

## Unity of Faith and Liturgical Diversity

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The subject to be addressed is in itself too vast, and to explore it in depth—even to a limited extent—would go far beyond the scope of a presentation of its characteristics. We shall therefore not attempt to cover all aspects of the subject, but shall confine our work to the most notable ones. We shall highlight only the main ones, which, by their very nature, would merit a much more extensive treatment. We therefore have no other ambition than to provide a general overview of such a broad subject.

An in-depth comparative study of the various rites of the Catholic liturgy should include all the aspects they encompass or which, in any way, are related to them; that is to say, not only the ceremonies of the Mass, but also the Divine Office, the celebration of the sacraments and even the spirituality itself. In fact, in the full sense of the term, a rite is not merely a liturgical ritual, but ‘a complete Catholic tradition, the unique way in which a particular community of the faithful perceives, expresses and lives its Catholic life within the one mystical body of Christ...’<sup>2</sup>. This encompasses all aspects of Catholic culture: theological schools with their Fathers and Doctors, canonical discipline, schools of spirituality, devotions, monastic traditions, art, architecture, hymns, music, etc...<sup>3</sup> However, for the reason stated above, we shall confine our study solely to the ceremonies of the Mass, and more specifically, to its Ordinary<sup>4</sup>.

On the other hand, a study of each of the rites through their historical development would be of great interest, but here we shall, in general, confine ourselves to the form ‘received’ form of each. Furthermore, we shall confine ourselves only to those rites that survived into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, without dwelling on those that have long since disappeared (such as the Sarum, Beneventan, Aquilan and Cistercian rites, etc.). It is important to establish a methodological criterion in this regard: people frequently turn to the oldest texts, in the belief that they will find in them what is most ‘traditional’, that is to say

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<sup>2</sup> Taft, S.J. ‘Catolicismo de rito oriental’, *Sal Terrae*, Santander, 1967, p. 6. In the same vein, Pius XII, in his encyclical ‘*Orientalis ecclesia*’, includes in the rite “everything pertaining to the sacred liturgy and hierarchical orders, as well as the other states of Christian life...”.

<sup>3</sup> This definition is not applied in a uniform manner; it holds true in its entirety only in the Eastern rites, whereas in the West the differences between the rites are limited to the Mass, the Divine Office and, only in certain cases, the other sacraments.

<sup>4</sup> The study of the rite should also include the calendar, which sets out the annual cycle with the repetition of rites from one year to the next, as well as, in many cases, a specific translation of the Scriptures.

This can only be achieved after painstaking archaeological research, the results of which are generally uncertain. Here, we shall endeavour to do the opposite, that is to say, to study and analyse the ‘traditum’, that which has been handed down: namely, what has come down to us and in the form in which it has come down to us, for tradition, by definition, is something that is received and not something that is unearthed. We are not, of course, doing this driven by an evolutionist prejudice, according to which the most recent is necessarily the best, but with the intention of discovering the elements that have endured over time and are practised in some form everywhere, and thus to identify the most universal and enduring liturgical elements, both across space and time. In this way, we shall be able to carry out an initial phenomenological analysis of the subject matter, without prejudice to any subsequent historical, systematic or theological study that might shed further light on the matter and lead us, perhaps, to further clarifications.

### **1. Liturgies, rites and customs**

When we speak of ‘liturgy’ in a broad sense, we are referring to the regulated set of prayers, hymns, gestures, rites, objects and, in general, symbols that the Church uses to publicly worship God and thus express its faith<sup>5</sup>. These prayers, hymns, gestures, etc., drawing on different traditions, take on their own distinct character in each case; and, being duly regulated, they constitute a rite. The liturgy of the Catholic Church is thus realised in various rites according to the different traditions handed down, which, in many cases, date back to the apostolic age.

We can distinguish three different attitudes towards the diversity of rites: firstly, that which identifies the Church with a specific rite, as is generally the case in the dissident Eastern Churches, each of which is thus confined to its own rite<sup>6</sup>; secondly, the attitude which regards the normal state of Christian liturgy as the variety and creativity of the particular rite according to the ingenuity and ‘inspiration’ of the celebrant or the community, an attitude generally found in the Reformed Churches; finally, the attitude which recognises the coexistence of various traditions

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<sup>5</sup> Here we understand ‘religion’ to mean the virtue associated with the virtue of justice as a potential part of it, as studied by Saint Thomas in S. Th. II-II, q. 81. ‘Religio is defined as that which renders to God the due service in those matters which pertain specifically to divine worship, such as sacrifices, offerings and other such things.’ II-II, q. 81.

