

## The celebrant and the altar before and after Vatican II

*Emmanuel de Butler OSB*<sup>1</sup>

The protocol of 5 May 1988, which communities wishing to benefit from the provisions of *the Motu proprio* of 2 July 1988 undertook to observe, requires said communities to "commit themselves to a spirit of study and communication with the Apostolic See, avoiding any polemics regarding points taught by Vatican II or subsequent reforms that they find difficult to reconcile with Tradition."

Although there has been no shortage of criticism of the liturgical reform that followed Vatican II over the last thirty years, it seems to us that a systematic and in-depth study of the modified rites, or of the contested points, is still lacking today. The present study is intended as a small contribution to such a work, in the specific field of the history of the liturgy of the Mass.

First of all, two conventions:

1 - In this study, we will use the term "Roman Mass" to refer to the Romano-Frankish Mass that emerged from the Carolingian reform, which quickly spread throughout Europe before becoming established with a few minor variations depending on the region or religious order. As such, we will understand the term "Roman Mass" to mean the Dominican, Cistercian and Lyonnais rites of the Mass, which, all things considered, differ only slightly from the Mass of the Roman Curia of the same period.

2 - With regard to the altar, we will use the terms "right" and "left" in the sense they had until the 16th century, that is, in relation to the celebrant facing the altar. The right side will therefore be the side of the Epistle, and the left side that of the Gospel.

In editions of *the Missale Romanum* (up to and including 1962), it is stipulated that the priest celebrating a solemn Mass must remain at the altar during the first part of the Mass. It is at the altar that he must intone the *Gloria* or the *Credo* and sing the collection; he must remain at the altar during the Epistle and the Gospel, and he must bless the subdeacon and the deacon at the altar - he may only sit down to wait for the choir to finish singing. In contrast, at a pontifical Mass, the celebrating bishop performs these various actions from his seat.

In *the Ordo missæ* of 1965, and then in that of 1970, on the contrary, "At sung Masses and read Masses celebrated with the people, after kissing the altar or incensing it, the celebrant goes to the seat, unless, according to the particular arrangement of the church, it seems more convenient for him to remain at the altar until the prayer is included. When the incensing (of the entrance) is completed, the celebrant with the ministers goes to the seat and there, after the singing of the *Kyrie*, he begins, if it must be said, the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*"<sup>2</sup>.

The purpose of this study is not to discuss the appropriateness of this change, but to conduct as accurate and comprehensive a historical investigation as possible. Our question is this: is the rule

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<sup>1</sup> Lecture given at the 3rd CIEL Colloquium in Versailles, October 1997.

<sup>2</sup> *Ritus servandus in celebratione missæ*, 26 January 1965, nos. 23 and 31.

in force until 1962 universally attested in the history of the Roman Mass—or are there exceptions—and, secondly, does this rule have a specific meaning?

Access to the documents that enable us to answer our question is relatively easy. Liturgists in the 17th and 18th centuries did valuable work in documenting this area, which was a remarkable task given the limited means of investigation available to them. First, we should mention Dom Jean Mabillon, to whom we owe the first edition of *the Ordines Romani* of the Middle Ages in 1689—the second volume of his *Iter Italicum*—descriptions of papal ceremonies and their adaptation to episcopal celebrations. then Dom Edmond Martène, who published his *De Antiquis Monachorum ritibus* and the three volumes of his *De Antiquis Ecclesiae ritibus* between 1700 and 1738 — we will abbreviate these to *AMR* and *AER* respectively — and we will give the references according to the so-called Antwerp edition (1736-1738), the four volumes of which were reprinted from 1967 to 1969 by Georg Holms, Hildesheim; and, in 1717, in collaboration with Dom Ursin Durand, his *Voyage littéraire de deux bénédictins de la Congrégation de Saint-Maur* — we will abbreviate this to *VLB*; Father Pierre Le Brun, of the Oratory, whose *Explication littérale, historique et dogmatique des prières et des cérémonies de la messe (Literal, Historical and Dogmatic Explanation of the Prayers and Ceremonies of the Mass)* was published between 1716 and 1726, and who left posterity remarkable archives, preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the "Papiers Le Brun" (mss lat. 16796-16818); and finally, Jean-Baptiste Le Brun Des Marettes, who published his *Voyages liturgiques en France, ou recherches faites dans diverses villes du royaume (Liturgical Journeys in France, or Research Conducted in Various Cities of the Kingdom)* in 1718 under the pseudonym Sieur de Moléon. We will abbreviate *this work as VLF*. These various works are not without their limitations, due to the inadequacy of the information available at the time, of course, but also because these authors are more or less Jansenist or Gallican in their views. Le Brun Des Marettes was a former pupil of Port-Royal, and his work clearly reflects this, resembling more a plea for Jansenist theses than a genuine scientific study, although much of the information he provides is accurate. Pierre Le Brun was an appellant of the *Unigenitus* bull and only recanted on the eve of his death in 1729. But it must be acknowledged that he was able to demonstrate real objectivity, to such an extent that he rallies the most opposing votes in our time: volume I of his work was republished in 1941 by the CNPL, and in 1978 by Father Barbara with a preface by Archbishop Lefebvre. Jansenists and Gallicans, they had strong sympathies for the "early Church" — or their idea of it — and never failed to draw their readers' attention to anything that might seem to argue in favour of a return to the old ways.

