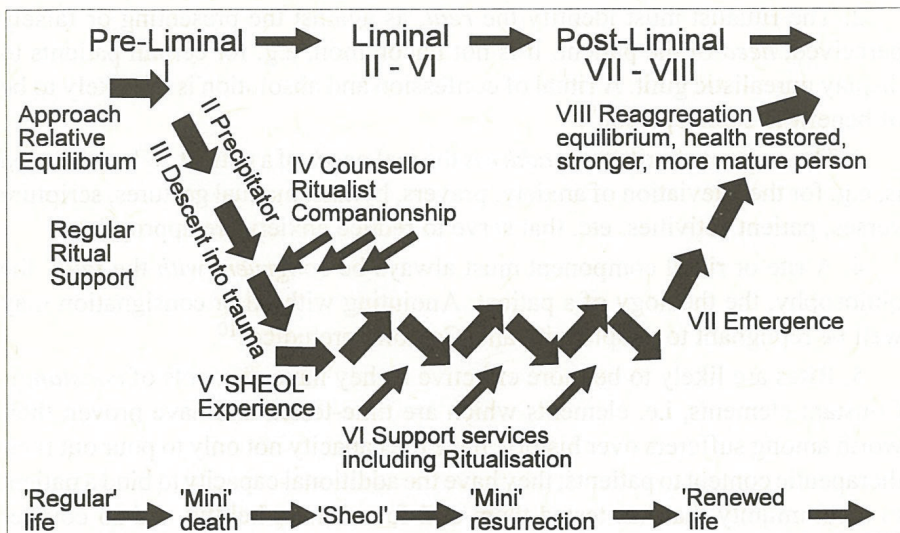
Generally speaking, I don't think that ritual has been given sufficient credit as a therapeutic resource for sufferers.

To appreciate this capacity of ritual and its components we must see its deep interest in human need and dilemma and we must rediscover its history of serviceability. Time does not allow us to explore this aspect of ritual thoroughly here in this essay. However, just an example or two. Studies have been made on patients before and after the application of ritual components bestowing Peace. Significant change in the pulse beat and the composition of the blood was registered in patients after the application of the rite<sup>7</sup>. We have all registered the allaying of anxiety that has followed a prayer, or a benediction, or a treasured verse or votum, or the laying on of hands or whatever. A need in the patient was met, a therapeutic (calming, relaxing, peace-generating, confidence-building, faith-reinforcing or whatever) energy was released for the patient, and a form of well-ness, health, stability returned to him/her.

When, through astute counselling, we have identified and assessed the need of the patient, and when we have called into service our knowledge of, and experience with, rituals and their component parts and have seen their value, and when, through discovery, including mutual assessment and response, we have ascertained what rites and ritual elements will be eagerly received by a patient as therapy, we are ready to craft, with the patient's involvement, a rite that will bring the benefits needed.

In this way we are able to provide for the patient handles of hope to hold onto for survival, emergence and reaggregation and development towards a more mature and advanced state of personal development. A schema, similar to the following, may help to illustrate the process of assisting a patient by means of a partnership between counselling and ritualisation.

It shows the patient in the following stages of a traumatic episode:



- 1) The approach or pre-liminal stage where a patient is in a state of relative equilibrium;
- 2) The encounter with a precipitator (sickness, unemployment, separation, life cycle stage, steady accumulation of influences)
- 3) The descent into trauma (distress, emotional/psychological/spiritual even physical disintegration, isolation, “mini-death”).
- 4) The companionship of the pastoral-care person (hopefully counsellor/ritualist).
- 5) The “Sheol” experience, the liminal state of the patient and
- 6) The application of support services including ritualisation.
- 7) The emergence of the patient towards re-integration.
- 8) The re-aggregation of the patient, the post-liminal state, as a re-integrated, restored-to-health person.

### Principles for Shaping and Use of Rituals for Pastoral Care <sup>8</sup>

If ritual is to be an effective partner with counselling in the care of the sufferer and if it is to be an effective instrument in his/her recovery then certain principles need to be observed. At least the following principles should be observed. (Others may have discovered other principles they consider important.)

1. The ritualist must approach his/her service with the same attitude of *compassion* as the counsellor. In the performance of a ritual the ritualist is a crucial unit in the communication of the contents. Its compassionate energies will be enhanced or impeded by the attitude of heart of the ritualist.

2. The ritualist must identify the *real*, as against the presenting or falsely perceived, *need* of the patient. It is not uncommon, e.g. for certain patients to display unrealistic guilt. A ritual of confession and absolution is not likely to be of benefit to such a person<sup>9</sup>.

3. The *content* of a rite must *address* the real *needs* of a patient. When the need is, e.g. for the alleviation of anxiety, prayers, hymns, manual gestures, scripture verses, patient activities, etc. that serve to reduce anxiety are appropriate.

4. A rite or ritual component must always be *congruent with* the *faith*, the philosophy, the theology of a patient. Anointing with oil or consignation may well be repugnant to people with anti-Catholic prejudices<sup>10</sup>.

5. Rites are likely to be more effective if they have elements of *constancy*. Constant elements, i.e. elements which are time-tested and have proven their worth among sufferers over history, have the capacity not only to pour out their therapeutic content to patients; they have the additional capacity to bind a patient to a community that has tested them and found them helpful and so counter isolation and reduce anxiety.

6. Rites need to *resonate* in supportive partnership *with counselling*. What counselling has freed the patient to express – fears, hopes, anxieties, guilt, despair etc – is gathered by the rite into acceptable, even beautiful and approved forms and effectively contained and “tied off”. The patient can say “My anger is acceptably vented and appeased, my guilt and sin are truly forgiven etc. etc.” when it is absorbed into the ritual forms approved by his/her faith community<sup>11</sup>.

7. *Ad hoc rituals* at critical junctures in the counselling encounter may well be inserted, e.g. when a stage has been reached by a patient in the counselling session where his/her anxiety about undergoing critical surgery has been adequately vented, an ad hoc ritual containing perhaps succinct scriptures, prayers, commendations with appropriate gestures acceptable to the patient, e.g. laying on of hands, holding etc might effectively be applied.

8. Where other people, e.g. congregation members, family, other staff etc. are present more formal, general rites may be more appropriate. The *privacy* of the patient needs to be shielded from the public gaze. The confidential substance that has emerged in the counselling session should be included in a private ritual but must be kept out of public rituals, except where patients desire (not simply permit!) it.

9. Rituals should *involve* wherever possible the *patient* and by-standers. Some ritual elements are decidedly *for* patients, e.g. intercession, blessing; but others should be included which are *by* patients, e.g. supplication, confession, reading, singing, kneeling, thanksgivings, etc. even blessing the bystanders. A deeper degree of appropriation is likely to be achieved, the isolation of the patient

is likely to be bridged, the “our-ness” rather than the “his/her-ness” or “their-ness” of the event, its stabilising corporateness is enhanced if involvement is provided for.