<sup>6</sup> At most, there was the case of two rites under a single authority, as was the situation until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in the Ethiopian Church, which, although it possessed its own rite, had no hierarchy and was dependent on the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria. The latter would send a bishop (of the Coptic rite) who did not intervene in ritual matters, but only in disciplinary matters and conferred holy orders. Furthermore, the two rites are closely related.

They express the same faith and are backed by a venerable tradition, a position supported by the Catholic Church<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, the Catholic Church—that is to say, ‘universal’, is not a religion of a single rite; on the contrary, it accepts all legitimate liturgical traditions, thereby embracing the entire heritage of tradition as a whole<sup>8</sup>.

This diversity frequently involves profound differences in structure, form and ‘style’ between the rites; thus, on the one hand, we find the Armenian liturgy, which currently has only a single, unchanging form, with no distinction between feast-day, Sunday or weekday rites, save for a few hymns that alternate throughout the liturgical year; and, at the other end of the spectrum, the Mozarabic liturgy, where even the Eucharistic prayer itself is composed of parts that vary at every Mass. Yet, behind these formally very different conceptions and these varied means of expression, there lies a unanimous and enduring foundation of faith. This is evident in two ways: on the one hand, a common core predating the centuries-old divisions; and on the other, certain aspects which, even though incorporated later by the various rites in parallel and independent ways, have nevertheless become common to all.

This is why, in accordance with the classical axiom ‘*legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*’, the liturgy can be used as a ‘*locus theologicus*’ manifesting the faith of the Church as handed down through a specific tradition. Thus, each rite manifests the faith of a particular Church, which, of course, cannot differ from that of the universal Church. Comparative liturgy therefore enables us, on the one hand, to confirm this assertion<sup>9</sup>, and on the other hand to determine what these common and fundamental points are.

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<sup>7</sup> According to the historical evidence we are about to present, there were periods when membership of the Church was in fact identified with the Latin rites; this did not, however, mean that the Church was identified with a single rite, for the plurality of Latin rites only began to diminish in the 16th century, precisely at the time when dissident Eastern groups were initiating their reincorporation. Furthermore, a careful distinction must be made between liturgical plurality consisting of rites derived from different liturgical traditions and the plurality of rites arising from the ‘free creation’ of new liturgical forms or the ingenious adaptation of existing ones.

<sup>8</sup> On this subject, Cardinal Dubois, Archbishop of Paris at the beginning of the 20th century, stated: ‘It is a mistake—a serious and all too widespread mistake—to believe that the Catholic Church is the Church of a single rite or a single liturgical language; it has embraced the entire apostolic heritage, the entire tradition of the early centuries. Whilst the dissident Churches are confined to their own rites, the Catholic Church embraces them all, provided that they express her faith and that their faithful recognise the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff. Moreover, it protects them and defends them against unwarranted zeal: it preserves them as a precious part of its religious heritage’ (cf. Lesage, p. 12).

<sup>9</sup> It was this idea that led Abbé Eusèbe Renaudot to publish his famous *\*Liturgiarum Orientalium Collectio\** (1715–1716), in which he provides Latin translations of the liturgical forms of all the Eastern Churches to demonstrate the agreement of the Eastern Churches with the Roman Church in the belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist (cf. A. Villien, ‘Abbé Eusèbe Renaudot: An Essay on His Life and Liturgical Work, Paris, Lecoffe, 1904).

Before continuing, we must pause, if only for a moment, to consider the criterion used to distinguish between the different rites. It is not always necessary for all the elements of one rite to be distinct from those of another; rather, a few sufficiently significant elements are sufficient to differentiate them. Furthermore, a distinction must be made between a ‘rite’ and a mere ‘liturgical usage’: the latter involves differences of lesser importance, which are not sufficient to constitute it as an independent rite; thus, within the same rite, various usages may exist.