A study of the various documents invites us to distinguish two aspects of the change introduced in 1965. Does the celebrant stand at the altar or at the seat?

1 - To intone the *Gloria* (the *Creed*) and sing the collection?

2 - During the readings and interspersed chants - Gradual, *Alleluia*?

The oldest somewhat detailed descriptive document of the solemn celebration of the Roman Mass that has come down to us is *the Ordo Romanus I*, which is generally dated to the 7th century. It should be remembered that in the ancient Roman basilicas, the pontifical seat, the *cathedra*, was located behind the altar (diagram A), at the back of the apse, facing the nave — a layout that can also be found on the other side of the Alps, in the cathedrals of Lyon and Vienne, for example. Here is the passage that interests us (it concerns the Pope's Mass): "When *Sicut erat* is said (at the

introit), the pontiff stands up, kisses the Gospel book and the altar, and goes to his seat, where he remains facing the East. The schola, having finished the antiphon (*of the introit*), intones the *Kyrie eleison*. (...) Then the pontiff begins the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, if it is the season. And he does not sit down until *Amen* has been responded to the first prayer<sup>3</sup> ."

The pontiff celebrating — in this case, the Pope — therefore stands at the seat:

1 - To intone the *Gloria*, (the *Credo*) and sing the collection.

2 - During the readings and the interspersed chants - Gradual, *Alleluia*.

*The Ordo Romanus II*, contemporary with the first, provides us with an interesting detail: "If the sovereign pontiff happens to be absent, here are the things that another bishop will do differently: (...) Secondly, he shall not sit in the seat behind the altar; thirdly, he shall not say the prayer behind the altar, but on the right side of the altar<sup>4</sup> ." Two slightly later *Ordines* specify that a seat has been prepared "on the right side of the altar"<sup>5</sup> .

So, there are two situations:

1. If the Pope is celebrating, he occupies the apse seat throughout the liturgy of the word—he intones the *Gloria* and the *Credo* there, sings the collection there, and remains there during the readings and intercalary chants.

2. But if he is replaced by a bishop, the latter occupies another seat, the *faldistorium*, placed immediately next to the altar, on the right side; he intones the *Gloria* and the *Credo*, sings the collection, and stands there during the readings and intercalary chants. This is the prototype of the *missa pontificalis ad faldistorium* of the *Cæremoniale episcoporum* of 1600.

Why does he occupy another seat? The reason is simple: "The apse seat, the *cathedra*, symbolised the authority and rights attached to the episcopal office. On the day of his ordination, the pope was solemnly enthroned in that of St. Peter's in Rome. This is why no other bishop or priest, occasionally replacing the sovereign pontiff, could sit there<sup>6</sup> . There is therefore a clear distinction between a pontiff with jurisdiction — who sits until the offertory far from the altar, in the apse *cathedra*, which is the proper place from which he presides over the first part of the Mass — and a pontiff without jurisdiction, who takes his place near the altar, from where he presides over the first part of the Mass, on a movable seat.