10. There should be stable *feeling* in the ritual though it needs to be formal. A close scrutiny of rituals and their component parts will reveal that they are permeated with deep feeling. The bearing/manner/attitude of the ritualist (see I. above) will hopefully ensure that the feeling, while not artificially exaggerated, is allowed to be “felt” by the patient.

11. Within a rite or ritual each component, especially those with symbolic content, should work together to convey its basic thrust. Manual gestures, e.g., should undergird and give impetus to the verba. Substance should represent that which the rite wants to give, e.g. water/cleansing, oil/soothing etc.

12. The *Ritualist* must serve as a *bridge* between the patient and his/her need. Between the patient-in-need and the ritual service that helps to alleviate it, is a hiatus which he/she in the depths of that need cannot bridge. The Ritualist must know (*gignosko*) the need and the rich store-house of ritual substance in order to serve as the conduit along which the appropriate substance is channelled into the patient’s need.

13. The ritual should gather the *private experience* of a patient and merge it into the *communal experience* of his/her group. Good ritual gives form to the faith, the discipline and structure of a community. Through properly shaped and applied rituals, the isolated, cut off and vulnerable individual is held or re-joined to, re-established in, his/her community.

14. Ritual is most effective where the *community*, usually through its official representative, is involved. The community of which the patient is a member becomes for him/her the caring, nurturing and health-bestowing mother, whose touch and embrace the patient feels as sustaining. And where the community is the community of faith, good ritual lodges the patient into the caring, therapeutic and sustaining embrace of God himself.

### **The Value of Regular Rites for Pastoral Care<sup>12</sup>**

In times of crisis, which are times of isolation, disorientation and potential disintegration, the stable, the regular and the familiar is of special value. It provides anchorage, reassurance and substance that does not have to be assessed and does not require of the patient the additional crisis-coping undertaking of familiarising him/herself with it. Strangers and the unfamiliar are elements that belong to the essence of the crisis itself. What the patient does not need is the intrusion of additional “strangers” to cope with.

Rites and ritual elements with which the patient is familiar are not going to traumatise him/her further. On the other hand they are going to be met as long-standing and in some cases, long awaited, "friends". If a patient has again and again or even at prior significant moments in his/her pilgrimage, received e.g. the laying on of hands and received it as a contribution to well-being, for him/her it is more than likely going to be a contribution to well-being in a time of crisis, when the capacity for rational evaluation has been diminished and the patient's feelings are his/her most potent sensitive receptors. The same is true of favourite hymns, scripture verses, other gestures etc.

Furthermore, the pastoral content, e.g. peace, support, comfort, forgiveness etc, contained in the familiar ritual and its components is likely to gain readier access to the patient, and be more immediately and profoundly appropriated, if during the patient's pilgrimage, he/she has had repeated and significant contact with it and has become well acquainted with its substance (cf the "Passing of the Peace", the "Aaronic Benediction", the "Sign of the Cross".)

To summarise, rites and ritual substance, familiar and imparted in normal life situations – no matter how flippantly they may sometimes have been received – are likely to be of substantial therapeutic value in times of crisis.

Before drawing this section to a close, I wish to emphasise vehemently that Christian rites have evolved in the Christian community for the benefit, i.e. the well-being of the community as such and of its members individually. Where those regular rites have been repeatedly used and used properly, the community as such and its members will have been provided substance and energy for both survival and sound and stable growth and development.

Their rites of passage e.g. will have carried them across mysterious, potentially dangerous thresholds to new and richer and more advanced statuses, for the benefit of not only the individuals concerned but of the total community. When, e.g. a group of young people is helped by well-crafted rites from the status of childhood through puberty (adolescence) towards adulthood, not only do the members of that group benefit, the whole community does. It takes into its corpus another contingent of well-integrated units to add to its own stature and capability. And, when one of its physically and psychologically wounded and debilitated members is ferried through his/her deep waters back to health and reinstatement into his/her locus within the community, not only is the individual extricated from his/her dilemma, the whole community takes back a virile unit into its full complement of members. It celebrates the return of the "lost" – however temporary the loss may have been – and the complement of blessing his/her return brings with it.

May I in closing refer in particular to two regular and fundamental rites very briefly and to their pastoral care value for people of the Christian community with

a particular belief about them. Others, with other beliefs about them, will be able to register other sets of values. The two rites are, first, the rite of initiation called Baptism, and, second, the rite of intensification called the Lord's Supper or the Holy Eucharist.

For people who believe that baptism conveys the following blessings: incorporation into the body of Christ; death and burial with Christ; rising with Christ to new and eternal life; the forgiveness of sin; deliverance from Satan and evil; regeneration: the gift of the Holy Spirit: and incorporation into the body of Christ, the Sacrament is immensely therapeutic. For those suffering alienation, lostness, loneliness it provides communion both with God, the source of life, and with the community of life. For those suffering the ravages of sin, a guilty conscience and all the disturbing, destructive consequences of the same, it provides cleansing, washing, exoneration, peace of mind, relief, joy. For those born to a destiny in death, it provides rebirth to a destiny called life eternal. For those in search of meaning and purpose it provides a life of fruitful service divinely guided and energised by the indwelling Holy Spirit. All of them fundamental for wholesome, well-integrated and purposeful living. And so we might go on. But its values may well be locked away in the past unless they are repeatedly accessed. This is achieved through what the theologians referred to as the "regressus ad baptismam" – the return to baptism. That means devotional activities, both private and public by which the devotee would continuously die to sin, to death, Satan etc and would rise to the new life in Christ – usually through confession of sin and absolution and the celebration of the eucharist. For crisis-coping purposes, i.e. for surviving and rising from the "mini-deaths" that such people repeatedly endure, the "return to baptism", their "death-in-Christ/resurrection-with-him" experience is crucial.

For people who believe that the eucharist conveys the following blessings: communion with Christ and the Trinity; communion with fellow communicants; cleansing from sin; conquest over death; life eternal; communion with the departed redeemed; divine energy for service; the sacrament is immensely therapeutic. In times of threatened separation and isolation it brings reinforced koinonia (togetherness) with Christ and with "compatriots" (the community of faith). In times of bereavement it brings re-union with departed loved ones. In times of debilitating inertia it restores energy and purpose for living. In times of death and dying and all the associated activities – the hive of unsettling affects – it brings communion with the risen Christ, and the assurance not only of "death with dignity" but of victorious death. In times of harassed conscience about a sordid record, it brings "blood that cleanses us from all sin". All of this is fundamental for wholesome, well-integrated and purposeful living.

