Liturgical language in Western rites

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The topic to be discussed in this presentation may not be as profound as other subjects covered in this conference, yet it is likely to provoke all kinds of passionate and contradictory reactions. Therefore, I will have to content myself, at best, with presenting a general overview that would merit further, more detailed research at a later date. That is why I have grouped the main considerations presented below into three parts:

- historical considerations,

- theological and philosophical reflections

- practical and pastoral implications.

1. Historical considerations

One of the flaws of our modern age is to think that the present is the sum and culmination of the entire past. The Church is well placed to know that this is not the case. As a great English author once said: "We are merely pygmies standing on the shoulders of giants." History is the window that illuminates the condition of the present, and it teaches us to see things in their true nature. This is particularly evident in the Church's insistence that sacred Tradition is a true and authentic organ of divine Revelation itself. In this spirit, as I was preparing this presentation, it seemed to me that the least I could do was to consult, among many other documents, the acts of the preparation and sessions of the Council of Trent. Reading the minutes of the preparatory sessions, I was very struck by how much the Council Fathers relied on Tradition and history in their research and discussions, and by the exhaustive and systematic methods they applied. For each doctrine and practice, they clearly strove to determine precisely what the Church had always practised, understood, and believed in its tradition, and to consider all of this as normative and legislative in relation to what was then presented—or judged to be—the practice of their time. Of course, in its doctrinal formulations, every ecumenical council is preserved from error, but what we can be absolutely certain of is that what was adopted at Trent was not adopted by accident. Similarly, when examining Catholic faith or practice, it is always good, and I would even say essential, to establish what precedents can be found in our history to determine whether they shed light on the present – and even what the future might hold.

Since the Renaissance and the rediscovery of ancient knowledge, which included the study and, to a certain extent, the revitalisation of the ancient languages of Hebrew and Greek, Christians

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have always wanted to rediscover what the original piety of the early Christian Church was like. They commonly hold a kind of utopian idea, still widespread today, of what is called "evangelical simplicity". For them, all developments, additions, embellishments and, dare we say it, beauty belong to a later, more decadent era. Thus Luther and those who, even in our own time, wish to modify Catholicism have been, in a sense, bitten by the demon of subtraction, simplification, and "return to" a kind of golden age prior to the additions that, in the Middle Ages, obscured the noble and rational simplicity of our worship. One must nevertheless ask whether the assumptions on which this conviction is based are well-founded. In fact, based on what we know, it would seem that they are not. It appears that the earliest Fathers, far from presiding over worship services with nothing but a guitar and a Bible, celebrated the sacraments in an atmosphere of the deepest reverence and the greatest mystery.

The very first celebration of Mass, which began at the Last Supper and found its fulfilment and meaning in the sacrifice of Our Lord Himself on Calvary, was almost certainly not celebrated in the vernacular. We all know that the vernacular language of that time was Aramaic, and it is almost certain that the prayers and psalms were recited in Hebrew, which was a dead language long before the time of Our Lord and was used mainly for prayer. However, in the Christian era, it seems that very early on, a language understood by all was used: at least, this is what can be deduced from both the *Didache* and the writings of St. Hippolytus[2] . The use of a language other than Hebrew was presumably inspired by the practice of the Jews of the diaspora, who used Greek even for sacred texts, as evidenced by their translation of the Bible, known as the Septuagint, which was already ancient at the time.

However, it should be added that it is not entirely accurate to say that Greek and then Latin were 'vernacular languages'. There was no single vernacular Latin language, but rather numerous variations, as in modern Italy where, although *lingua toscana in bocca romana* remains the official language of the country, it was nonetheless true, at least until recently, that each region had its own dialect. Like modern Italian, Greek and then Latin had the same characteristic of not being vernacular languages used throughout the empire, but *linguae francae*, i.e. languages that allowed a number of distinct vernacular language groups to understand each other, as is the case today with French and English in many countries. The status of cultural language assumed successively by Greek and then Latin was maintained until very recently. At the beginning of this century, it was not unusual for people of a certain culture, even lay people, to converse with each other in Latin, even though their respective mother tongues were mutually unintelligible.