## **2. Classification of the various rites**

Among the Western rites<sup>10</sup> we find, first of all, the Roman Rite (with certain particular customs such as the ‘Papal Mass’<sup>11</sup> at St Peter’s Basilica and the ‘Patriarchal Mass’ in Lisbon, or those specific to certain religious orders). Next are those specific to certain dioceses, which have preserved them over the centuries, such as the Ambrosian<sup>12</sup>, the Mozarabic<sup>13</sup>, the Lyonese and the rite of the Church of

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<sup>10</sup> When Saint Pius V promulgated the ‘Missale Romanum’, he imposed it only in places where no missal was in use that could be shown to be more than two hundred years old; in such cases, one could choose either to retain it or to adopt the new one. Several dioceses and religious congregations that met this condition nevertheless preferred to adopt the new missal; in other cases, the traditional practice was retained for a few years, but was later abandoned and replaced by the Roman rite; in some instances this did not occur until the 17th century, as was the case with the Cistercians and the Premonstratensians. Thus, only seven Latin rites survived into the 20th century. Following the Second Vatican Council, some were abandoned (the Dominican and Carmelite rites), the use of others was restricted (the Rite of Braga), and the remainder were thoroughly reformed. As we are considering here only the various rites insofar as they manifest or illustrate a tradition, we shall not take into account those of new creation or those that have been thoroughly reformed, because they do not serve as a ‘locus theologicus’ in the sense that the others do.

<sup>11</sup> It was used until the 1960s for events of remarkable solemnity held in St Peter’s Basilica, such as canonisations, the proclamation of dogmas, etc.

<sup>12</sup> The origins of this rite, which is the most important local rite in the West, are unclear. Some believe that its origins lie in the East, whilst the most widely held view today is that it is a Roman-type liturgy. However, there have been those who have regarded it as a variation of the ancient Gallican liturgy. What is beyond doubt is that it was influenced by all these sources and, definitively, by the Roman liturgy during the Carolingian reform. The first printed editions appeared in 1475 and 1482; following the Council of Trent, a revised edition of the Missal was prepared, work on which began under St Charles Borromeo and was completed and published by Cardinal Frederick Borromeo (1595–1631). Cardinal Pozzobonelli (1774–1783) oversaw a new edition of the Missal, and in 1902 another was published under Cardinal Ferrari. Finally, on 15 April 1976, the reformed New Ambrosian Missal was presented.

<sup>13</sup> It remained in use on the Iberian Peninsula until its abolition in the 11th century; it was, however, preserved in a special chapel within Toledo Cathedral and in six parishes in the city. In 1936, the last nine priests celebrating the rite died during the religious persecution. Four years later, six further priests were appointed to celebrate it, and they had to learn it; thus it was able to be revived. In 1982, a commission was set up to revise the Hispano-Mozarabic liturgical books, and in July 1988 the revised Ordinary of the Mass was approved.

Braga<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, there are three missals of religious orders that were preserved until the liturgical reform: the Carthusian<sup>15</sup>, the Dominican<sup>16</sup> and the Carmelite<sup>17</sup>.

Among the Eastern rites, the most widespread is the Byzantine rite<sup>(18)</sup>, within which we find various forms: the Greek rite, in which Catholics have been present since the 19th<sup>th</sup> century; the Russian rite in its two forms, the Old Rite<sup>19</sup> and Synodal (the latter celebrated in several languages in mission countries – Chinese, Japanese, etc.), where only

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<sup>14</sup> The rite specific to the Diocese of Braga (Portugal), whose earliest precedents date back to Pope Vigilius's instructions to Bishop Profuturus in 538, after a period during which it was, in a sense, eclipsed following the decrees of the Council of Toledo, regained its former splendour in the 12th century. Following the promulgation of the Roman Missal of 1570, it remained in use by virtue of its antiquity; in 1880 there was an attempt to abolish it, but the majority of the clergy preferred to retain the rite handed down by tradition. Later, the synodal constitutions of 1918 imposed the rite on the entire archdiocese, the latest edition of the Missal having been approved by Pius XI in 1924. Following the post-conciliar liturgical reform, the possibility of reforming it was considered, with an archdiocesan commission having been set up in 1970 for this purpose (cf. *Notitiae* No. 73, pp. 145–150); but the Congregation for Divine Worship decided to retain it in its traditional form, although it authorised priests of the diocese to use the *Novus Ordo Missae* if they so preferred (*Notitiae* No. 72, pp. 114–115).