And so one could go on in analysis of the Church's rites and their therapeutic value as instruments in pastoral care. What pastoral counselling services need to know is that in the rites of the Church, there is available for patients and their communities a vast storehouse of therapeutic (I would add divine) resources that waits to be tapped.

I hope that we may have begun to build a pedestal from which we can look into human need on the one hand and into the value of rites and their components on the other, and I hope we may contrive ever more effectively to apply them to persons and communities whose health and well-being – emotional, physical and spiritual – has been impaired, and who long for authentic restoration to health.

#### NOTES

1. There is much similarity, but a vast difference, between setting a table for breakfast – a routine undertaking – and “setting” a communion table – a ritual act.
2. cf. van Gennepe's *Rites of Passage* already available at the beginning of this century.
3. Numerous classifications of rituals have been made.
4. cf. e.g. Jewish rites of mourning and their service in grief management.
5. The declaration of marriage, e.g. which features in many marriage rites is both authoritative and reassuring.
6. A value for both patient and community too often ignored.
7. Here the “experiments” conducted by Klaus Thomas, Berlin, in the 1960's are significant.
8. The basic material for this section of the paper is available in an article I wrote “Ritual and Pastoral Care” published in the *Journal of Pastoral Care* Vol .XXXIII No. 3. It was based on work done at the now Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, USA.
9. cf. the frequent incidence of the death by accident of a child being interpreted as death by neglect.
10. Though counsellors need to be sensitive to Jewish/Muslim/etc. convictions in the use of the name of God (Christ), Christian ritualists need to be honest and open in the use of Christian rituals.
- 11 The use of the wail and dirge (cf. also flagellation) in some cross-cultural rites of mourning is worthy of scrutiny.
12. Here the work of Robert L Kinast *Sacramental Pastoral Care* - Pueblo Co. N.Y. is illuminating, cf. also Charles W Gusmer's *And You Visited Me* also Pueblo Co. N.Y.

## ART AND LITURGY

A paper read before the Victorian Chapter of the Academy  
*Albert McPherson*

A popular song of my younger years was 'Tiptoe through the tulips'. I feel some thing like that would be appropriate for this brief talk to you today, as in the space of some thirty minutes we tiptoe through the massive scope of 'Art and Liturgy', or I should prefer to say, 'The Arts and Liturgy'. The main difference perhaps is that rather than a field of tulips, it is much more like a minefield.

In my life-long preoccupation with this theme, I have always, and still am beset with questioning from people concerned with Christianity and the church and its worship whether such a preoccupation is not a secondary matter. In other words, art or the arts are not essential to matters of faith and worship. Some even go so far as to suggest that they are trivial. I cannot see, nor ever have, any sense in such an attitude. For me, art is an essential quality of human existence, we cannot exist without it.

Some people of faith, Christians mainly, acknowledge that since the Incarnation of Jesus Christ then art along with other material forms, has some significance in the realm of the spiritual. Again, that would seem to me but an insufficient acceptance. For me, and I believe truly for all of us, art is an essential quality of human existence; it is the way in which in varying methods we express our humanity.

Whenever I hear people speaking about the realm of the spirit or pure, untrammelled spirituality, I rush for the Scotch decanter. Matters of the spirit cannot be experienced or communicated without the involvement of some physical means – thought, speech, movement, even silence, which we can only define when we know something about noise and sound. We are creatures, whole and entire, mind, body, and spirit. Purity exists in the integration of all our given faculties, not in the exclusion of any one of them.

So, in matters of liturgy, you cannot avoid art or the arts. As soon as you appear in the body at a liturgy, in any role within that liturgy, you are entering the realm of art. As soon as you open your lips to speak or sing, as soon as you move a foot or a hand in gesture, as soon as you use your eyes, you are involved in artistic activity.

So to recapitulate, the arts are involved in liturgy, because of our creation as human beings – living, moving, breathing, speaking, etc. The buildings we inhabit as a people of God, the words we use, the music we sing, the way we move and act, the clothes we wear, the decoration we use, (and even a bare wall is decoration), all of this is a meeting ground for the arts, the liturgy, by which we



worship God, and that Being we name as God, our Creator and continuing Provider and Inspirer.

But having said that we are all artists, there is of course, as in all human enterprise, the experts. We cannot all be fully expert in all the many faceted techniques and requirements for human living. We as human beings have come to rely on experts in every matter of our existence whether that existence be primitive or sophisticated. How we grow our food, how we process it and prepare it for consumption; how we grow fibres to weave our clothes, and how we design them; how we study the world around us and learn to provide ways and means by science and medicine for better health and living; how we reflect upon our past and uncover the trends of our existence and so lead others through our history from past to present; how we meditate and study the discoveries of others and try in many ways to lead creatures into some understanding and appreciation of the ways of the Creator; how best to build and construct to order and plan – we follow the better knowledge that exists in other people, as they in turn follow us if we have sufficient knowledge to so do.

There is an artist in all of us, but undoubtedly, there are some who by natural gifts, and even more by study and preparation, hone that gift to what we would call a professional standard. Whether it be an architect, a composer, a writer, a designer, a painter or sculptor, a weaver, a script writer, a dancer, an actor – there is one common element in all artists and that is the quality of imagination. There are other qualities necessary too for the artistic enterprise, such as dedication and commitment and many artists shame the comfortable Christian and churchgoer in this particular way, but the one quality necessary above all is imagination, and the stature of an artist is often measured by that quality.

Recent developments in liturgy have been so rapid that as soon as we begin to speak about the present situation, let alone record it it has already tended to become the past. I think that the stubborn attitude of so many people in the church against change, has itself changed. The world itself has changed in ways that few of us could have imagined. These past weeks with the anniversary of the moon-landing by humans, with the bombardment from comets of the planet Jupiter, so closely observed and examined by earthbound humans makes the science fiction novels of my adolescence old fashioned.

Admittedly, there is still a problem in persuading people that change is here to stay. The world is not only a changing one, but a constantly changing one. And this is and must be reflected in the liturgy of the worshipping community. There are unchanging elements in creation and in our worship, but much that surrounds that is and must be open to reinterpretation and change, or perhaps it would be better to say, re-expression.