Thus, once the prayers of the Mass and the Office had been codified and written down, perhaps at the time when the Church became the Church of the Empire under Constantine, these prayers tended to remain in circulation in the language in which they were originally written. When Pope Saint Gregory the Great sent Saint Augustine to evangelise England, he gave him Latin

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[2] Reading the *Didache* and Saint Hippolytus, one might think that the celebrant improvised the canon of the Mass. If we consider these texts to be normative, it should be noted that, although he was eventually canonised as a martyr, Hippolytus had a rather tumultuous relationship with the Church; moreover, I have personally heard some people question whether the *Didache* was really a Catholic text or whether it originated from a heretical sect.

liturgical books to take with him. While it is true that he did not rule out possible modifications if Saint Augustine deemed them useful, there was never any question of changing the language in which public worship was celebrated to adopt a truly vernacular language. Similarly, when Winfrith – or Boniface – left Crediton, in Devon, to evangelise the pagans of Germany, it was Latin books that he took with him. Furthermore, throughout this period and until the time of the Council of Trent, it was customary to assert that Mass could only be properly celebrated in three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Latin, as these were the three languages of *the titulum* on the cross.

As far as I know, this situation did not change much for the Latin rite until the Reformation. There was, of course, the notable exception of the Eastern rites. When Saints Cyril and Methodius brought the Gospel to the Slavs, they did so in the Slavic language, and they also celebrated the liturgy in that language. In this they were initially encouraged by Pope Adrian II, but in 879 his successor, John VIII, reprimanded them for celebrating Mass neither in Latin nor in Greek *sed barbara, id est Sclavina lingua*[3] . However, they appealed and, the following year, the same Pope reversed his ban and in fact encouraged the missionaries in what they were doing, asking only that the epistle and the gospel be read in Latin – we can assume that this referred to the formal liturgical proclamation, which was accompanied by a translation into Slavonic. It should be noted in this context that at that time it was not considered that the Scriptures needed to be proclaimed in the vernacular, but rather that, in order to preserve their integrity, the sacred language had to be retained. This attitude is contrary to the modern view – adopted by many liturgists and also, one might say, by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council when they prescribed a wider choice of texts from the Word of God for the Mass[4] , and even by many people who remain attached to the traditional liturgy – a conception according to which the reading of the Scriptures during Mass has a didactic purpose and must therefore be done in the vernacular. On the other hand, it seems that in former times the idea was rather that in the reading of the Scriptures we have a kind of epiphany of God, the Word, corresponding by analogy to the descent of the Lord in his Flesh and Blood during Mass: the place for instructing the faithful in the faith was not the liturgy but elsewhere, in catechesis. This reminds us of a remark made by Pius Parsch in the introduction to his book *Das Jahr des Heils* (*The Year of Salvation*): "In the Gospel, it is Christ who appears and speaks to us. Let us not consider the Gospel so much as a teaching, but rather as an epiphany of Christ.[5] . The liturgy was seen as something else: a humble reflection of the heavenly liturgy, which allowed us to see, as through a veil, the face of God, and which should not be used for more mundane things.

In short, in 885 the Pope changed his mind once again and authorised only an approximate translation and presentation of the Scriptures in Slavonic – probably after they had been read in

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[3] P.L. CXXVI, col. 849-850.

[4] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35 (1).

[5] PIUS PARSCH, *Das Jahr des Heils*, Klosterneuburg 1932, p. 16, quoted in: KLAUS GAMBER, *La réforme liturgique en question*, Le Barroux: Editions Sainte-Madeleine, 1992. During the presentation of this paper at the colloquium, one participant pointed out that the early tradition of catechesis carried out within the framework of the liturgy, as attested by the homilies of St. Augustine and St. Cyril of Jerusalem, should also be taken into account. It should be noted in this regard that it is only in modern times that the sermon has come to be considered part of the liturgy itself.

Latin and during the sermon. We know that this method was practised throughout the East, for example in Jerusalem, at the time of the visit there by Egeria, the famous 4th-century travelling nun, who heard the readings first in Greek and then in a Syriac translation, and that it is still the custom of the Copts today – first in Coptic, then in Arabic. This is obviously a method that we are familiar with today, although in the Roman rite, the reading of the Scriptures in the vernacular is not part of the liturgy but is generally only an addition to a homily. It was shortly after this authorisation that the schism occurred, in which the Slavs fell along with almost the entire East.

The ban on Slavonic was reiterated by Pope Hildebrand, Saint Gregory VII (1073–1085), but the language was then authorised once again by Innocent IV (1243–1254) in the regions where it had more or less survived: Croatia, Istria, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Slavonia. It should be noted that this liturgy was not that of Saint John Chrysostom or any other Eastern rite, but the Roman liturgy in Slavonic. It continued to flourish, under the name of *missa glagolitica*, until the 17th century: at that time, books became scarce and a certain hybridisation occurred, derisively called *schiavetto*. Subsequently, much like the adaptation of the Roman Missal in 1965, the parts of the Mass sung by the people or the responses they gave were in Slavonic, with everything else being taken from the Latin Missal. During the reign of Pope Leo XIII, the Glagolitic Mass experienced a certain revival, which has continued sporadically since then, the only interruption being caused by the general reforms of the last thirty-five years. The form in which it is perhaps best known today is that given to the Glagolitic Mass by Leos Janacek. Curiously, the services of the ritual have been celebrated in modern Croatian – which is truly a vernacular language – since the 17th century.