<sup>15</sup> The origins of the Carthusian Missal remain a mystery; the view generally accepted by liturgists is that the major monastic orders adopted the local liturgy of the church where the original foundation was established; in the case of the Carthusians, this rite was that of Lyon. However, in a work published in 1981, Dom Paul Tirot of Fontgombault Abbey puts forward an interesting hypothesis, which is consistent with other studies of the time: a specific *Ordo Missae* for Cluny Abbey is thought to have existed at the beginning of the second millennium. Cîteaux and subsequently the Carthusians are thought to have adopted it, simplifying it in accordance with the spirit specific to each order.

The earliest form of the Carthusian rite is reflected in the 12th-century Sacramentary of the Grande Chartreuse. The most notable missals are those printed in 1541 and 1679. In the 1970s, it was reformed in accordance with the *Novus Ordo Missae*.

<sup>16</sup> In 1256, the '*Ordinarium iuxta ritum ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum*' came into force, having been approved by Clement IV on 7 July 1267. It subsequently held great importance and was adopted by several monastic communities. In 1968, the Order's General Chapter decided to adopt the *Novus Ordo Missae* (*Notitiae* No. 69, pp. 17–18), which was ratified on 2 June 1969 (*Notitiae*, No. 48, p. 359).

<sup>17</sup> From its very beginnings (around 1210), the Order of the Hermits of Mount Carmel adopted the liturgy of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which incorporated several liturgical practices from central France, from where the majority of the clergy accompanying the Crusaders originated. In 1312, the Order's General Chapter made compulsory an Ordinary compiled by Master Sibert de Beka, which underwent further modifications over the centuries. By the mid-16th century, most of its numerous prose passages, specific to the rite, had been eliminated, with only five being retained; in 1584, a general revision of the missal and breviary took place, approved by the Holy See, which remained unchanged until the 20th century, although the rite was preserved only by the Discalced Carmelites, the Barefoot Carmelites having adopted in 1586, even before the definitive separation of the Order, the '*Missale Romanum*' promulgated a few years earlier by Saint Pius V. At present, the Calced Carmelites have also abandoned their own rite and adopted the '*Novus Ordo Missae*' (cf. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Prot. 863/72, 4 July 1972, '*Notitiae*', no. 78, p. 362).

<sup>18</sup> The Byzantine Rite is undoubtedly the most widespread in the East, to the extent that it is normally identified, in general terms, with the Eastern Church, just as the Latin Church is identified with the Roman Rite; one might attempt to draw an analogy between the other Eastern rites in their relationship to the Byzantine Rite and the Western rites in their relationship to the Roman Rite. For a concise and up-to-date history of the rite, see R. Taft, '*The Byzantine Rite: A Brief History*', Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1996.

<sup>19</sup> This was the rite used until 1654, when Patriarch Nikon reformed it to bring it into line with contemporary Greek practice. In recent centuries, the group known as the 'Old Believers'—which still exists as an independent church and has some two and a half million members—has continued to use it. Some of them returned to the Russian Orthodox Church in the 18th century whilst retaining their rite, and others united with Rome at the beginning of the 20th century, but after the October Revolution the latter group disappeared.

a very small group of Catholics <sup>20</sup>; the Romanian rite, where Catholics have been present since the 17<sup>th</sup> century; the Greek Melkite rite, which has used Arabic alongside Greek since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and some of whose adherents became Catholics in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; the Georgian Church, which has existed since the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries and returned to the Catholic community in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, remaining faithful to it intermittently; the Ruthenian Church <sup>21</sup>(converted to Catholicism in the 16<sup>th</sup> century).

Secondly, there is the Antiochian family, with its two branches: the Western Syriac branch, to which the Syriac liturgy proper belongs, used by the Jacobites (5<sup>th</sup> century) and the Syriac Catholics (from the 17<sup>th</sup> century), the Malankara (adopted by dissidents in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a group of whom returned to Catholic communion in 1930), and the Maronite (7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries). The other branch, whose historical connection with the former is certain, even if it is difficult to discern, is the Syro-Eastern branch, whose three rites—Nestorian (5<sup>th</sup> century), Chaldean (Catholic since the 16<sup>th</sup> century) and Malabar (Catholic in the 16<sup>th</sup> century)—do not differ greatly from one another <sup>22</sup>.

