

Chapter 3 – The Liturgy

The Liturgical Commission had submitted to the Central Preparatory Commission an excellent schema “On the Sacred Liturgy.” At the March-April, 1962, meeting of the Central Commission, the patriarch praised this schema. That did not prevent him from making some reservations on the points where the Eastern liturgical practices did not seem to have been sufficiently taken into consideration.

The schema of the constitution presented by the Liturgical Commission deserves all praise. It does honor to the commission which prepared it....

Granted, this schema concerns only the Latin Church, and, more particularly, the Roman rite. Thus, I am not directly qualified to offer amendments of a technical nature. I would only say that in what concerns the Eastern Church and the movement towards union, the schema seems to me to reflect attitudes of spirit that are excellent in every regard. It emphasizes in its preamble that every reform in the Catholic Church should have in view, among other aims, the drawing closer of our separated brothers, that this council should avoid making any new dogmatic definitions, that the proposed liturgical renewal concerns only the Roman rite, which is only one of the rites of the Holy Catholic Church, and that the Holy Catholic Church intends to safeguard and to surround with an equal respect all liturgical rites that are presently in use. This last mentioned truth, repeatedly declared by the Roman pontiffs, should, it seems to us, be solemnly declared by the council, in order to discourage definitively the reactionary “apostles” of the latinization of the East. This does not appear at all superfluous to anyone who knows the stubbornness of these latinizers and the support which they unfortunately still find in certain circles.

In the second place, the liturgical reforms which are proposed to us contribute indirectly to the work of union, by bringing the Western liturgical usages back to a traditional form, better preserved in the Christian East: Eucharistic concelebration, Communion under both species, diaconal litanies, etc.

Having said this, I believe that I must nevertheless make a few brief observations concerning this schema, which is otherwise excellent:

1. Renewal of the Sacred Liturgy

I agree with the principle of the necessity of adapting the liturgy to changing conditions of place and time. I shall make, however, two remarks on this subject:

- a) The first is that the Eastern Catholic Church should, for more than one reason, renounce at this time making any change in its rites independently of the corresponding Orthodox branches, to avoid creating new differences with our separated brothers. Liturgical adaptation should be made only in concurrence with them.
- b) The second remark is that we should not exaggerate to an obsession our concern for liturgical adaptation. Liturgical rites, like the inspired texts, have enduring value in spite

of the circumstances which brought them into being. Before making any change whatever in a rite, we must be sure that this change is absolutely necessary. Liturgy has not only an impersonal character, but also a character of universality both in space and time.

2. The Use of Living Languages in the Eucharistic Celebration

This use is confined to the biblical readings, to the common prayer after the homily, and to certain paraliturgical hymns. We are resolute adherents of a much wider use of living languages, even in the celebration of the Mass. Whatever may be the advantages of liturgical Latin—and they are numerous—they should, it seems to us, be outweighed by the irreparable disadvantage that it is not understood by 99% of the faithful who participate in the sacred action. In the light of this painful consideration, we think that the example of the Eastern Church, which strongly advocates the use of language that can be understood by the people, should serve as a model. We fear above all that the fervor with which certain groups defend the almost exclusive use of Latin is not inspired by purely pastoral or ecclesiastical considerations, not to mention those who claim that Latin is “the language of the Church,” forgetting that the Latin Church is only one of the Churches within the Catholic Church, and that latinism and Catholicism are in no sense identical.

3. Communion under Both Species

Very fortunately the schema proposes to restore in the Latin Church Communion under both species. This restoration first of all conforms with our Lord’s wish, for He did not lightly institute the Eucharist under two species, for the faithful as well as for the priests. Without condemning the Latin practice of giving Communion to the faithful only under the species of bread, our separated brethren could well have been surprised that the Latin Church does not follow more closely in this regard the desire of the Lord and the ancient tradition of the Church. Thus it is a restoration that is equally desirable from the point of view of drawing closer to our separated brethren of the East and of the West.