In Western Europe, the Carolingian movement aimed to re-establish a kind of Roman Empire, which is why it encouraged Roman stability in all its parts. It is therefore not surprising that, in liturgical matters, Latin was maintained and encouraged as the language of official worship. That said, the vernacular was not completely excluded: Jungmann recounts that throughout the Carolingian Empire, the faithful were allowed to sing a kind of *Credo* in their respective languages[6] , and a form of this chant survived until relatively recently in certain regions of France, where it formed a kind of counterpoint sung by the congregation to *the Credo* recited in Latin by the priest at the altar.

St. Thomas Aquinas has little to say on the question of liturgy in the vernacular. He confines himself to discussing errors of pronunciation and other acts or accidents that could cause invalidation[7] .

The vernacular was to some extent admitted into the liturgy, probably at the end of the Middle Ages, at least in the liturgy specific to the bishopric of Salisbury – Sarum Use – which was,

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[6] Jungmann gives an example of *the Creed* sung in German, quoted by BERTHOLD OF REGENSBURG (Predigten, Pfeiffer ed., I. 498.):
Ich gloube an den Vater,
Ich gloube an den Sun
miner frouwen sant Marien,
und an den Heiligen Geist. Kyrieleys.

[7] ST III, q. 60, art. 7.

mutatis mutandis, celebrated throughout most of the British Isles. Every Sunday or on major feast days, a prayer called *the bidding of Bedes* was recited, which corresponds very roughly to our universal prayer (or, according to English usage, *bidding prayers*), asking [*bidding*] the faithful to recite prayers for the benefit of various benefactors of the Church and various other persons. Opinions differ as to when these prayers were said: in reality, it may have varied from region to region. Some specialists place them in the same place as the universal prayer today, i.e. after the *Creed*, at the same time as the sermon[8] . I understand that some liturgies celebrated on the continent had something similar, called the office of the prône. However, most specialists believe that this *bidding of the Bedes*, according to the liturgy of the diocese of Salisbury, took place as part of an extra-liturgical rite at the end of the solemn procession that usually preceded High Mass, with the procession stopping at the rood screen for the reading of a verse, a collection and, probably, the *bidding of the Bedes*.

With its new knowledge, the Renaissance, which had always tended to consider education essential for human nature to realise its full potential, believed that everything else was obscurantism and superstition. The Catholic reform before the Reformation undertook the study of the Scriptures in their original languages in order to better understand them. Examples include the remarkable *Biblia complutensis* by Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros, prepared between 1502 and 1517, and the literal restoration – as they understood it – of New Testament and patristic texts undertaken by Erasmus, who published a new Latin version in 1516, and Lefèvre d'Etaples, who went so far as to translate the New Testament from Latin into contemporary French between 1516 and 1524. From then on, it is not surprising to see that, starting with Tyndale (in English, 1526), Luther (in German, 1534) and Olivétan (in French, 1535), all the reformers produced or published translations of the Bible into the vernacular. However, as the Reformation spread, positions quickly hardened and, in England, the counterattack against the Scriptures in the vernacular was led by none other than St. Thomas More, who was himself a friend of Erasmus and a Catholic humanist, and who could not help but react to the publication of Tyndale's New Testament in Flanders in 1526[9] . Countless copies had been imported, brought in by merchants with their goods, and when a large stock of these translations was discovered hidden in warehouses belonging to merchants of the German Hanseatic League, along with a number of Protestant tracts in English, all of it was burned at St. Paul's Cross, accompanied by a sermon by St. John Fisher. These men, who had championed the Renaissance and the rebirth of knowledge, had discovered that knowledge – or rather a certain form of knowledge – was turning against the Church itself.

It was not long after the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular that the liturgy was also translated. Lutheranism retained a Latin liturgy, at least in part, for over a hundred years, but all other forms of Protestantism, which placed such importance on reading and preaching the

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[8] In the liturgy used in the diocese of Salisbury, the sermon is preached after the *Creed*.