Deriving in its formation from the two preceding families (Byzantine and Antiochene), yet possessing its own distinct character, is the Armenian rite <sup>23</sup>, practised by the ‘Apostolic’ Armenians (Monophysites) and by the Catholics (united with Rome in the 16<sup>th</sup> century).

Finally, there are the two Alexandrian rites: the Coptic (Monophysites since the 5<sup>th</sup> century, some of whom became Catholics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and the Ethiopian (also Monophysites since the 5<sup>th</sup> century, who broke away from the Coptic hierarchy in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; the Catholic branch having joined the Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century).

### **3. The preservation of ritual diversity: a lesser evil or a source of richness?**

All these Eastern rites were, in the most distant antiquity, part of a single Church, but following the emergence of Nestorianism in 431, various dissident churches were formed, for diverse and even conflicting reasons. However, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, following some short-lived successes, a reverse process began, and little by little, groups from these churches reunited with

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<sup>20</sup> In the final years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a Russian Catholic Church began to take shape, comprising a group of converted intellectuals; it was officially established in 1907, but following the revolution it was suppressed (1923), with very few faithful now remaining in exile.

<sup>21</sup> These are Catholics who have incorporated several elements of Latinisation.

<sup>22</sup> The differences are mainly due to a few corrections concerning doctrinal matters, e.g. the Offertory and the words of consecration, which are missing from the Nestorian version of the Anaphora of Addai and Mari—the version usually used in the three rites.

<sup>23</sup> Brightnam considers it to belong to the Byzantine rite.

the Catholic Church<sup>24</sup> ; this union was the result of a long process that was only completed in the 20th<sup>e</sup> century, and so today there is no living rite of the Christian tradition that is not represented, however small its presence may be, within the Catholic Church<sup>25</sup> .

This diversity of rites causes some perplexity amongst those accustomed to regarding the Roman Rite as the proper rite of the Catholic Church; this is why they fear that this multiplicity might in some way affect the unity of the Church<sup>26</sup> . They therefore wonder whether this variety of rites constitutes a source of richness in itself, or whether it is merely the result of an act of tolerance on the part of the authorities, so as not to create yet another obstacle for the faithful who are attached to them, thereby preventing them from remaining within Catholic unity.

The clear answer can be found in numerous statements by the Supreme Pontiffs of recent centuries. One of the most eloquent is Pius IX: ‘Far from weakening the unity of the Church, the variety of these sacred and legitimate rites serves rather to enhance her august majesty and splendid splendour’<sup>27</sup> . More recently, Pius XII declared, even more categorically: “Both the Eastern and Latin rites must be held in equal esteem and with equal splendour, for they adorn the Church, our common Mother, with a genuine variety. Not only for this reason, but because this diversity of rites and institutions, in so far as it preserves intact and in its entirety that which represents for each of the denominations its most ancient and precious specificity, does not stand in the way of true and substantial unity”<sup>28</sup> .

This is why the Supreme Pontiffs have enjoined the Eastern Churches to preserve their rites as something precious, to the extent of strictly forbidding them to alter them or to persuade others to do so<sup>29</sup> . Moreover, they have frequently taken steps to restore rites when these had been distorted<sup>30</sup>; there are numerous examples, of which we shall cite a few: firstly, the Greek monastery of Grottaferrata, situated on the outskirts of Rome, had become increasingly Latinised over the course of the

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<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that these unions are, in reality, nothing other than the ‘recovery’ of Catholic rites which the Church had lost due to the separation of the faithful bound to the rite in question. The case of the Anglican communities that have recently entered into communion with the Holy See is very different; indeed, although at first glance their situation may appear similar to that of the Eastern Churches, it is, in truth, entirely distinct; for the right to preserve a rite does not derive from the community’s mere usage of it (that is to say, from a cause inherent to the community) but from its origin in an immemorial tradition of the Church, which is thus restored.

<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the fact that in some cases there has been a lack of communication for over 1,500 years bears witness to very ancient traditions common to the whole Church.

<sup>26</sup> This did not happen as a result of the plurality of rites within the Latin Church, for in the West there has never been a single instance of a rite giving rise to a schismatic church.