It is interesting to note that this same principle would still characterise papal liturgy several centuries later. We read in the Ordinary of Innocent III, concerning the solemn prayers of Good Friday: "The Pontiff, rising, says these solemn prayers from his seat. If someone other than the Pope says them, he must do so at the altar."

But here we must make a small digression, which is essential for a proper understanding of what follows. The first *Ordines*, written to spread the Roman liturgy beyond the Alps, had to make a

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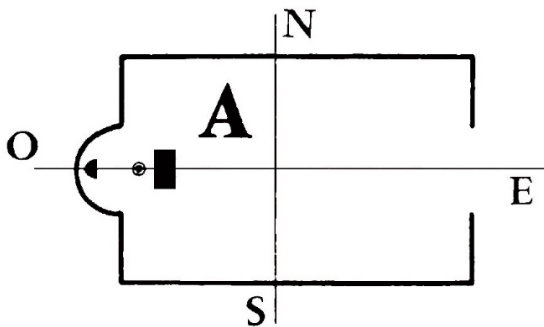
<sup>3</sup> M. ANDRIEU, *Les Ordines romani du haut Moyen-Age*, 6 volumes, Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1931 et seq. *OR I*, 51-53.

<sup>4</sup> *OR II*, 2, 3.

<sup>5</sup> *OR IV*, 18; *OR V*, 21.

<sup>6</sup> ANDRIEU, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 144, note 3.

small adjustment to the rites that came from Rome. In Rome, many basilicas were "westernised", and so, at the altar as at the *cathedra*, the Pope stood facing both the East and the congregation (diagram A).



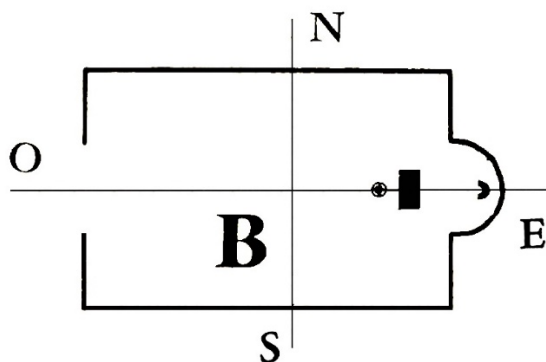
● : *cathedra episcopalis*.

■ : *Mensa*.

● : *Célébrant*.

A) Probably the original position, with the apse to the west and the façade and opening to the east. The celebrant at the mensa faces east, and therefore ipso facto faces the faithful.

In countries with Gallican liturgy, on the other hand, churches are oriented with the chevet facing the rising sun. In this way, the faithful, looking at the altar, have their faces turned towards the East. As for the pontiff, in order to face east at the altar, he had to stand not behind the altar, as in Rome, but in front of it (diagram B).



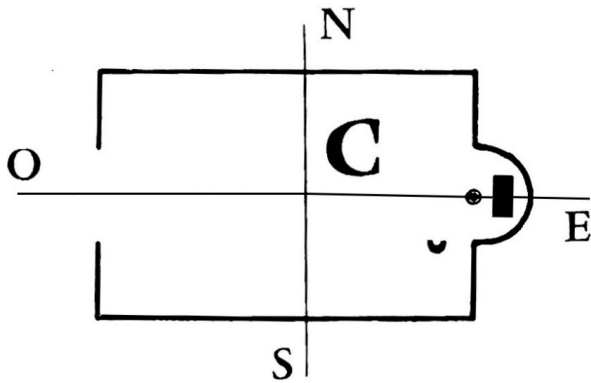
● : *cathedra episcopalis*.

■ : *Mensa*.

● : *Célébrant*.

B) Apse facing east, façade and opening facing west; this type became predominant from around 450 onwards. In order to face in the correct direction, the celebrant at the mensa turned towards the back of the apse and thus, ipso facto, had his back to the people (or, rather, faced east with the people).