[9] At the time, Tyndale was living on the continent, in Switzerland and Germany or thereabouts. The authorities had discovered what he was plotting, and John Cochläus warned William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, who did everything in his power to stem the flood of books by having them bought on the continent, at the source. To avoid prosecution, Tyndale took refuge with Philip of Hesse, the man whom Luther had authorised to live in bigamy.

Scriptures, adopted vernacular forms. We know that the Council of Trent held serious discussions on whether the liturgy could be fruitfully celebrated in the vernacular. Apparently, no one was truly convinced. At the congregation of theologians on 31 July 1562, Francisco de Sanctio (a Spaniard) pointed out that evangelising France and Germany, where Latin was used during Mass, was like throwing pearls before swine (!). In the end, the Council concluded:

> "While it is true that the Mass contains great instruction for the faithful, it has never seemed appropriate to the Fathers that it should be celebrated everywhere in the vernacular. Therefore, preserving in each place the ancient usage of each Church and the rite approved by the Holy Roman Church, mother and teacher of all Churches, and so that the sheep of Christ may not suffer from hunger, nor the little ones ask for bread and there be no one to distribute it to them, the holy Synod enjoins pastors and all those who have charge of souls to frequently expound during the celebration of Mass – either themselves or by entrusting it to others – a part of what is read at Mass and, for the rest, to explain one or another mystery of this most holy sacrifice, especially on the Lord's Day and on feast days"[10] .

It is interesting to note that the council requested that commentary on the Mass – probably in the vernacular – be given "frequently" and that it could even be presented by a non-ordained person. This foreshadowed many interesting developments in the 20th century.

The council also promulgated the following canon: "If anyone says that Mass should be celebrated only in the vernacular, let him be anathema."[11] . This is a canon whose echoes, in our time, are also not without interest.

Considering that, even today, the Church in China – both in its clandestine forms and in the communities of the so-called "patriotic" Church " – constitutes a special case in that it continues to use Latin in its liturgy, it is curious to note that, in the past, China was considered a special case that required the use of the vernacular. The first example we have of this is that of Jean de Montcorvin, a Franciscan missionary in Tartary, who simply informed the Pope that he was celebrating the liturgy in the local language. This did not seem to cause the Holy Father any undue concern, as in 1307 he appointed him Archbishop of Beijing. However, another more famous example was that of Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary in China in the 17th century, who in 1615 received broad latitude from the Vatican to use Chinese in the Latin rite liturgy and, at the same time, to practise what we would

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[10] Session 22, 17 September 1562. This is how the preparatory commission of 6 August 1562 presents the situation in chapter VI: "Ita enim et hujus ineffabilis mysteriis majestas rectius conservatur, et populus excitatur vehementius ad præclare de hoc sacrificio cogitandum. Lingua etiam latina, qua missæ in occidentali ecclesia celebrantur, maxime congruit, si quidem ea pluribus nationibus communis est, neque videtur esse dubitandum, quin, si missæ vulgari cujusque gentisque idiomate peragerentur, divina mysteria minori reverentia colerentur. It would also be extremely dangerous if various errors were to arise in multiple translations, which would make the mysteries of our faith, which are simple, appear to be different.
This was followed by a prescription authorising the reading of the epistle and the gospel in the vernacular on Sundays and feast days. We shall see that the decree that was finally adopted mitigated the conclusions of the preparatory commission to a certain extent.

[11] "Si quis dixerit, missam nonnisi in lingua vulgari celebrari debere: anathema sit" - preparatory text of canon 10: *De Sacrificio missæ*, 6 August 1562. The text quoted in the body of this presentation is a translation of the canon itself.

today call inculturation experiments. However, his work did not last, as the controversy over ancestor worship caused it to collapse; after his death, Latin once again became the mandatory language.

In Austria-Hungary, the reign of Joseph II, the unfortunate son of Maria Theresa, saw numerous failed attempts at reform, including an attempt to celebrate part of the liturgy in the vernacular, at least in the emperor's possessions. In practice, this meant that the congregation sang versified versions of the common parts of the Mass in the vernacular, while the priest celebrated in Latin at the altar. This tradition continued, and in some parish churches in Germany and Austria, one can still hear the *Deutsche Messe* as set to music by Schubert and Haydn, which has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in the context of the modernised liturgy.