<sup>27</sup> Pius IX, Letter of 8 April 1848.

<sup>28</sup> Pius XII, ‘*Orientalis Ecclesiae*’ of 9 April 1944, (A.A.S. 36 (1944) 129–144).

<sup>29</sup> Pius XII, in his encyclical ‘*Orientales omnes ecclesias*’ of 23 December 1945 (A.A.S., 38 (1946) 33–63), summarises the main statements of his predecessors on this subject.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid*.

in recent centuries, even in the appearance of its buildings. Both the rite and the church were restored at the behest of Leo XIII, who had the iconostasis reinstalled in front of the altar <sup>31</sup> . Similarly, in 1903 a new edition of the Chaldean missal was published, in which certain traditional forms of the rite were restored, in particular the two anaphors that had been abandoned some time previously by Catholics; likewise, the Syrian missal of 1922 restored the consecration formulas specific to each anaphora, which had previously been standardised.

The Russian Catholic Church was established during the pontificate of Saint Pius X; the decree of 22 May 1908 from the Vatican Secretariat of State states: ‘His Holiness decrees that the laws of the Greek-Slavonic rite be observed faithfully and in their entirety, without any admixture of the Latin rite or any other rite’; and this principle was confirmed by the Pope himself during an audience attended by several members of this nascent Church: when they asked him whether they should modify certain elements of their rite in order to bring it closer to the Latin rite, as the Ruthenians had done, or whether they should preserve it as they had practised it prior to their conversion, the Holy Pontiff replied categorically that they should follow it ‘Nec plus, nec minus, nec aliter’. Furthermore, it was decided that converts from the Old Believers, who had rejected Patriarch Nikon’s liturgical reforms (17<sup>th</sup> century), should also retain the distinctive features of their rite<sup>32</sup> .

#### **4. A comparative description of various liturgical traditions**

We shall now review the most salient aspects of the various liturgical rites, in order to highlight the elements common to all or to several of them, and to compare their differences<sup>33</sup> . We shall, of course, have to limit our analysis to a few points, in particular those which are currently the subject of controversy. Furthermore, we assume that the Roman Rite is familiar to all; consequently, although it is constantly our point of reference, we shall keep quotations from it to a minimum.

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<sup>31</sup> See R. Lesage, *\*La sainte messe selon les rites Orientaux\**, Avignon, 1930, p. 11, and Janin, op. cit., p. 273. This same Pope ‘ordered the abolition of all innovations incompatible with the Byzantine rite’ which had crept in amongst the Italo-Greeks (see *ibid.*).

<sup>32</sup> See Gatti and Korolevskij, *\*I riti e le Chiese orientali\**, p. 892.

<sup>33</sup> It should not be forgotten that many of the current differences are not due to an East-West divide, but rather to a conception shared by both, in contrast to the modern vision that emerged after the Renaissance.



### ***a) The process of formation of the various rites***

Firstly, we may note a complete convergence in the way in which the various rites came into being historically, both in the West and in the East: all were the result of a long tradition of selection. The fact that certain Church Fathers are regarded as authors of liturgies (St John Chrysostom, St Basil, St Cyril), where there was a historical basis for such an attribution, does not imply a creation ‘from scratch’, but rather a new formulation of a deposit handed down through tradition. The true author of each rite was the Church herself. She worked through various anonymous hands, in an almost imperceptible development, over several generations who understood (and almost intuited) the plan virtually contained in what they received, which they were to transmit faithfully, yet at the same time in an enriched form. In general, ecclesiastical authority was confined merely to confirming or, where necessary, correcting what these time-honoured traditions had shaped over the years<sup>34</sup>.

Furthermore, there has always been a tendency to preserve all the rites thus established, and although many have disappeared, fallen into disuse or even been abolished, this has never been a matter of principle<sup>35</sup>; and indeed, the abrupt alteration of a rite or its replacement has not failed to have traumatic consequences for the Christian people<sup>36</sup>.

### ***b) The purpose of the liturgy***

A second coincidence of enormous importance concerns the principal purpose of liturgical action: an analysis of all the eucological, ritual, gestural, musical and ornamental elements, etc., of various rites shows that they are clearly ordered towards a principal purpose: the glory of God. This significance stems from the well-known fact that human actions are defined by their end; the unity of this end thus indicates the profound identity of different rites, beyond the varied forms in which they may be expressed.