This restoration is unquestionably inspired by the example of the Eastern Church. That should convince the partisans of total “latinization,” if there is still a need to do so, that there are other rites in the Catholic Church, and how senseless it is to deprive the Catholic Church of everything that is not Latin, in the matter of the liturgy, as well as in discipline, art, organization, etc.

4. The Obligation to Attend Mass on Sundays and Feast Days

The schema rightly recommends to the pastors of souls that they make the faithful understand that they should participate in the whole and entire Mass, and not only in those parts that are called “essential” or “integral.” On this proposal, I hope that the council can find a way to prevent the casuistry of the moralists who have dissected the Mass into segments differing in nature and involving an unequal obligation. I am delighted that this schema, while retaining the obligation to attend Mass, has avoided talking of mortal sin and venial sin. Western moralists, since the Middle Ages, have indulged in two excesses: juridical excess, which seeks to specify rigorously the limits of serious sin, and the excess of casuistry, which corrupts the moral sense of the Christian. A Christian must be able to go to God without the constant threat of serious sin and of

censures, and likewise ought to serve God a bit more fully than the subtleties of casuistry may indicate.

5. Concelebration of the Eucharist

Here again is a desirable restoration inspired by the example of the Eastern Church. I likewise applaud without reservation this felicitous innovation, whose benefits will quickly make themselves felt. I shall merely take the liberty of making the following remarks:

a) “The faculty to concelebrate is restricted to specific circumstances,” although it is concelebration which is the rule, and individual celebration the exception. The Eucharistic sacrifice is above all the sacrament of unity, and in the first place of priestly unity. There should be a truly serious reason for a priest to refuse to concelebrate with his brothers. Here again there would have to be a reversal of perspective. No limit should be placed on concelebration other than the necessity of assuring other Masses in the course of the day for the good of the faithful.

b) “The concelebrants are only permitted to wear the alb and the stole.” We think that the concelebrants should wear all their sacred vestments and participate intimately in the liturgical action, which is simply presided over by the principal celebrant, notwithstanding the recent practice of certain non-Byzantine Eastern clergy. Moreover, it is not necessary that all concelebrants say all the prayers at the same time. Concelebration is not a simultaneous gathering of several individual celebrations, but rather a common action in which each one plays his role.

c) “Only the ordinary of the place has the right to permit concelebration, on a case by case basis, and to set the number of concelebrants.” Again, this is an excessive limitation of an act that is not only more legitimate but even more consistent with tradition. Priests should be able to concelebrate as often as they wish, as long as this does not interfere with their pastoral duties, and to do so in as large a number as they choose.

d) Finally, “concelebrants are permitted for good reason to receive an honorarium for a concelebrated Mass, just as for an individual celebration.” That is self-evident, for a concelebrated Mass is no less a Mass than a Mass celebrated individually. It is even surprising that the Roman Curia believed that it had to intervene, in the 18th century, to affirm this obvious fact. However, this affirmation should not be based on the assumption that in concelebration each priest celebrates a distinct sacrifice. In concelebration there are not several Masses, but one single Mass offered and celebrated in its entirety by several priests.

6. Reserved Blessings

There should be no blessing that a bishop cannot give. No blessing should be reserved for the pope, for patriarchs, for cardinals, or, least of all, for religious. The bishops should be able to give even the Apostolic Blessing, since all bishops are successors of the Apostles.

7. Feasts of the Saints

The schema seems to favor the critical spirit towards the “legends” of the saints and even the celebration of their feasts. The liturgy is not a school of historical criticism. For instance, the blunder of taking St. George down from the pedestal on which the Church had placed him for centuries had the most unhappy consequences among our people in the East. We ourselves have been obliged, in order to calm the populace, to insist that St. George exists and retains his sanctity and his dignity, just as our Eastern Church has always proclaimed.

For the Use of Living Languages in the Liturgy

On October 23, 1962, the council held its fifth General Session in which the discussion concerned the liturgical language. At the very end of the meeting, the patriarch was given the opportunity to speak. In a strong and confident voice the patriarch gave his first address to the council in French. He affirmed that Latin is a dead language, but the Church is living and should speak the living language of its faithful today. Some said, "A bomb has been hurled at St. Peter's." The Fathers of the Council were introduced to this noble elder, who did not fear to say what he thought simply and courageously. Many bishops ran to shake his hand at the end of the meeting, thanking him for daring to say what many thought inwardly. Through this historic discourse, it was said by some, Patriarch Maximos had put an end to the "myth of Latin." The cause of living languages in the liturgy had been won.