At this point, it is worth mentioning a non-Catholic movement that is little known outside England. Most Europeans know that, doctrinally speaking, *the Church* of England is not a homogeneous group: among Anglicans, there are people who call themselves Anglicans but profess Calvin's doctrines in their entirety, and others who, while also claiming to be Anglicans, profess all Catholic doctrines, including that of papal infallibility and, curiously, at least in one case – which I know from a reliable source – the conviction that Anglican orders are invalid. Between these two extremes, there are also all possible shades of grey. In the 19th century, the Oxford Movement gave rise to a number of "Anglo-Catholic" variations, the most powerful of which was perhaps the "papalist" movement which, like all Anglo-Catholics, considered that theChurch of England was authentically part of the Catholic Church but had unfortunately been separated from the main body by the unfortunate accident of the Reformation, while adding that the best way to restore unity with the Catholic Church was to make known to the English all its doctrines and practices, as they had continued to develop since the Counter-Reformation. Thus, at the end of the 19th century, the *Missale Romanum* of 1570 was translated into the most beautiful English and, although often filled with excerpts from *the Book of Common Prayer*, continued to be used until the recent liturgical reforms; The churches that had previously used the English missal simply replaced it with the Roman Missal of 1970, in its most common English translations by ICEL and ICET, with the lectionary from the Jerusalem Bible. What is important about the English Missal is that it is the only true vernacular translation[12] of the traditional missal, produced in an attempt to instil traditional Catholic practice and dogma, and that this was done in an exhaustive manner. Often, "papalist" Anglicans accepted appointments in the most difficult areas, neighbourhoods long abandoned by the mainstream Anglican Church, particularly in London's East End, among the poorest of the poor. They gathered the children who were loitering in the streets, dressed them in albs and surplices, and taught them to serve Mass and respond to Psalm 42 – just as any child on the continent would do – except that they did so in English rather than Latin. The effect was remarkable: entire neighbourhoods in the poorest parts of England were brought back into the fold of the Anglican Church – in a rather exceptional way, of course, and according to their conception of the Church of England. We can still see the fruits of this today. One of my friends is the rector of

[12] The Missa Glagolitica used liturgical Slavonic and not vernacular Croatian.

one of these churches. He now uses the modern Roman Missal and, in almost every respect, both in its external aspects and in its internal characteristics, it is almost impossible to distinguish this church and this congregation from ours. And I would add – a notable fact in the non-Protestant sectors of the Church of England today – that the faithful are numerous. It can certainly be said that, in one way or another, the people have been sanctified and nourished by a vernacular form of the Mass, even if, of course, the grace received has not been directly sacramental, given the invalidity (of most) Anglican orders.

The 20th century saw an intensification of the movement in favour of the use of the vernacular, perhaps as a consequence of the development of communication methods and, in any case, of the leisure industry. It seems that, for the most part, this enthusiasm for the vernacular was a variant – albeit a largely minority one – of the liturgical movement. It was inevitable that the latter's efforts to actively involve the people in the Mass and other sacraments would ultimately give greater importance to the forms of this participation and lead to "renaissances" and "rediscoveries" of what was believed – or at least claimed – to be the practice of earlier, more enlightened times. It could be pointed out that this appeal to an ancient era sometimes led to impudent excesses. In England and Wales, when lay ministers of the Blessed Sacrament were introduced in the 1970s, Catholics were told that this was merely a return to the practice of the early Church and that it was part of the authentic tradition. In the context of the traditional Mass, the introduction of the dialogued Mass was often presented as a "rediscovery." As far as I know, before our century, there was never a case where the entire congregation recited Psalm 42 alternately with the priest. The whole idea of a simply spoken Mass is a relatively recent creation. In any case, there is not much difference between asking the faithful to respond to the priest by stammering in Latin and wondering why they could not do so in their mother tongue. And since the laity were encouraged to recite the breviary in the vernacular, why could not a priest do the same when he found it difficult to recite matins or read hymns and collects?

The movement grew, and there were many experiments, some of which were authorised and some of which were not. Pronouncing marriage vows in the vernacular has been common practice since at least the Middle Ages. Then, in the 1950s, the vernacular was authorised for the dialogue accompanying baptism. When asked to use the new version, Monsignor Ronald Knox, a famous English scholar who was not lacking in wit, replied with a bittersweet remark: "The baby doesn't know English, but the devil understands Latin." In France and, I believe, in Germany, experiments were carried out in the vernacular concerning the Mass itself. I know people who, as early as 1960, attended a Sunday Mass in a French parish that was said largely in French and celebrated facing the people. In many places, the readings from Scripture and other texts of the Mass were done in the vernacular, often by a lay person, while the priest read them quietly in Latin at the altar. It is certain that the situation had reached such a point that a solution had to be found.