### ***c) The layout of the church***

The distinction between the sacred and the profane—a feature common to all liturgical traditions—is intimately linked to this liturgical purpose. This is evident

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Klaus Gamber, *The Liturgical Reform in Question*, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> Liturgical unification in the West was not brought about by Roman authority, but rather by lower authorities driven, at best, by ill-advised zeal and, in other cases, by considerations that were more political than religious.

<sup>36</sup> According to Gamber, the abolition of the Gallican liturgy in the 8th century is one of the roots of the current liturgical desolation. See *\*The Liturgical Reform\**, pp. 16–17.

in many ways: firstly, in the temple, as a special place dedicated to worship, set apart from all secular activities, characterised by ‘decorum’, with hierarchically organised sections, amongst which the sanctuary stands out; moreover, the sanctuary is always separated in some way from the rest of the temple. In the East, this separation is clear-cut. Generally there is a partition with doors and curtains, which not only signifies this separation but also conceals part of the ceremonies from the eyes of the congregation<sup>37</sup>, the best-known form being the iconostasis used in the Byzantine rite, where Our Lord, the Mother of God and the various orders of saints—apostles, prophets, etc.—are depicted in a pre-established manner on different levels<sup>38</sup>. To pass from the sanctuary to the nave, three doors are used (a central double door and two smaller side doors), all of which are similarly decorated with icons. The central doors (known as ‘beautiful’, ‘royal’ or ‘holy doors’), are passed through only by the priest and deacon clad in liturgical vestments: not only are they closed at specific moments during the ceremony, thus concealing the entire sanctuary from the eyes of the faithful, but a curtain is also drawn behind them at other times. All this is intended to reflect, in some way, the ‘awesome’ actions performed during the liturgy<sup>39</sup>.

In the Eastern Syriac and Coptic rites, similar divisions also exist, with partitions closed off by doors or curtains. The traditional form of the Ethiopian church is quite distinctive. Generally circular in shape, it is divided into three concentric sections: the one furthest from the centre, where the choir and the congregation are seated; the second, separated by a colonnade and called the ‘Sancta’, into which only those going to receive communion may enter; and finally the third, or ‘Sancta Sanctorum’ (like the previous one, in a clear allusion to the Temple of Jerusalem), where the altar table is situated; this is enclosed and rectangular, and communicates with the rest of the church via a door, which is opened or closed as circumstances require; only the officiating ministers may enter it.

The Armenians have no equivalent of the iconostasis, but use a large curtain which conceals the entire sanctuary from the view of the faithful during the Offertory and, after Communion, when the sacred vessels are purified, and, during the Pontifical Mass, during the Great Entrance. A second, smaller curtain covers the altar canopy at the time of the breaking of the bread and the priest’s communion. During Lent, the large curtain remains closed throughout the ceremony, concealing all the rites

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<sup>37</sup> With the exception of the Maronites who, owing to Latin influence, do not retain any of these divisions and use Western-style altars.

<sup>38</sup> In the Byzantine conception, the iconostasis is not merely a partition, an obstacle preventing the faithful from seeing what is taking place in the sanctuary, but an object of contemplation for the faithful, as it represents, through its icons, the ‘Ecclesia caelestis’.

<sup>39</sup> Hence the striking contrast seen throughout Holy Week, when all the doors remain open, symbolising that through his death and resurrection, Christ has opened the gates of Heaven to us and given us the opportunity to contemplate the profound and hidden mysteries of God.

within the sanctuary: the deacon only leaves to read the Gospel, and the priest to deliver the sermon and administer communion to the faithful, entering from one side. Furthermore, the sanctuary is in itself already set apart from the rest of the church, as its floor is raised by more than a metre above the nave; it is accessed via two side staircases. Western Syrians use similar curtains.

In Western rites, although the separation is not quite so distinct, it does nevertheless exist. The altar is raised a few steps above the level of the presbytery, which is itself raised above the nave. In the past, the ‘cancelli’ (choir screens) formed a distinct separation between these two parts of the church, in the same way as in Eastern churches; nowadays, the communion rail remains. Until the middle of the Middle Ages, the altar was very often placed beneath a baldachin from which curtains hung, concealing the mysteries out of reverence (the very nature of which requires them to be veiled)<sup>40</sup>. Finally, this is the significance of the veil over the chalice<sup>41</sup>, which has been retained even in the new ordo missae<sup>42</sup>, although this provision is not generally observed.