Liturgical studies are uncovering more and more the variety that existed in the early church, for example. In the eucharist and in baptism, the two primary sacraments for most Christians, there are unchanging elements. The taking of bread and wine, the thanksgiving over them, the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the bread and wine, are constants of the eucharistic sacrament. The baptism with water is the core element of Initiation. Other things might be added, and of course have been at various times and various places, and we understand more fully now, and probably will even more in the future. I say that because amongst many liturgists there is a tendency to hark back to what the primitive church did, what the early fathers said and did. We know now that outside those basic factors they said and did things in a variety of ways. Some liturgists would have us think that the Holy Spirit having revealed and directed in the first century, then left the church to fossilise the liturgy. It is more like the action of a Holy Mummy or embalmer, than a vital, dynamic Spirit. What the first church communities did and said, and maybe even how they said and did it is extremely important but the world has changed, time has evolved, and human experience and understanding have moved on, and all of this I am convinced is the movement of the Holy Spirit of God.

It is then these qualities of imagination and prophetic insight into the surrounding world, that any artist at their best possesses, that are needed in renewing and continuing to renew the liturgy of the church.

Let me hurriedly put this into some practical context. Firstly, architecture.

The Christian liturgy can take place anywhere, we don't need specifically designed or ordained buildings. And yet from the beginning of human existence, humanity has felt the necessity of some form of home. The primitive nomad has some rough shelter, if only the side of an animal with a blanket thrown across; or like our Australian aboriginal people with the quickly assembled sheets of bark. Tents, mud huts, tree dwellings, caves, homes, shrines, temples, public buildings of every description have become a necessity for the civilised existence of humanity. As individuals and as communities we need somewhere we can call home. One of our saddest social problems at the moment are the homeless.

So in the Christian communities of our history, private homes became community homes, meeting places; and with the advent of a more public Christian church, specific buildings began to be built. The House of the People, became inevitably, the House of God. We have inherited them, and at the present time, the big question for many of us, is what do we do with them, how do we use them.

We do not need to enter here into the thorny matter of disposing of redundant churches except I would like to say that the church should do so with the greatest

care. Too many mistakes have been made in this matter, and the church has yielded to pressure to dispose of unwanted and unneeded buildings, only to find that later in time there would have been a use for them. Shifting populations leave an area bereft of residents, and then, either return, or a new generation succeeds them, only to find an empty space, a restaurant or a car park where the church used to be. There are ways of using unwanted buildings for other purposes in a temporary manner until we find out more accurately their long-term viability.

It is more in the area of using unwieldy buildings for the liturgy that we need the imagination of architects and designers. I have seen, as I am sure you have, some imaginative and very workable formats that have transformed older churches into extremely good environments for modern liturgy, and probably have also seen, as I have, some terrible disasters. The spate of immediate post second world war churches, were built just prior to the newer liturgical movements and are sometimes less easy to adapt than older forms. Some of our modern churches look more like the over-dressed sitting room of Dame Edna Everidge, than a space for the people of God, and the mystery of that Being they worship. Some of our older and modern churches, alas, look like a depository for dead flowers, dust and ragged notice-boards recording the latest financial drive, usually with rather dismal results.

A church building is in some ways a contradiction. It really doesn't function until the liturgy is taking place, and yet an empty church building, should also be able to communicate to the visitor, that here is a special kind of building that is meant to embrace people and lead them into some sense of the transcendent. A good hospital building is that place where you feel assured that medical attention is going on; a good library building should convey the treasury of study and learning as well as providing the ease for good study; a good financial institution building should look as though it is pursuing business and not appear as some vast hall from outer space with no particular purpose in mind; a good shop, or department store, or even a shopping centre should appear as though it is there to provide commodities for human beings, and not just be an exercise in confusing escalators and floral arrangements, usually plastic.

So, our churches in their architecture should express that we are waiting for something to happen, for the people to come and worship, and also express, that already there is a presence here. That is where the help of painters, stained glass artists, sculptors, decorators, tapestry weavers and designers is so important as is the skill of good lighting technicians and designers.

All of us are engaged in the revision and renewal of our liturgical forms. How many poets and writers have we engaged to lead us out of so many impasses. We need so much help in choosing the right way with words, to convey with clarity

and understanding the message that is enfolded by them. We need too guidance in choosing words which lead us beyond. Our liturgies are always to lead us into mystery, of this world, this creation, of ourselves and others, they are not there to give a scientific explanation of it all.

The musical tradition of our churches is something that in recent years has been greatly abandoned. a recent broadcaster commented on the fact that nowadays you are more likely to hear the great treasures of Christian music in a concert hall, or on disc or CD, or over the air waves than you are to hear them in a church. I am sure great care is needed before we yield to pressure on the question of catchy tunes, and jolly music – hymns the people can whistle to. How ironic that having been told by liturgical experts and pastoral gurus that plainsong drives the young people from the church in droves, that now ‘Canto Gregoriano’ sung by the monks of the Benedictine monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, is top of the charts. I’m told that recently at the Myer Music Bowl, the kids requested it to be played again whilst they skated to it. Perhaps they know something about moving to music, that the church has either forgotten or never learned properly. I have withheld mentioning the art of dance in worship because so little of it happens, and when it does, so much of it is an acute embarrassment. Liturgical dancing more often looks like pious gymnastics than real dance movement or expression. When it comes to that most primitive of all human faculties, movement, most congregations appear like paralysed zombies, than moving, living, breathing creatures of God.

There is much to be done as we continue with our experience of liturgy, with our renewal of it, with our reform of it, with our knowledge and use of the past and the present. Relying on professional assistance is important and we need to cultivate humility in our approach to arts and artists. ‘I know what I like’ is not good enough. we need to know why we like it and why we don’t. We need to know what the artist is attempting to convey, which might be what we like or do not like and might reflect upon who we are, more than who the artist is.

Of paramount importance, is to rely on ourselves and others within our worshipping community, our co-liturgists. We all have artistic ability; to speak, or sing, to move, to be still, to listen and hear.

## INTERCESSION – WHAT’S THE USE?

*Delroy Oberg*

Some time ago I asked a priest to pray during mass for a seriously ill friend. As I was not in my “home” parish and the person was unknown to him, I thought I should add a few details for his benefit. When the time for the intercessions came round, Father co-operatively recalled my request. Moreover, he informed God (and the congregation) of the patient’s full name, complaint, current condition and the desired prognosis. The combined intercessions that morning comprised approximately one-third of the (mid-week) mass time. As I visit a number of Anglican churches, I am aware that this is no isolated example of what seems to me a great imbalance in the amount of time allocated to any one part of the service.

Indeed, at the risk of being labelled an anthropomorphist, I sometimes wonder if god feels as bored and frustrated as I do over lengthy intercessions, or if he, too, heaves a sigh of relief when the priest directs: “We’ll use the intercessions on page 158” (the short form in *An Australian Prayer Book*), instead of the longer form which spans pages 140 to 142 of the Second Order for Holy Communion.