Those who have the slightest doubt about the position of the good Pope John on Latin need only read the remarkable apostolic constitution *Veterum sapientia*, published on 22 November 1962,

on the eve of the Second Vatican Council and intended, one may suppose, to channel the advocates of the vernacular languages who intended to use the Council to advance their cause.

> Recently, the use of Latin has been questioned in certain circles, and many have asked for the Holy See's opinion on the matter. We have therefore decided to publish the relevant guidelines contained in this document, in order to ensure that the ancient and uninterrupted use of Latin is maintained and, where necessary, restored[13] .

That is what you call speaking plainly. However, it became apparent over time that this undertaking was ill-conceived; in the long term, its effect was negligible and it was perhaps the swan song for Latin. This document contained no liturgical prescriptions and concerned the compulsory study of Latin. I am not sure how this text was applied on the continent, but in my seminary, for about a year, classes were taught in Latin during the first half and then immediately repeated in the vernacular. The result was that people thought, "The law is absurd, but it is the law." Students whose knowledge of Latin was insufficient to follow complicated theological or philosophical arguments were bored and lost during the first half of the class and, in the end, learned only half of what they had previously learned when classes were entirely in the vernacular. Latin thus appeared, quite obviously, to be an obstacle to knowledge and an anachronism – which was exactly the opposite effect to that sought by Pope John. Hence the general relief when, shortly afterwards, Latin fell almost entirely out of use.

We are all too familiar with the history of Latin and vernacular languages over the last thirty-five years, so I do not intend to revisit it here. Instead, I will move on to some internal considerations.

2. Philosophical and theological considerations

As we all know, even the holy sacrifice of the Mass is not an end in itself; it is only a means to an end, or more precisely, to ends, these being the glory of God and the salvation of man, as Pope Pius XII reminded us in his encyclical *Mediator Dei*. It follows that, in order to judge how we celebrate Mass, we must see to what extent the ends to which it tends are achieved. It is certain that, *ex opere operato*, Mass validly celebrated, in whatever language, perfectly achieves its ends; the question of the effects *ex opere operantis* remains.

I would say that, for most of us, the reason we are attached to the traditional rite is not primarily and above all a matter of theoretical considerations, but rather the result of experience. In other words, the celebration of Mass in its traditional forms evoked a spiritual emotion in us, and we feel that this form is more useful than others in helping us to achieve the goal of our eternal salvation. Of course, our study of the Mass will lead us to the same conclusion for intellectual reasons, but it can be said that, for most of us at least, these are a posteriori reasons. I know from experience that when I celebrate in Latin or attend a Mass celebrated in Latin, my fervour, my

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[13] *Veterum Sapientia*, § 13.

awareness of the divine, and the feeling of spiritual fulfilment I experience are much stronger than when I attend a Mass—or have to celebrate it—in the vernacular. To this observation I would like to add another: for these same reasons, it is important that Mass be celebrated in the direction of the liturgical East, wearing the appropriate vestments, which bear no resemblance to street clothes, and in an atmosphere of contemplation and piety. The word that more or less sums up this attitude or experience is "transcendence". A liturgy that does not include these elements, that is, that adopts an immanentist attitude, will not achieve the same ends as a Mass that adopts a transcendent attitude. Advocates of immanentist forms of worship consider them desirable in themselves. When one dialogues with such theologians and liturgists, they emphasise that the faithful are more physically active, that this strengthens their sense of belonging to a community in which Our Lord is unquestionably present, and that we are no longer dealing with passive Catholics, "dead weights" who attended Mass without participating in any way in the liturgical action.

These people forget, of course, that the very purpose of Mass is to aim beyond itself. They are so busy admiring the sign that they do not see what the sign indicates. And so it loses its meaning and becomes empty of all significance. A sign that indicates nothing is absurd. It becomes an end in itself – it is theatre. In traditional forms of Mass, as we have seen previously, there are several elements, each of which contributes to this transcendent, "trans-horizon" view. This is particularly true of the use of a non-vernacular language. The sense of transcendence can of course survive without this element, but only if most of the other elements have been preserved, as is the case in the English Anglican missal – apart, of course, from the question of its effectiveness *ex opere operato*. The fewer transcendent elements it contains, the closer the Mass comes to the world and the less it will be able to achieve the ends for which it was instituted, at least *ex opere operantis*. It may distract the faithful, but it will not fascinate them; it may give them a sense of community, but it is less likely to sanctify them. And it will not encourage them to see the things that are above, as the Apostle asks us to do.

In this sense, I would say that, while it is undoubtedly infinitely preferable to use a non-vernacular language, it is not absolutely essential.