However, Andrieu continues, "to get from the front of the altar to the seat at the back of the apse, the route was complicated: instead of simply turning around and taking a few steps, as in Roman basilicas, the pontiff now had to walk around the altar, through the ranks of the assisting ministers. The length of the route and the fear that it might cause disruption led those concerned to move the pontifical seat closer and place it to the right of the altar, as was done in Rome when the Pope did not celebrate in person<sup>7</sup> ." (diagram C).



◐ : *cathedra episcopalis*.

■ : *Mensa*.

● : *Célébrant*.

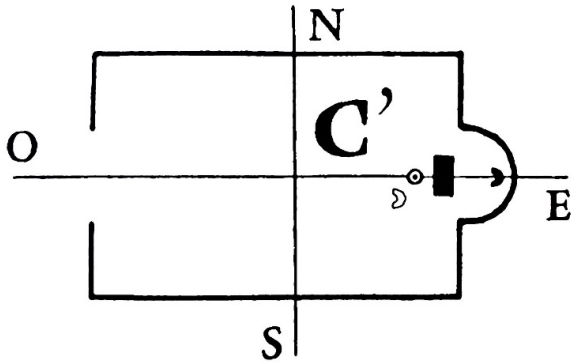
C) Medieval solution: apse (or chevet) to the east, façade and opening to the west. To avoid the complicated movements required by position B, the altar is placed at the back of the chevet, with the cathedra moved to the side. To avoid becoming disoriented in this type of architecture, the celebrant must necessarily celebrate towards the back of the apse.

*Ordo IV*, almost contemporary with *Ordo I* but written in Frankish territory, no longer mentions the apse seat: "The pontiff goes to the right side of the altar, to his seat, and the deacons with him, at his sides, standing and facing the East<sup>8</sup> ." And so, the distinction between the pontiff with jurisdiction—seated in the apse *cathedra*—and the pontiff without jurisdiction—seated near the altar, in *the faldistorium*—becomes blurred.

Let us correct here a small error by Professor Cyrille Vogel, who turns the seat on the right side of the altar (diagram C) to face north, whereas the texts clearly invite us to turn it to face west (see diagram C').

<sup>7</sup> ANDRIEU, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 144.

<sup>8</sup> *OR IV*, 18.



∅ : *faldistorium*.

■ : *mensa*.

● : *célébrant*.

C') Medieval solution, corrected sketch: the use of the apse "cathedra" generally fell into disuse. The celebrant uses another seat, which is mobile, the "faldistorium" (∅), but oriented like the ancient "cathedra".

In the 13th century, Durand de Mende's pontifical, the quasi-immediate ancestor of the Tridentine books, prescribed that the bishop celebrating pontifically in his diocese should go "to the seat prepared for him on the right side of the altar", adding however: "On major feast days, the pontiff sits behind the altar, doing what we have prescribed him to do when, on other solemnities, he sits on the right side of the altar<sup>9</sup>."

It is therefore well established that, as far back as the texts allow us to go, the bishop remains in the apse seat if he has jurisdiction, or in the mobile seat located in the immediate vicinity of the altar if he does not have jurisdiction, for the first part of the Mass.

But what about the ordinary priest? It must be acknowledged that we do not have such ancient documents. There are the *Ordines romani XV* and *XVII*, from the end of the 8th century, but given the nature of the *Ordines romani*, it is very difficult to determine:

- 1) Whether these two *Ordines* accurately describe a liturgy that was actually celebrated, or whether they are rather "propaganda" texts written by a theorist with a view to promoting the spread of the Roman rite beyond the Alps. Their lack of posterity would tend to favour the second hypothesis.
- 2) If the celebrant is indeed a simple priest. In the case of *Ordo XVII*, Dom Pierre Salmon clearly excludes this possibility<sup>10</sup>.

On the other hand, medieval treatises on the rites of the Mass focus more on explaining their symbolism—most often allegorical—than on describing them. This is true of the *Expositio missæ*

<sup>9</sup> M. ANDRIEU, *Le Pontifical Romain au Moyen-Age*, vol. III, *Le Pontifical de Guillaume Durand*, Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1940, III, XVIII, nos. 24 and 43.