The Anglican Liturgical Commission has recently published its new trial order, Holy Communion 1993, which is being used in some of our churches. Thus it was with great alacrity and some apprehension that I procured a copy and turned immediately to page 22 where the rationale behind “The Prayers of the People” is to be found. It reads thus:

One of the obvious and dramatic shifts in formal liturgy has been towards freer forms of intercession. During the past twenty or so years Anglicans gathered for worship have become a more obviously ‘participating praying’ people as opposed to ‘a passive listening’ one. The present service provides headings which may be used as a structure for extempore intercessions.<sup>1</sup>

At this point my heart sank, for, with all due respect, nothing can be quite so synonymous in prayer with lengthiness and longwindedness as “extempore”! Not that set forms can’t also become long-drawn-out. When the various revisers of the BCP 1662 traded in the very long, static, set form “Prayer for the Church Militant” in favour of a series of supposedly shorter and more varied intercessory prayers, they were motivated by a desire for greater flexibility, relevance and congregational participation. In effect, AAPB encouraged a double dose of excessiveness: the headings which allowed for the extempore, and a series of set prayers which, in toto, equalled the old set form in length and lack of variety.

Yet even the earliest reformers did anticipate the problems which have arisen. G.D. Kilpatrick, writing of the English Alternative Services (Series 2, 1965), observed:

We may fear that if they are not carefully controlled our intercessions may get out of hand. For this we must be prepared believing that, as long as our intention to make our requests made known to God is not defeated by disorder, we must be prepared for our intercessions from time to time to get out of hand.<sup>2</sup>

We certainly need to be prepared for this undesirable state of affairs, but we surely must not condone it. The disorganisation and mismanagement of the liturgy in any way or for any reason is appalling and for those who should know better to permit its occurrence or continuation is a culpable contribution to lack of reverence and respect for God. The Pauline injunction to “let all things be done decently and in order”<sup>3</sup> still holds. I am thus relieved and delighted to observe that the comment on the new order states:

It is important, if the service as a whole is to cohere, that no one part – such as the intercessions – becomes unduly drawn out.<sup>4</sup>

We may well note the wise advice given by the respected Australian liturgist, Gilbert Sinden, SSM, when enumerating the dangers (and the word is used advisedly in the context) in the use of the flexible free form, the first of which is to do with length. “It is better to say too little than too much.”<sup>5</sup> He anticipated another danger, even more insidious.

... that the leader may introduce partisan ideas with which not all members of the congregation will be expected to agree.<sup>6</sup>

I suggest that there is an urgent need to re-examine and evaluate the way in which we petition God, our reasons for so doing, and what we hope to effect. This may be done – or, at least, begun – by considering three types or stages of intercessory prayer.

First, there is the “shopping list” concept: the mechanical repetition of long lists of names often qualified by specific requests and requirements. It is a method of praying conducive to boredom (it can lengthen and deaden the liturgy quite as much as the most tedious of sermons); or to a diminution of faith (since it would be surprising if every petition were to be “favourably” granted). The death of a long-prayed-for member of a congregation – especially a young mother or child or the bread-winner of a family – can have a devastating affect on some parishioners. Such prayers may appear presumptuous (depending on what is asked and the tone of voice in which the request is made), and may only confirm the opinion of the sceptics that intercession is simply a futile endeavour to persuade God to act in a particular way as if he can be dictated to, or to do something he might not otherwise have thought of doing – as if he can’t be relied on to keep an eye on things for himself! At its very worst, this type of prayer appears to manipulate and try to use God. In her youth Evelyn Underhill viewed intercession very much in this light, and concluded,

I don't believe in worrying God with prayers for things we want. If he is omnipotent he knows we want them, and if He isn't, He can't give them to us.<sup>7</sup>

However, it cannot be denied that we are told to make our request made known to God (Philippians 4.6) and to ask and we shall receive (Matthew 7.7; Luke 11.9). Our Lord even commends persistent petitioning of a most irritating and inconvenient (for others) kind (Luke 11.5-8; 18.1-8).

For some people being put on a prayer list *is* of the utmost importance and a source of great consolation and strength regardless of the outcome. J. Neville Ward, who defines intercessory prayer as "part of the Christian way of living and loving",<sup>8</sup> sees that those people who wish to be placed on a prayer list "just want this form of being loved".<sup>9</sup> Nobody has the right to deny them this. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said:

He who denies his neighbour the service of praying for him denies him the service of a Christian.<sup>10</sup>

The list method does indeed need to be reconsidered. We are, after all, only human and it is not always easy to comply with all the requests made for prayers – especially if our memories are getting shorter year by year. Evelyn Underhill freely admitted that she was terrible at intercession because she couldn't remember the names.<sup>11</sup> There is a beautiful prayer from the Liturgy of St Basil which may help us out in such exigencies.

And those whom we, through ignorance or forgetfulness or the number of names, have not remembered, do Thou, O God, remember them, who knowest the age and name of each one, who knowest each from his mother's womb. For Thou, O God, art the help of the helpless, the saviour of the tempest-tossed, the harbour of mariners, the physician of the sick. Be Thou Thyself all things to all men, who knowest each and his petition and his dwelling and his need.<sup>12</sup>

God knows; but what intercession emphatically *is not* is passing the buck onto God. What it *is*, is

... offering your will and love that God may use them as channels whereby His spirit of mercy, healing, power, or light, may reach them and achieve His purposes in them. We can't do it unless we care, both for God's will and also for "the whole human family" – but that certainly does not involve knowing all the details about everyone who asks our prayers. God knows the details – we need not. Probably the best kind of intercession is a quite general offering of oneself in union with our Lord – and that is what the total prayer of the Church for the world is. He prays in and through us, lifting into the supernatural world all souls and causes and setting them before God's face – and it is our privilege to share that "lifting-up" process.<sup>13</sup>

We must now consider intercession very differently, and here we come to the second consideration.

In prayer we learn to participate in the mind and action of God.<sup>14</sup>

I pray not so much to change God's mind as to change my heart.<sup>15</sup>

... for those who cannot see how intercession can affect others, I would suggest that they consider how intercession might influence indirectly but perceptibly the person himself who prays sincerely.<sup>16</sup>

Intercession might be more than mere lip service. Jacques Ellul has coined the term "discarnate prayers". These are ... prayers for others which permit us not to do anything for them; such prayers are a substitute for action, a cheap way of having a good conscience.<sup>17</sup>

They are the result of the casual promises we Christians often make to or for others, possibly fulfilled in cursory fashion by remembering them once or twice in our prayers, or by putting them on the parish prayer list and feeling that we have "done our duty". Discarnate prayer means saying the words and leaving it at that. We do not visit old Mrs B in hospital because we don't have the time and we don't like sick rooms. We pray for our enemy but don't put our prayer to the test because we avoid every opportunity to confront him and say something positive or genuinely reconciling.