I would now like to explore this relationship between language and transcendence in a little more depth. Recently, in fact this year, a remarkable book was published in England entitled *After Language: The Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, written by a young graduate of Cambridge University named Catherine Pickstock.[14] Her field of study is the philosophy of language and its relationship to theology, particularly liturgy. In this very special work, which will undoubtedly set a precedent, she studies our current conceptions of language, particularly in relation to the work of the postmodern philosopher Derrida, and finds that the entire contemporary approach to language is fundamentally empty. Going back to Plato, she studies a more authentic notion of language, particularly as it relates to the relationship between the Creator and his creation. She finds that one of the most refined expressions of correct and truly meaningful dialogue between God and man is

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[14] Catherine Pickstock, *After language - The liturgical consummation of philosophy* Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.

found in the traditional Roman rite. You may be surprised to learn that Catherine Pickstock is not Catholic but Anglican, or rather Anglo-Catholic. In her view, language has become increasingly manipulative over the centuries. No doubt manipulation can have good and bad effects, just as indoctrination can have good and bad effects: we "manipulate" children to teach them not to run in the street or be selfish; we manipulate them to teach them to say their prayers and love God and their neighbour. And, of course, manipulation can have perverse effects. Language is almost always used, in one way or another, to change the person we are talking to: perhaps to inform them, or to challenge them; we press a button and expect that gesture to elicit a response. Liturgical language is a very special form of language. To begin with, it is non-manipulative. Consider those great collects of the Roman rite that say everything and nothing at the same time. Why do we ask anything of God? Because he is our Father, who in any case knows better than we do what we need. Ultimately, we are like those baby birds in the nest, opening their beaks wide, waiting to be fed by their mother. The liturgy is simply a way of expressing the creature waiting for its loving Creator and Redeemer to come and save it: even the specific requests that the liturgy addresses to God are symbolic of the need we generally have for him; it is an awareness of our relationship of complete dependence on God, the absolute foundation of our existence. Liturgy is the greatest and most powerful means of doing this, because it does not have the manipulative characteristic inherent in modern language. It simply addresses God as God, because that is what He is: the One Who Is. There is no point in trying to manipulate Him with our babbling; our words certainly have their place, but liturgy is the Church's inarticulate cry of love for her Bridegroom, the expression of her ardent expectation of the consummation of her love at the heavenly wedding feast, so perfectly prefigured in the reception of Communion. In the Holy Spirit, we cry out, "Father"; what else is there to say?

This is the very essence of what Catherine Pickstock calls the "apostrophic" voice. It is a language that has a different mode and purpose from everyday language. It is absolutely non-manipulative but essentially transcendent. Even when using familiar language, the apostrophic voice is precisely – and this is important – non-vernacular. A language that constantly speaks to God about Himself and then asks Him for this or that is a manipulative language and, ultimately, does not allow a lasting, authentic relationship to be established between the Creator and the creature. The god we harangue is a god we can manipulate. This is not our God, the only God, and He has made possible this transcendent mode in which we can, in a way, glimpse the fringe of His cloak.

Perhaps the closest other example to this apostolic voice is the rosary. As we all know, when one has recited the rosary for a certain amount of time, the literal meaning of the prayers becomes less and less important, and even the discursive meditation on the mysteries recedes into the background. We are then nothing more than creatures who, holding Mary's hand, contemplate their Creator. The rosary is, in a way, the liturgy par excellence for the laity. Perhaps those who recite the rosary during Mass feel how appropriate this form of participation is – but this is something that members of the liturgical movement, convinced of the need for more active participation, would not approve of.

3. Practical considerations

We have established that, although the use of the vernacular can be supported by a number of historical precedents, these are few and far between and that, from an epistemological perspective, it is preferable to address God in a language other than the vernacular. that said, sooner or later, we cannot avoid addressing the purely practical question of how all these considerations can be applied in practice. It is certainly interesting to build theories on these issues, but the practical aspects now appear to be very delicate. The people, the Catholic people, have simply lost the habit of Latin, and even of a liturgy that is in any way transcendent. For many Catholics today, especially young people, the use of Latin is no longer a matter of nostalgia but of innovation. It is a question of introducing an element that they would never have associated with worship. Why Latin, rather than Norwegian or Inuit?

Secondly, it is undeniable that, for those attending for the first time, rites in the vernacular are much more accessible than those in Latin. When they can at least understand the words used, pagans attending a baptism, wedding or funeral are not completely bewildered by what is happening. There is a certain connection between their lives – essentially television – and the efforts made by the priest to communicate with them. A priest who clearly spends most of his time talking to God in a mysterious language and who does not bother to entertain his flock is certainly not going to make a big impression on those who do not even understand what he is doing.