<sup>10</sup> P. SALMON, *Etude sur les insignes du pontife dans le rit romain*, Rome: Officium Libri Catholici, 1955, 31.

by Amalarius of Metz (d. 850)<sup>11</sup> and that of Remi of Auxerre (d. 908)<sup>12</sup>. This is hardly surprising: no one bothered to describe in detail rites that were known to all and practised daily.

The *Liber de officiis ecclesiasticis* by Jean d'Avranches (circa 1060), although also belonging to the *Expositio missæ* genre, is a little more precise. We read that after kissing the altar and the Gospel book, "the priest goes to the right side of the altar (...) The deacon follows him and stands behind him until he signals him to sit down. (...) When the subdeacon begins the epistle, the priest sits down near the altar and signals to the deacon to sit in his place<sup>13</sup> ." Clearly, the celebrating priest stands:

1 - At the altar to intone the *Gloria* (the *Creed*) and sing the collection.

2 - At the seat during the readings and the interspersed chants (Gradual, *Alleluia*).

We can already note both the similarity between the prelate's *faldistorium* and the seat of the "simple priest" — both are placed near the altar, on the right side — and the difference between these two seats: the prelate's *faldistorium* faces the congregation, and the celebrant goes there at the beginning of Mass—it is truly, like the ancient apse *cathedra*, a seat of presidency—while the seat of the "simple priest" is located perpendicular to the altar, and the priest and his ministers only take their places there during the readings and interspersed songs; the singing of the collection and the intonation of the *Gloria*, which are strictly speaking the celebrant's first two "presidential acts", are performed at the altar. *The Ordo missæ* according to the practice of the Roman Church—the papal court—before 1227 also marks very clearly the difference between the bishop and the priest—this is the singing of the collection—: "Before saying *Dominus vobiscum*, if the celebrant is a priest, he kisses the altar; if he is a bishop, he says, standing before the seat, *Pax vobis*<sup>14</sup> ."

The Cluniac *Consuetudines* of Udalric (1080), for their part, say that the celebrant "sits from the Epistle until the Gospel is reached", but that in order to bless the deacon before the Gospel, the celebrant "stands on the right side of the altar, and the deacon on the left side"<sup>15</sup> : the celebrant therefore clearly returned to the altar just before the Gospel. The ordinary of Monte Cassino at the time of Abbot Oderisius (1099-1105) specifies that after the incensing of the altar, the celebrating priest stands on the right side of the altar, with the deacon and subdeacon behind him, until the *Gloria* and the collection inclusive. For the Epistle, the intercalary chants — and, it seems, the Gospel — he is at his seat<sup>16</sup> .

At this point in our study, a question arises. Indeed, a custom emerged towards the end of the 11th century whereby the celebrant would read aloud what was sung by the choir—the Introit,

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<sup>11</sup> *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia*, ed. HANSENS, Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1950, 297-321.

<sup>12</sup> PL 101, 1247 ff.

<sup>13</sup> PL 147, 33.

<sup>14</sup> "Order of the Mass according to the use of the Roman Church (Court) before 1227", in Stephen J.P. VAN DIJK, *The Ordinal of the Papal Court from Innocent III to Boniface VIII and related documents*, Fribourg: University Press, 1975, 501.

<sup>15</sup> PL 716, 149.

<sup>16</sup> E. MARTENE, *AMR*, Lib. II, Cap. IV, § I, n. VII.

*Kyrie, Gloria, Epistle, Gradual, Alleluia, etc.*—<sup>17</sup> . Was it not this custom that prompted the celebrant to remain at the altar during the first part of Mass, in order to read from the missal? The answer is simple: at the same time, in the pontifical rite, the pontiff also began to read aloud what was sung by the choir or the ministers, and yet he continued to go immediately to his seat at the beginning of Mass, and it was there that he did this private reading. Therefore, there is no decisive link between private reading by the celebrant and standing at the altar during this time. It is indeed the symbolic meaning that is primary: presiding at the seat signifies jurisdiction, presiding at the altar signifies absence of jurisdiction.