The opposite of this is "enfleshed prayer", which is simply "prayer enfleshed in action ... enfleshed in the real issues of our times."<sup>18</sup> The relevance of prayer within the context of apostolic action is an inescapable fact. Prayer without action and action without prayer are equally abortive if we are truly seeking God's will. It is so difficult to achieve a balance. We all know the people who are "so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly use", and the others, the natural "do-gooders", who are the conspicuous "pillars of the church". Part of the discernment needed in parish ministry is how to assist both groups to achieve their maximum potential. The results in one sense may be hidden, for they involve interior reform, as well as a possibly much altered approach to living out one's life.

But this reconsideration of both our prayers and our actions is still only a beginning. Henri Nouwen, in his *Way of the Heart*, indeed affirms that our spirituality and ministry are symbiotic. Quoting Matthew 11.29-30, he equates the "yoke" with accepting the "burden" of human suffering as Jesus accepted the burden of a suffering, tortured world.

When we say to people, "I will pray for you", we make a very important commitment. The sad thing is that this remark often remains nothing but a well-meant expression of concern. But when we learn to descend with our mind into our heart, then all those who have become part of our lives are led into the healing presence of God and touched by him in the centre of our being. We are speaking here about a mystery for which words are inadequate. It is the mystery that the



heart, which is the centre of our being, is transformed by God into his own heart, a heart large enough to embrace the entire universe. Through prayer we can carry in our heart all human pain and sorrow, all conflicts and agonies, all tortures and war, all hunger, loneliness and misery, not because of some great psychological or emotional capacity, but because God's heart has become one with ours.<sup>19</sup>

Evelyn Underhill saw this as "the most awful privilege of redemptive suffering"<sup>20</sup>; "praying from the cross"<sup>21</sup>; the lot of "those whose lives are self-offered on the altar of holy desire".<sup>22</sup> This is the third and most demanding form of intercession. It is difficult; it is frightening; and it can be dangerous. Modern spiritual writers describe this as a "victim soul" or "suffering servant" type of mystical prayer.<sup>23</sup> It can mean being placed in a position where one literally assumes, feels and accepts the burden, the pain and the suffering of another. The famous lay Catholic theologian, Baron von Hugel, believed in "the interconnectedness of souls", a doctrine espoused also by his pupil, Evelyn Underhill, and explained thus:

One human spirit can, by its prayer and love, touch and change another human spirit; it can take a soul and lift it into the atmosphere of God... And the whole possibility of intercessory prayer seems based on this truth of spiritual communion – the fact that we are NOT separate little units, but deeply interconnected – so that all we do, feel and endure has a secret effect radiating far beyond ourselves.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, she continues:

Each time you take a human soul with you into your prayer, you accept from God a piece of spiritual work with all its implications and with all its cost – a cost which may mean for you spiritual exhaustion and darkness and may even include vicarious suffering, the Cross. In offering yourself on such levels of prayer for the sake of others, you are offering to take your part in the mysterious activities of the spiritual world; to share the saving work of Christ. Each soul thus given to your care brings a need which it is your job to meet, a duty that no one else can fulfil.<sup>25</sup>

Those who have seen the film "Shadowlands" will have been subtly introduced to this concept. C.S. Lewis, after his conversion from the atheism of his youth, became one of the outstanding writers and theologians of his time. He is particularly respected for his writings about pain, suffering, love and prayer. But it was not until he was in his mid-fifties, when he made a marriage of convenience to Joy Davidman, discovered with her that she had terminal cancer, and began to realise the extent of his love for her, that he grasped the true connection between love and pain on both the human and the spiritual levels. The doctrine he espoused was that of "co-inherence"; that one person can indeed take on the pain and suffering of another, provided this is being done for the true Christian love of that person and God. Lewis, appalled by his wife's suffering, prayed not

only to share it, but to take it from her. It seems that he succeeded. After Joy's death he explained to one of his bewildered colleagues what had happened. "You mean that her pain left her, and that you felt it for her in your body?" "Yes", replied (Lewis), "in my legs. It was crippling, but it relieved hers."<sup>26</sup>

Another Anglican writer and mystic who is further affirmation of the above from her own experience was Dorothy Kerin (1889-1963) who, as a child, underwent the most excruciating physical suffering which her doctors never expected her to survive. She received a miraculous healing, which was well documented by her doctors and other witnesses, and found her vocation in prayer for others and her work in the healing ministry of the church. In a spirit of total oblation and self-sacrifice, she would pray:

By the bruising of my whole life,  
Strengthen me with sympathy for every wounded soul;  
And let my prayers be a balm for the wounds of thy children  
That they may be healed.<sup>27</sup>

While she prayed regularly for people by name as part of her ministry, what she advocated for use during healing services was a more silent offering of intercession so that the Lord, who so frequently makes his presence known in "the still, small voice", might thus be heard by those who prayed. It is a contemplative approach to healing prayer; a realisation of the divine presence; an emptying of self (kenosis) that God's will might be done; an entering into the all-pervading silence and, without making specific requests and petitions, lifting them up to God and leaving them resting with him and in him. The present Chaplain of Burrowswood, the home she established for those in need of physical and spiritual healing, describes the basis of this as a "resting theology", and considers it one of Dorothy's greatest legacies to the healing work of the church.<sup>28</sup> It is also one of the most significant contributions towards a theology and "methodology" of intercession.

How can all this find application in the Prayers of the Faithful during the eucharistic liturgy?

The earlier part of this article has already covered the basics. Common sense, discretion and sensitivity should determine the length of lists and their content. Thorough preparation will accompany the compiling of the list, and part of the preparation may also include advice to intercessors on how to proceed. This will include training in delivery that is reverent but audible and does not appear too dogmatic or aggressive. "We are not customers putting in an order," as Gilbert Sinden succinctly put it.<sup>29</sup>

Nor should the more flexible forms become in themselves a prescriptive formula. A "free" form soon becomes a set form when it is overused. I await with

interest the “variety of litany-style intercessions” promised in the new order,<sup>30</sup> and wonder how they will be used. Will every single petition always be included even if it is not particularly relevant at the time? Consider again the wisdom of Gilbert Sinden.

When the minister has nothing of this order to include, it is better to say nothing at all than to ‘drag in’ a topic for the sake of having something to say in each section of the prayer.<sup>31</sup>

“Constant chatter impedes prayer,” warns another writer.<sup>32</sup> There is a great need for more silence in our liturgy. I think many ministers find it hard to “say nothing”. However, while I am obviously critical of unnecessary longwindedness, I do strongly believe that nobody who desires to be placed on a prayer list should be denied that privilege. It is, in fact, very difficult for some people to make this request, for it is to them an admission of weakness and vulnerability. But what is then done with the list is quite another matter. It is indeed reassuring to hear one’s name read out in church in a time of need, but for me it would be quite sufficient to know that the list with my name on it had been placed on the altar for the week, particularly in a church which has a daily eucharist, where one feels that it would lie surrounded by so much love and prayer.