It seems to me that the difference here is the same as that between fast food and a truly nourishing meal. Fast food may well have a certain appeal in the short term, but ultimately it goes against what real food is supposed to do, namely nourish. A child who eats only ice cream will eventually die of malnutrition, even though, paradoxically, their stomach will be full. In England, and probably in other parts of the world as well, we see many Protestant communities springing up overnight, attracting hundreds of young people with a trendy message, loud music and fast-talking preachers, but after five years they are no longer there, unable to sustain those who rushed to them in droves. To use the expression used by Our Lord, these are seeds that have fallen on stony ground. In the liturgy, the Christian people must learn what they need to know for eternity: the faithful need to discover themselves as creatures in relationship with the God who created them. The seeds must be sown in good soil, where they will bear much fruit.

I believe that Catholic liturgy can undoubtedly achieve its goal by using the vernacular, provided that other elements are maintained fairly firmly – such as the "orientation" in the case of Mass, and "sacred" language instead of mundane chatter. In some cases, it may even be desirable to use the vernacular, as the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council say. I will cite, for example, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick: the fact is that the sick or dying person, and all those attending the ceremony, are more directly interested in the action and prayers that constitute the sacrament and are particularly affected by the affliction that prevails at that particular moment, not to mention the practical conditions in which this sacrament is generally administered, which can

make it difficult to use the full texts with translations for all participants. However, in the case of sacraments that are more visibly ecclesial in nature, ceremonies in which the Church clearly manifests itself as such, and in particular when ecclesial communion itself is essential – which is the case with Mass or ordination, and perhaps also with baptism – for all the reasons we have indicated in the course of this presentation, the use of a common non-vernacular liturgical language appears highly desirable.

Thirdly, the fact that, during this century, Latin has truly ceased to play a prominent role in our culture certainly poses a problem. A hundred years ago, it was not unusual – at least in England – for seminarians to be taught to speak Latin, and not just to know enough to be able to read it. Nowadays, despite the Church's requirements in this area, Latin is rarely taught in Western seminaries. Even if a programme were set up to reintroduce Latin, it would be necessary at the same time to educate a very reluctant clergy! But it is either that or simply accept that the reintroduction of a Latin liturgy cannot be achieved in the current generation, and begin to make long-term plans for it to be restored in the next generation.

Fourthly, it should be noted that, throughout the history of the Church, experiences of liturgy in the vernacular have almost always gone hand in hand with heterodoxy in matters of doctrine. The use of the sacred language has been, in a very real sense, a kind of bastion – or at least a companion – of orthodoxy. We must realise that, today, the Church is faced with problems far more serious than that of the language in which the sacraments are celebrated: very often, it is the sacraments themselves that are under attack. In my opinion, if the use of the liturgical language had been maintained, the damage would not have been so serious, but, on the other hand, it will not be enough to restore Latin to restore everything else.

4. Conclusion

Certainly, the history of the Church has seen a number of reversals in liturgical matters. The Breviary of Quignonez, which, curiously, was widely used by the English reformer Cranmer in his *Book of Common Prayer*, was replaced shortly after its introduction. And, after the severe pruning of the calendar practised after the Council of Trent, the feasts of yesteryear soon began to flourish again. It is not at all impossible that, given the growing number of people who believe that our religion is in great danger, certain efforts will be made by the Church authorities to restore Latin as the true language of the Church. However, for all the reasons I have mentioned, and although I believe that Latin should be restored when so much has already been lost, I do not believe that the time for Latin has yet come. I honestly think that this restoration will be extremely difficult to achieve. When the first Mass in English was celebrated in my home parish – it was, of course, still essentially that of St. Pius V – my father remarked that he felt as if he had not attended Mass; he was too shocked and felt out of place. But at that time, there was still a strong sense of obedience and respect for the Church, and most people eventually came to terms with the change. If carried out too abruptly, the restoration of Latin as the liturgical language could have the same effect, but it

would not be supported by a sense of obedience... and could end in anarchy – which would not displease some people. If, in one way or another, we are considering reforming or restoring the current rites, I think that, rather than a Mass entirely in Latin, the people would more readily accept other elements such as celebration facing East, Communion received kneeling, and even the traditional Mass itself. Once these other elements have been reinstated, then we can crown it all with the restoration of the sacred language. And, God willing, perhaps we will not have to wait too long for it.