From the 12th century onwards, these same indications appear with increasing frequency. Examples include Cîteaux: *Consuetudines* of 1191<sup>18</sup> , the Dominicans<sup>19</sup> , the Benedictine congregation of Bursfeld<sup>20</sup> , the Carthusian monastery: statutes of Dom Riffier (1259) or *Antiqua Statuta*<sup>21</sup> ; similarly, *the Ordinarium Cartusiense* of 1582<sup>22</sup> , and that of 1932<sup>23</sup> , the Premonstratensians<sup>24</sup> , in Bayeux<sup>25</sup> , in Salisbury<sup>26</sup> ...

This list could be extended indefinitely, as there are so many documents that are almost unanimous on this point.

However, liturgical scholars of the 17th and 18th centuries point to several cases where a simple priest remained seated for the first part of Mass. Having read, pen in hand, the *Literary Journey of Two Benedictines, the Literal, Historical and Dogmatic Explanation, the Liturgical Journeys in France*, and the passages from *De Antiquis Monachorum ritibus* and *De Antiquis Ecclesiae ritibus* on the subject, I have identified four such cases. Let us examine them closely.

First Reims and Laon, which I group together for reasons we will see in a moment. Martène, describing the rites of Mass, writes: "The pontiff remains at the throne until the Offertory, and during that time he recites or sings everything that must be recited or sung." All celebrants, even those who are not bishops, enjoy the same privilege in the Church of Reims. They do not recite or sing anything at the altar before the Offertory, but at a lectern placed beside the altar. The same practice may have been in force in other churches attached to this metropolis: this appears to be the case at least for Laon, as can be seen from a manuscript Ordinary of this church, which prescribes

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<sup>17</sup> This question will be the subject of a future study.

<sup>18</sup> Ph. GUIGNARD, *Les monuments primitifs de la règle cistercienne*, Dijon, 1878, 142-143.

<sup>19</sup> "Directions for the celebration of high mass by the Dominican friars, from a thirteenth century manuscript", in *Tracts on the Mass*, edited by J. WICKHAM LEGG, Henry Bradshaw Society, vol. XXVII, London, 1904, 76.

<sup>20</sup> *Ordinarius divinatorum de observantia Bursfeldensi*, (1474), quoted in MARTENE, *AMR*, Lib. II, Cap. IV, § I, n. XIII.

<sup>21</sup> *Statuta et privilegia Ordinis Cartusiensis*, Basileae, apud J. Amorbach, 1510, part 1, chapter 4, cited in MARTENE, *AER*, Book I, Chapter IV, Article XII. (Ordo XXV), volume I, column 631 E.

<sup>22</sup> MARTENE, *AMR*, Lib. II, Cap. IV, § I, n. XXVI.

<sup>23</sup> *Ordinarium cartusiense*, Parkminster, 1932, 144, 147, 153.

<sup>24</sup> *Ordinaire de Prémontré*, 12th-13th century, Louvain, 1940.

<sup>25</sup> *Bajocensis ecclesiae Ordinarium*, Bayeux, Bibliothèque du Chapitre, ms. 121, 13th century in MARTENE, *AER*, Lib. I, Cap. IV, Art. XII. (Ordo XXIV).

<sup>26</sup> *Missale ad usum Sarum*, 1489, by M. WENSSLER, Basel, cited in MARTENE, *AER*, Lib. I, Cap. IV, Art. XII. (Ordo XXXV).

that "after the *Gloria*, the priest should come to the lectern to say the prayers<sup>27</sup> . A little further on, Martène quotes this Ordinary again: "From an ancient Ordinary of the Church of Laon: 'After the singing of the *Kyrie*, the priest comes to the lectern on the right side of the choir and begins the *Gloria in excelsis*. (...) When the *Gloria* is finished, the priest returns to the lectern to say the prayers<sup>28</sup> .' This particularity seems to be confirmed by Le Brun Des Marettes, who specifies that the aforementioned lectern is placed at the celebrant's seat: "In Reims Cathedral, during solemn Masses, the priest says the *Aufer a nobis* prayer, then goes up to the altar and kisses it. Afterwards, he goes to his seat near the altar and reads the beginning of the Mass up to the secret prayer from a small lectern (as he remains there until the Offertory); he also reads the post-communion from the same lectern, as in Laon<sup>29</sup> ."