I place great store on intercessions made during the eucharist, which for me is the “source and summit”<sup>33</sup> of my prayer in relation to the rest of my life. When the priest at the end bids us to “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”,<sup>34</sup> he does not mean us to shut ourselves up in a cupboard and pray piously until next time. What is meant provides the link between the first and second types of intercession which we looked at earlier.

Real adoration never forgets familial obligation to the other children of the Beloved. Our desire is to be offered on this table, that we may be cleansed, transformed, and unselfed, united with the Divine creative desires, and devoted to the purposes of God. All this is a true part of the reasonable sacrifice, a necessary function of the Eucharistic life.<sup>35</sup>

Anticipating Vatican II by at least three decades, Evelyn Underhill strongly emphasised the “profoundly social” aspect of eucharistic life, and what this meant in terms of the “interconnectedness of souls”.<sup>36</sup>

We are far from realising yet what human beings can do for one another in the world of sacrificial prayer; but the Liturgy never allows us to forget the central place which it holds in the Eucharistic response of Church and soul to God.<sup>37</sup>

Though it would be unwise to endeavour to broaden a parish’s understanding of intercessory prayer by talking of “co-inherence” as if it were the norm (you would frighten most people to death), it is clear that real intercession cannot remain stationary at the “shopping-list” level. Thus *silence* must and will have

a greater part to play in such an environment of prayer. It is most encouraging to see that the 1993 order allows for this in suggesting: "Periods of silence may be kept".<sup>38</sup> Though six headings are provided for the intercessions or thanksgivings, it is with the proviso, "May be offered as appropriate."<sup>39</sup>

A reconsideration of how we pray and what we pray in this part of the eucharist will in fact be a reflection of how we pray and what we pray at other times and how we live our lives in this spirit of prayer. The *use* of intercession will accordingly be seen, understood and practised in a depth and breadth which may overwhelm and transform not only the person praying and the one prayed for, but indeed the whole church.

## NOTES

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## NEWS AND INFORMATION

### Letter on Koinonia in Worship

Much has been made in reports of recent assemblies of the World Council of Churches of the liturgical life of those huge meetings, especially of the activities in the great tents at Vancouver and Canberra. Many of us reach for the “worshipbooks” of past WCC events to find interesting music and prayers with a world perspective. Curiously though, the WCC itself has not examined its theology of worship for over thirty years. Ecumenical worship has taken a number of different forms in that time. The earlier strand is that worship at ecumenical gatherings will be the forms known to and presided over by a local church. Thus, the eucharist at Amsterdam (1948) was according to the rites of the Netherlands Reformed Church, though Christians of other traditions took part. Frequently, the daily prayers follow a form familiar to one or another church. The newer strand is the development of a large repertoire of prayers and responses whose words and theology are acceptable across a large number of churches, and made familiar (not least by musical setting) by use in ecumenical settings. Most recently, a form of the Eucharist itself, devised for the Faith and Order Commission meeting at Lima, Peru, has been used. These later developments have raised questions about the nature of ecumenical worship.

In August 1994, thirty-two liturgical scholars were brought together by the WCC Faith and Order Commission for a consultation on the role of worship in the search for the unity of the churches. They met at the Community of All Hallows, Ditchingham, near Norwich, the Anglican community who are guardians of the shrine of Julian of Norwich. Amongst the better known, especially by those who have attended congresses of Societas Liturgica, were Prof. David Holeton, Anglican Church of Canada, Dr Anita Stauffer, Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, Fr Ancar Chapungco OSB, leading scholar in the area of inculturation of the liturgy in the Philippines and Rome, and Prof. Gordon Lathrop, Lutheran from Philadelphia. The members reflected a very wide range of churches, east and west, and cultures. Some came with musical and artistic skills.

The result was a major report to Faith and Order which will be published, and the letter which follows, which was intended to introduce some of the key themes, and to call for the churches of the world to begin to take liturgy seriously once more. A central theme was the basic *ordo* of Christian worship. Other matters discussed included a common date for Easter (but not a fixed one!), the urgency and limits of liturgical inculturation, the renewal of prayer for Christian unity, and the integration of worship studies in ecumenical dialogues.

– Robert Gribben

26 August 1994

To Christians, as they care about the unity and the worship of the churches,

From the members of a consultation on the role of worship in the search for Christian unity, held at Ditchingham (near Norwich), England, and convoked by the Commission on Faith and Order, Programme Unit I (Unity and Renewal), World Council of Churches:

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

“May mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance” (Jude 2).

Gathered here, from many churches and nations of the world, in the hospitality of the sisters of All Hallows Convent, we have been moved to write to you of the urgent matters in which we have found profound agreement.

In the divided world, marked by massive injustice, bitter warfare and vast sorrows, the churches of Jesus Christ remain visibly divided. These are the very Christians for whom Jesus prayed when he asked that those who believe in him through the apostolic word might all be one “so that the world might believe” (John 17.21). Generations of Christians have joined that prayer, though they have sometimes grown weary of praying or even indifferent to the search for Christian unity. We wish to shake off the indifference in ourselves and arise from the weariness. Will you, in your place, join us?

Here in Ditchingham, we have seen the body of Christ in the presence of each other—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Mar Thoma, United and Uniting Church Christians, from local churches in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America and Oceania. We have been moved to hear of many instances in local places where visible koinonia between and in the churches is emerging. We give praise and thanks to God, believing that the prayer for unity is being answered.

But we also believe that Jesus Christ himself, crucified, risen and present in our midst, is the eternal answer to the prayer. We are one as we dwell in him and as, through him, the Holy Trinity dwells in us. We must become, visibly, what, in his mercy, we already are.

For this drawing near to Christ, communal assembly for worship is essential. Indeed, for being Christ’s body visible in each place, for koinonia between and in the churches, for being the church at all—worship is essential. And we have been finding, to our joy and astonishment, that we share together, as our common inheritance, the deepest gifts of worship: the gospel of Jesus Christ, the great patterns of Christian gathering in the truth of that gospel, the call to see those patterns celebrated in ways appropriate to the dignity and gifts of each local

place, and the conviction that this celebration sends us in a mission of love and the search for justice in the world.