Although the schema "De Sacra Liturgia" concerns only the Roman rite, may I nevertheless be permitted to bring to the debates the testimony of a patriarch of the East, who follows with interest the progress of the liturgical movement in the Latin Church. To make it briefer, this testimony will bear only on the problem of the liturgical language, considered in No. 24 of our schema.

I should begin by saying that this schema, as a whole, is excellent. With the exception of some amendments, which the interested bishops will not fail to make, the schema does honor to the commission which prepared it, and more generally, to the liturgical movement itself, which inspired it.

I shall take the liberty only of remarking that the principle expressed in the heading of No. 24 appears to me to be too arbitrary: "Let the use of the Latin language in the Western liturgy be preserved." It seems to me that the quasi-absolute value that they wish to give to Latin in the liturgy, in teaching, and in administration of the Latin Church represents, for the Eastern Church, something quite abnormal; for, after all, Christ indeed spoke the language of His contemporaries. It was also in the language understood by His listeners, Aramaic, that He offered the first Eucharistic sacrifice. The Apostles and disciples did likewise. The idea never occurred to them that in a Christian assembly the celebrant could have the scriptural pericopes read, or the psalms sung, or could preach or break the bread while using a language other than that of those who were assembled. Saint Paul even tells us explicitly: "If you bless with the spirit (that is to say, speaking a language that is not understood), how can anyone who does not comprehend say the 'amen' to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying. For you may give thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified... In Church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue (that is not understood)" (1 Corinthians 14:16-19). All the reasons invoked in favor of an untouchable Latin—a liturgical language, but a dead one—should, it seems, yield before this clear, frank, and precise reasoning of St. Paul.

Besides, the Roman Church itself, at least until the middle of the third century, used Greek in its liturgy, because it was the language spoken by its faithful at that time. And when, at that date, it began to abandon Greek in order to use Latin, it was precisely because in the meantime Latin had become the language spoken by its faithful. Why

should it nowadays cease to apply the same principle? As for the East, after the Aramaic and Greek of the first Christian generations, Coptic was introduced in the Egyptian countryside. Then it was the turn, from the fifth century on, of Aramaic, Georgian, Ethiopian, Arabic, Gothic, and Slavonic.

In the Western Church, it was only in the Middle Ages that Latin was considered the only universal language of the Roman civilization and of the Holy Empire, in contradistinction to the languages of the barbarian nations that dominated Europe. Likewise the Western Church made Latin its official and sacred language.

In the East, on the contrary, no problem ever arose concerning the liturgical language. Every language is, in fact, liturgical, for in the words of the psalmist: "Praise the Lord, all nations;" in every language, whatever it may be, we must glorify God, preach the Gospel, and offer the Sacrifice. We, in the East, do not conceive that it is possible to assemble the faithful to pray in a language that they do not understand.

The Latin language is dead, but the Church remains alive. The language, vehicle of grace and of the Holy Spirit, should also be living, for it is for men and not for angels. No language should be immune to change.

We all admit, however, that in the Latin rite, the adoption of the spoken languages should be carried out gradually and with the precautions required by prudence. But I would propose first to soften somewhat the rigidity of the initial principle contained in No. 24, which is "*Linguae latinae usus in Liturgia occidentali servetur*" ("Let the use of the Latin language in the Western liturgy be preserved"), by saying, for example: "*Lingua latina est lingua originalis et officialis ritus romani*" ("Latin is the original and official language of the Roman rite").

In the second place, I would propose to leave to the episcopal conferences in each region the responsibility to decide if, and in what measure, it is fitting or not to adopt the living language in the liturgy. The text of the schema leaves to the episcopal conferences only the task of proposing this adoption to the Holy See of Rome. There is, however, no need at all to have an episcopal conference make such a proposal. Any member of the faithful can make it. Episcopal conferences should have the power not merely to propose, but to decide, subject to the approbation of the Holy See.