Unfortunately for us, Martène does not cite any documents to support his claim. The three Ordinaires manuscripts currently held at the Municipal Library of Reims (mss. 328, 329 and 330, from the 13th-14th centuries, edited by Ulysse Chevallier<sup>30</sup> ), which are similar in text to the Ordinaire de Reims cited elsewhere by Martène (and now lost), give no details on this point. Le Brun Des Marettes also gives no source for Reims. The same is true of the "Papiers Le Brun", which contain no information for Reims on this subject. For Laon, we are a little more fortunate with Bellotte's voluminous ceremonial<sup>31</sup> . In fact, in writing his ceremonial, Bellotte uses as sources, which he follows with meticulous care, two manuscript Ordinaries of Laon, that of Lisiard (12th century) and that of Corlandon (13th century). Martène, for his part, probably had access to a slightly more developed version of Lisiard's *Ordo*<sup>32</sup> . Here is what Bellotte tells us: "The celebrant, having kissed the Gospel book and bowed deeply to the altar, withdraws to the lectern placed outside the altar, on the side of the epistle, where, standing facing the altar, he reads alone, in a low voice, the introit of the Mass from a missal already open and placed on the aforementioned lectern<sup>33</sup> . It is at this same lectern that the celebrant intones the *Gloria* and continues it in a low voice, and sings the prayers. But Bellotte adds: "After saying the prayers, if he wishes to sit down, having greeted the altar with a deep bow, he descends the steps on the epistle side to his seat. (...) He reads the epistle from a movable lectern placed to the right of the priest's seat<sup>34</sup> . This detail is important: there are two lecterns—something Le Brun Des Marettes had not noticed—the first, placed at the top of the altar steps, in front of the altar and to the right, where the celebrant stands to intone the *Gloria* or sing the collects, which means that he is indeed at the altar and not at his seat; and, at the bottom of the altar steps, a second one, placed next to the seat, on which he reads, seated, the epistle and the hymns that follow. The Church of Laon, therefore, and Bellotte tells us that it acts there *ad normam metropolitanae Remensis cuius filia dignoscitur*, "according to the norm of the metropolis of

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<sup>27</sup> AER, Lib. I, Cap. IV, Art. IV.

<sup>28</sup> AER, Lib. I, Cap. IV, Art. XII.

<sup>29</sup> VLF, pp. 427-428.

<sup>30</sup> U. CHEVALIER, *Bibliothèque liturgique*, vol. 7, Paris, Picard, 1900.

<sup>31</sup> *Ritus ecclesiae Laudunensis redivivi*, Paris, apud Carolum Saureux, 1662.

<sup>32</sup> See E. MARTIMORT, *La documentation liturgique de dom Edmond Martène*, Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1978, 128.

<sup>33</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 98, n. 11.

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 99-100, n. 15-16.

Reims, of which it is the daughter"<sup>35</sup> , observes the general practice of the presidency at the altar for the simple priest. Simply, the missal is not placed on the altar, but just in front of it. The celebrant then sits down for the readings.

The third case concerns Verdun Cathedral. Martène briefly reports: "When Mass is said, the celebrant, after making his confession, sits down and remains seated until the Offertory<sup>36</sup> ." Fortunately for us, Father Le Brun's correspondent in Verdun sent him a very precise description of the rites of Mass at Verdun Cathedral. We read: "The high priest—that is, the celebrating priest—has barely ascended to the altar when he kisses it, saying *Oramus te Domine*, but he never incenses it at this point, and then goes to the missal to begin the usual introit of the Mass, which the choir sings (...). No sooner has the high priest finished the collections at the altar *in cornu epistolae* than he bows from where he is and goes *per brevioram viam* to sit on the throne, where he reads the epistle and the gradual in a moderate voice while seated (but never covered, nor do the altarists), then the Gospel while standing<sup>37</sup> The text is clear: the priest presides over the first part of the Mass at the altar, on which the deacon has placed the missal upon his arrival<sup>38</sup> . The priest is at the altar to intone the *Gloria* and sing the collects. Only then, as in Reims and Laon, as in Jean d'Avranches<sup>39</sup> , as in Monte Cassino, does he sit down to read the readings and intercalary chants in private.