May we ask you to join us

—in renewed prayer for the unity of the churches, such as Christ wills and by the means that Christ wills;

—in a new and deeper study of the sources and meaning of Christian corporate worship;

—in a commitment to clarify and renew our local worship so that our witness to the world and the grounds of our koinonia may be shown forth by the centrality of these common gifts: Sunday assembly, scripture reading, preaching, intercessions, thanksgiving at the holy table, eating and drinking the gift of Christ, forming new Christians in the faith and praying for them, baptising, and sending in mission to the world;

—and in a decision to undertake this prayer, study and renewal together with other Christians, across our divisions?

We have in common these holy things of worship: baptism, the word, eucharist, prayer, assembly, the celebration of the resurrection on Sunday and Paschal/Easter. These things are dear to us, and were at the heart of our discussions in Ditchingham, not only because we share them but because in them we encounter Christ and in him, in the power of the Spirit, we come to the Father. In them we are given a foretaste of the world reconciled in God's love. In them we are given each other. In them we are formed to stand with the poor and suffering ones of the world. Together with you, we all, in these holy things, are given Jesus Christ, "the bread of God which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6.33).

Join us, we ask you.

O God, holy and eternal Trinity, we pray for your Church in all the world. Sanctify its life; renew its worship; empower its witness; heal its divisions; make visible its unity.

Lead us, with all our brothers and sisters, towards communion in faith, life and witness so that, united in one body by the one Spirit, we may together witness to the perfect unity of your love. Amen.



France en Australie  
The 1994 Père Receveur commemoration  
at La Perouse on Botany Bay

Every year since 1988, the bicentenary year of Père Receveur's death and of the subsequent loss of the Laperouse Expedition, the Père Receveur Commemoration Committee has arranged the annual Père Receveur Commemoration in the vicinity of Père Receveur's grave near the Old Cable Station. Claude François Joseph (Laurent) Receveur (1757-1788) was the Conventual Franciscan priest and naturalist on the Laperouse Expedition who died on 17 February 1788 during the expedition's six weeks sojourn in Botany Bay.

Because there were two priests on the Expedition it has long been presumed that the first celebrations of the Mass in Australia occurred during the period spent by the Laperouse Expedition in Botany Bay. The Expedition perished within weeks of sailing from Botany Bay but its tragic fate was not discovered until 1827.

This year's Père Receveur Commemoration took place on Sunday 13 February in the vicinity of Père Receveur's grave at La Perouse, four days before the anniversary of his death. This event took the form of Low Mass in the traditional Latin Rite of the Catholic Church according to the presumed use of Père Receveur and his colleague, the Abbé Jean André Mongez, during the lengthy visit of the Laperouse Expedition to Botany Bay between 26 January and 10 March, 1788 when the Holy Eucharist was thus introduced to Australia. Most appropriately the Mass was celebrated by a young French priest, recently arrived in Australia, who preached the occasional sermon concerning the place of the Eucharist in the scheme of redemption related to the historic role of the two priests of the Laperouse Expedition in 1788. An altar stone recovered from the wreckage of the expedition has been on display in the nearby Laperouse Museum since 1988.

The Mass was followed by a procession to Père Receveur's grave where prayers for the dead and the *Salve Regina*, centuries old prayers, as current in the eighteenth century as today, were chanted within the grave enclosure with priest and attendants ranged about the altar style tomb erected in 1829.

The dignity of the annual commemoration was enhanced by the presence of Capitaine de Moisson, the French Defence Attaché and an officer of the *Marine Nationale* (French Navy) who spoke briefly, but eloquently, for France and her navy at the end of the ceremonies. Captain R.L. Gibson, who had attended the 1993 commemoration represented Rear Admiral Hunt for the Royal Australian

Navy. Lieutenant Commander P.R. Wood, an officer presently on three years exchange duty with the RAN, represented Commodore B.J. Adams, British Defence and Naval Adviser for the Royal Navy, whose officers in 1788, like Governor Phillip and Captain Hunter, had extended the utmost courtesy and cordiality to the visiting Laperouse Expedition. The three naval officers kindly participated in the flag breaking ceremony of the troop of scouts and guides who were present. A book with details of six French warships, which are represented by plaques on the Laperouse Monument, was presented to each of the officers after the ceremonies as a memento of the 1994 Commemoration.

On the Sunday following the Commemoration a display of information and illustrations relating to Père Receveur, the site of his grave, and to the annual commemoration was mounted in the cafe opposite the grave. The same display was exhibited in the Bowen Library at Maroubra Junction up to Easter.

An account of the life and work of Père Receveur in the context of the Laperouse Expedition was published in 1933: F. Carleton 'An Eighteenth century Conventual Franciscan naturalist on the Laperouse Expedition: Père Laurent Receveur (1757-1788)' *The Great Circle: journal of the Australian Association for Maritime History* 15 (I) 1993, pp. 18-29.

This article deals in part with the liturgical regimen of chaplains in the navy of the *ancien régime* and outlines the bases of the theory that the first celebration of the Mass in Australia occurred during the sojourn of the Laperouse Expedition in Botany Bay which coincided with the early weeks of the First Settlement at Sydney Cove. This writer is working on a study of the myth of *terra de France*, or sovereign French soil at La Perouse in which the grave of Père Receveur and the long commemoration associated with it, notably the celebration of Mass and other liturgical ceremonies, have an integral part.

The 1995 Père Receveur Commemoration has been scheduled for Saturday 18 February at 3.00pm and will take the form of a Requiem Mass in the traditional Roman Rite.

Frank Carleton  
Convenor,  
Père Receveur Commemoration Committee.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Frank R.L. Carleton** is an historical bibliographer and archivist. His study of the myth of French soil at La Perouse in Sydney, *Terre de France a La Perouse?* is due to appear soon.

**The Revd Robert W. Gribben**, a former President of the Academy, is General Secretary of the Victorian Council of Churches. He was invited to take part in the consultation on the role of worship in the search for Christian unity at Ditchingham (see his introduction to the Letter on Koinonia in Worship) and contributed a major paper on the future use of the Lima Liturgy.

**The Revd Thomas F. Knowles SSS** is Australian Provincial of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation and teaches liturgy at Yarra Theological Union in Melbourne.

**The Revd Canon Albert B. McPherson** recently retired from his position as Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne but continues his work as Chaplain for the Arts in Melbourne.

**Delroy Oberg** works in the area of spirituality and is continuing research for a spiritual biography of Evelyn Underhill. Her book, first published as *Given to God*, was re-issued in 1993 as *Daily Readings with a Modern Mystic: selections from the writings of Evelyn Underhill*.

**The Revd H. Paul V. Renner**, a former Secretary/Treasurer of the Academy, has been President of the Lutheran Church of Australia, Queensland District. His post-graduate studies in ritual and pastoral care were undertaken at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus Ohio USA.

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