Thus I would propose that No. 24 (lines 619) conclude as follows: "It should indeed be left to the episcopal conferences in each region to set the limits and the manner of admitting the vernacular language in the Liturgy, with recognition of the right of the Holy See to act."

Concelebration and Communion under Both Species

At the General Session of October 30, 1962, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani attacked with some irony the efforts of the Latin liturgists to reintroduce the usage of concelebration and of Communion under the both species under certain conditions. There was no direct allusion to the Eastern usage, but it was made to appear, after the Cardinal's speech, as exceptional and merely to be tolerated. Some eminent members of the Liturgical

Commission telephoned to the Patriarch, asking: "Doesn't the East have anything to say to defend itself and us?" The next day, October 31, Kyr Neophytos Edelby, Archbishop of Edessa and Patriarchal Counselor, made an intervention at the Council, stating in brief: it isn't the Eastern usage which is the exception; it is the Western usage which needs to be vindicated; concelebration and Communion under both species are the rule, not the exception.

Although the schema "De Sacra Liturgia" deals only with the Roman rite, as the preamble clearly affirms, may I nevertheless be permitted to make a few brief remarks on Chapter II, so that the voice of the East, even in the matter of the reform of the Latin liturgy, may be usefully heard and that eventual obstacles to the union of Churches may be averted in case the reform of the Latin liturgy is not carried out as well as could be wished.

I shall limit myself to two remarks. The first concerns Communion under both species:

Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist under the two species of bread and wine, and it is under these two species that He wished that His faithful should normally receive Him. Since Christ acted in this way, we cannot doubt that He acted well. It is also necessary to notice that Christ did not in any way reserve Communion of the chalice to priests alone, but He authorized access for all the faithful. It even seems that He made it as a precept, saying: "Drink of this, all of you." These words of the Lord are definite and clear. It is also certain that the Apostles and their first successors distributed Communion to all the faithful under the species of wine as well.

Likewise, it is certain that the Eastern Church, or at least the Byzantine rite, faithfully following in this matter the example of the Lord and the usage of the Apostles, has always admitted the properly disposed faithful to Communion under both species at each Eucharistic liturgy. Therefore the practice of Communion under both species should be considered as an evangelical, authentic, apostolic, and normal practice. It is neither a privilege nor an exception.

Nevertheless, we recognize that there can be, and there have in fact been, prudential reasons which require that Communion be given under one or the other species alone, since Christ is totally present under the species of bread and totally present under the species of wine. These reasons of practical order have been confirmed, not only in the Western Church, but also in the Eastern Church, which, under extraordinary and exceptional conditions, has occasionally given Communion under the sole species of wine. Still, Communion under only one species should be considered an exceptional, extraordinary, and less traditional practice.

It follows that no one who adheres to the truth can claim that the practice of Communion under both species is erroneous, condemned, or dangerous for the faith. It is true that the Council of Constance condemned the error of those who maintained that the Latin Church had forbidden Communion under both species without reason and illegitimately. But it never condemned the usage of Communion under both species as such; otherwise, we would have to consider the Eastern Christians as affected by this same condemnation.

We must conclude that the usage of Communion under one or two species is a purely disciplinary matter which is subject to change with the times. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that, insofar as possible, it is better to follow faithfully the example of the Lord and the practice of the Apostles. Among the reasons which have gradually induced the Church to abandon the ancient practice of Communion under both species, some are of a psychological order, others of a practical order, but none is of a doctrinal order.

The reasons of a psychological order constitute mainly what modern thinkers call a “complex.” The Catholic hierarchy of the Latin rite fears, on one hand, that the Church may appear to concede today what it has refused in the past so many times and with so much tenacity. It is as if by retracting its ancient refusals, it would be succumbing to external pressure. Another “complex” consists in the fear some of the Fathers among us have of being assimilated on this point to our separated brothers, Protestant and Orthodox.