The fourth case is that of Langres Cathedral. Martène reports, again briefly: "After the introit, he (the celebrant) sits down with his ministers during the *Kyrie*; he stands to sing the *Gloria in excelsis*, and then sits down again<sup>40</sup> ."

In response to Father Le Brun's question no. 10: "If he (the celebrant) stands at a lectern or some other seat outside the altar until the Offertory," the Canon of Vidrange replies: "Excessive musical repetitions have introduced the custom of sitting down during the priest's inaction; before the length of the music, the priest, deacon and subdeacon were not allowed to sit down or lean on anything<sup>41</sup> The response is somewhat surprising in what may seem like a lack of relevance, but this in no way detracts from the value of the information. Father Le Brun's question was clear and precise. If the Church of Langres had had an original custom on this point, the canon of Vidrange would not have failed to point it out. We can therefore be certain that in Langres, as elsewhere, it is at the altar that the celebrant presides over the first part of the Mass. We should add that the two Ordinaries of Langres that have come down to us<sup>42</sup> , although very laconic, contain no information that would lead us to believe otherwise.

Finally, let us note a small change that appeared in certain places in the 15th century: whereas the oldest documents place the celebrant at the seat for the readings and intercalary chants, a new trend was to have him remain at the altar during the readings. The missal of Saint Pius V, in

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<sup>35</sup> Op. cit., p. 365.

<sup>36</sup> *VLB*, vol. II, p. 94.

<sup>37</sup> *Papiers Le Brun*. Bibl. Nat. ms. lat. 16807, ff. 213v-214r.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 212v.

<sup>39</sup> *Liber de officiis ecclesiasticis*, PL 147, 33.

<sup>40</sup> *VLB*, vol. I, p. 136.

<sup>41</sup> B. N. ms. lat. 16802, f. 163v.

<sup>42</sup> Chaumont, Municipal Library, ms. 46 (13th century) and Langres, Municipal Library, ms. 15 (1651).

1570, prescribed this new practice, which was adopted almost everywhere. However, the old custom remained prescribed by several liturgical books in use until Vatican II: in particular, the Dominican Ceremonial of 1869<sup>43</sup>, the Carthusian Ordinary of 1932<sup>44</sup>, and the Lyon Ceremonial of 1897<sup>45</sup>.

At the beginning of this study, we asked the following question: "Is the rule in force until 1962—presiding at the altar for the simple priest—universally attested in the history of the Roman Mass, or are there exceptions?"

At the end of our investigation, we can answer: As far as the texts available today allow us to judge, the Roman Mass, both in the practice of the Curia and in that of dioceses and religious orders, shows us the simple priest standing at the altar for the *Gloria*, the collection and the *Creed*, until 1962. *The Ordo missæ* of 1965<sup>46</sup> therefore departs from the practice in use—almost universally—until then by placing the ordinary priest in the seat for this purpose. But it should be noted that the rubric remains hesitant; it tolerates—but for reasons of convenience—the old usage: "unless, according to the particular disposition of the church, it seems more convenient for him to remain at the altar until the prayer inclusive."

For the readings, the celebrant goes to his seat near the altar. In the 15th century, however, the practice of remaining at the altar for the readings was established<sup>47</sup>, a practice that the *Roman Missal* spread and retained until 1962, although other rites continued to follow the old custom. By placing the celebrant on the bench for the readings, *the Ordo missæ* of 1965 (and then of 1970) does not depart from what we know of Roman practice (as a whole) throughout the centuries.

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<sup>43</sup> *Cæremoniale juxta ritum s. ordinis prædicatorum Revmi Patris Fr. Alexandri Vincentii Jandel ejusdem ordinis generalis magistri jussu editum*, Melchinæ, H. Dessain, MDCCCLXIX, 312.

<sup>44</sup> *Op. cit.* 153.

<sup>45</sup> *Cérémonial romain-lyonnais*, Lyon, E. Vitte, MDCCCXCVII, pp. 305-306.

<sup>46</sup> *Ritus servandus in celebratione missæ*, 26 January 1965, n. 23.

<sup>47</sup> No doubt in imitation of what the priest does at low Mass.