If I am not mistaken, we must reject our complexes, and “de-complex” ourselves, as the modern thinkers say. In the first place, the circumstances have changed; there is no shame for the Church in changing its discipline. Today, nobody denies the presence of Christ under each of the two species. Nobody any longer exerts pressure on the Church to obtain by force the usage of the chalice. That is why the Church can, in all truth, authorize what it formerly forbade. On the other hand, if, while completely safeguarding the Catholic faith, we can bring our liturgical practices nearer to those of our separated brethren, there is no shame in that. It is, on the contrary, a very glorious achievement, since it contributes to assist union among Christians.

As for the practical difficulties which make Communion under two species somewhat inconvenient, they surely exist, but they should not be exaggerated. We Eastern Catholics, at least those of the Byzantine rite, each day give Communion under both species, and in our churches the number of communicants is not that much less than in the other churches.

Of course, the faithful do not drink directly from the chalice, which nowadays would appear to be nearly impossible. But the priest dips the consecrated bread partially in the Precious Blood, and places it, thus intincted, on the tongue of the communicant. There is thus nothing unsuitable about it, or so little that it amounts to nothing, in comparison with that great and eminent grace of receiving the Lord also under the species of wine, as the Lord instituted it.

Be this as it may, on this point as on all the others, it is necessary to give proof of moderation. We must not in one fell swoop, immediately and without distinction, grant the use of the chalice in the Latin Church. Indeed, nobody is asking for this. What many desire is that the door be not closed to a subsequent evolution of the liturgical discipline, and that meanwhile the Holy See of Rome can concede the usage of the chalice to the faithful, in certain well-defined cases.

That is why, in my humble opinion, the text of the schema, as it is now proposed to us, is sensible and moderate. It deserves our support, for reasons that are above all ecumenical.

May I just be permitted to propose one small amendment. In the schema, Communion under both species is proposed, “provided danger to the faith is removed.” These words do not seem to me correct, for there is the risk of interpreting them as if Communion under both species were of itself a danger to the faith. Much to the contrary, Communion under both species is the legitimate and normal usage, founded on the example itself of the Lord and of the Apostles. What is doubtless meant is that the heretical doctrines of the Middle Ages, denying the total presence of Christ under each of the two species, are over and done with, and that, since the danger of this false doctrine has passed, nothing any longer prevents once again giving Communion to the faithful under both species. That is why I would propose the following amendment: “Communion under both species, since the perversions of the faith have now ceased...may be given not only to clerics and religious, but also to lay persons.”

Now I wish to add a few words on sacramental concelebration.

We know that the practice of concelebration continues in force in the Eastern Church, occurring frequently and indeed even daily. It can even be said that for us concelebration is, as it were, the rule and individual celebration the exception. The practice of concelebration, which is apostolic and traditional, is not based on some practical necessity. In other words, we do not concelebrate because there are not enough altars or to save time. We concelebrate because in concelebration the unity of the priesthood is made more evident, as is the unity of the mystical sacrifice; fraternal charity among the priests is better sustained, and the public character inherent in all liturgical action is more clearly seen.

When our schema extends the practice of concelebration “to gatherings of priests, if it is not possible to arrange otherwise for individual celebrations” the authors of the schema demonstrate that they have not understood the real meaning of concelebration, its spiritual usefulness, its mystical value. We do not concelebrate because we are unable to celebrate individually. We concelebrate because we wish to celebrate better.

I am certain that this poor empirical conception was not to be found in the first schema prepared by the Liturgical Commission. Thus I propose that on this point there should be a return to the original text, as it read prior to the changes introduced by the Central Commission.

Setting the Date for Pascha (Easter)

This is one of the themes closest to the hearts of the Eastern bishops, especially in the Arabic Middle East. There, in fact, Christians and Muslims live side by side. In the years in which Orthodox and Catholics do not celebrate Pascha on the same day, they feel themselves humiliated before their Muslim fellow citizens. Unification of the date of Pascha is for them the first condition for union. Kyr Philip Naba, Metropolitan of Beirut and Under-Secretary of the Council, devoted his intervention of November 10, 1962, to this question.

Much could be said on the subject of setting the date of the feast of Pascha, on a single and invariable Sunday. Chapter V of the schema "On Renewal of the Liturgical Year," which speaks of it, could lead to prolonged liturgical, historic, scientific, social, and ecumenical developments. However, I shall be brief. I shall develop here only the ecumenical reason which postulates the stabilization of the feast of Pascha throughout all the universal Church, and most of all in the Eastern countries where Christians live with non-Christians, and where Catholics are side by side with non-Catholics of all rites and nationalities.

It is the ecumenical reason that we must focus on especially here, since it clearly illustrates what setting date for the feast of Pascha means in the universal Church. Now, this common celebration of Pascha signifies that it unites all Christians in one and the same faith in the resurrection of Christ, and that it raises the same hope in all Christians, who do not wish to celebrate Pascha as separated brethren, but who await from this council a broader, more nearly perfect, and stronger Christian unity. This great hope is alive and is the prayer of the Church of Christ all over the world, and more particularly in those regions where Christians are divided.

Indeed, in all these regions, which extend over the whole Middle East, and even to many other Western nations which have Eastern rites, the union of Christians is fervently desired, and is sought especially in the celebration and the glorification of the Resurrection of Christ, Savior of the whole world. Here, in fact, we must point out that Catholics and Orthodox do not use the same calendar for the feast of Pascha. The Orthodox, who follow the Julian calendar and not the Gregorian one, celebrate Pascha sometimes on the same day as Catholics, sometimes one week later, sometimes five weeks later.

There are two principal ecumenical reasons that press us in the East to unify the glorious celebration of Pascha.

The first reason relates to our one undivided faith. All Christ's faithful, regardless of the rite or confession to which they belong, have the same faith in Christ, raised from the dead for all, on the third day. Thus it is fitting that Christ's faithful be united as one in the glorification of the resurrection. It is also fitting that they be one in beginning a new life, in the unity of the grace that Christ merited for us by his resurrection.

Besides, we must not forget that perfect unity among Christians will be realized only gradually and by stages. The union of brothers and sisters in the celebration of these days

of grace and of salvation constitutes not only a first stage, but also a firm and necessary step toward union. Many Christians even say, and with reason, that the union of Churches should even commence with the union of the faithful in celebrating together the great mysteries of Christ, and above all His resurrection. This common Paschal manifestation, even if it is not complete and perfect union, represents a great step forward and sets us on the sure path of charity and of union.

The second ecumenical reason concerns the non-Christians who live in the same region as Christians. In fact, the division of Christians in the celebration of Pascha, or rather the division of Pascha itself into the first Pascha, for Westerners and Catholics, and the second Pascha, for Easterners and Orthodox, causes a great scandal for non-Christians. They see it as dividing Christ and the mystery of His passion, His death, and His resurrection. Moreover, it provides them with the opportunity to doubt our true, firm, and undivided faith. Finally, by these Christian divisions over Pascha, we offer to the non-Christian world a spectacle in which we are the object of confusion and irony. All of this unfortunately is detrimental to our faith. These are the reasons why, to avoid these scandals and promote Union, I propose to the venerable ecumenical council the following suggestions:

1. The formation of a mixed commission, composed of Catholics and non-Catholics, to develop a new and single Paschal calendar. This commission would function with the consent of the sovereign pontiff to avoid making the liturgical calendar a new obstacle to union with our separated brethren who follow the Julian calendar.
2. The acceptance of the World Calendar prepared by the League of Nations. This acceptance should be given, in the universal Church, with the consent of all the Separated Brethren, in the East and in the West, at least the part concerning the setting of the date for Pascha.
3. If none of these suggestions is accepted, let the feast of Pascha be set, with the consent of the Separated Brethren, at a Sunday which never falls before the Passover of the Jews, for example the second or third Sunday of April.
4. In any case, let the feast of Pascha at least be fixed on an invariable Sunday, in all the Eastern Church, so that all Eastern Christians may be united, in the eyes of the non-Christian world, on the day of the Resurrection and of glory.