In addition to the architectural arrangement we have just described, the very air inside the church is ‘sanctified’ in a certain sense through the use of incense. In Western rites, the use of incense is restricted to the Solemn Mass, but in the East it is present in every liturgical celebration, however simple it may be; moreover, the incensing is carried out whilst moving throughout the entire church, so that the whole building is filled with its fragrance. In this way, the faithful find themselves in an atmosphere, perceived through all their senses, that is distinct from the profane.

The orientation of the church is another sign of its sacred character. Ancient and unbroken tradition holds that, in all rites, liturgical prayer is directed towards the East, the place of Christ’s Ascension and return. In addition to this geographical orientation, there is an orientation within the church towards the cross situated on the altar; for it is inherent in the idea of sacrifice that everyone should look together in the same direction, since, as Bishop Gamber says, ‘from time immemorial, those offering a sacrifice have turned towards the one for whom the sacrifice was intended, and not towards the participants in the ceremony’<sup>43</sup>. We shall not dwell further on this

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. K. Gamber, *\*Tournés vers le Seigneur\**, pp. 8–10.

<sup>41</sup> In his *\*Rationale divinarum officiorum\**, Guillaume Durand speaks of three veils: one covers the sacrificial offerings, the second surrounds the altar, and the third is suspended in front of the choir; cf. K. Gamber, *\*Tournés vers le Seigneur\**, p. 26.

<sup>42</sup> *\*Institutio generalis\**, no. 80.

<sup>43</sup> See K. Gamber, *\*Turning Towards the Lord\**, p. 53.

subject, as it has been analysed in depth in recent publications and in a number of papers presented at symposia in previous years<sup>44</sup>.

But the centre of the sacred temple is, without a doubt, the altar or the 'holy table', as it is often called in the East. It is placed at the centre of the sanctuary; nothing unrelated to worship may be placed upon it, and no one may touch it, except the priest or deacon during services. In the Roman Rite, it is kissed with veneration before each greeting to the congregation; in the Byzantine Rite, it is kissed whenever one approaches or departs from it. In the Armenian Rite, the deacon receives the sign of peace at the altar by kissing it, after which it is passed on to the faithful, who in turn pass it to one another.

It is frequently treated as a person: in the rite of consecration, it is washed and anointed, after which the Eucharist is celebrated there, as if it were the three sacraments of initiation. In some rites, one even speaks to it; in this sense, the greeting of the altar at the end of the Mass in the Syrian rite is particularly significant, even to the point of personification: 'Abide in peace, holy altar of the Lord. I do not know whether I shall return to you again or not. May the Lord grant that I may see you in the assembly of the firstborn in heaven: in this covenant I place my trust. Abide in peace, holy and propitiatory altar. May the holy Body and the propitiatory Blood which I have received from you be for the forgiveness of my faults, the remission of my sins and my assurance before the dreadful judgement seat of Our Lord and God for ever. Rest in peace, holy altar, table of life, and intercede for me with Our Lord Jesus Christ, that I may never cease to think of you, now and for ever.' The Maronites and Malabars have similar salutations.

Sacredness is also manifested in the use of sacred vestments, which differ from ordinary clothing. When putting them on, it is customary in the Byzantine, Syrian and Coptic rites to recite verses from the Psalms appropriate to the symbolism of each vestment. The Roman Rite uses prayers specially composed for this purpose. Furthermore, the celebrant and ministers of the Armenian and Syrian rites wear special shoes for walking on the sacred floor, similar to those worn by the bishop in the Roman Pontifical rite. The Armenian celebrant, moreover, removes his shoes at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful and remains so until Communion.

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<sup>44</sup> Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, \*The Spirit of the Liturgy\*, Chapter Three: 'The Altar and the Direction of Prayer'. CIEL.

#### ***d) Posture of the faithful and celebrants***

The attitude required to participate in the liturgy is just as ‘sacred’. The hymn sung during the Great Entrance in the Byzantine and Armenian rites bears clear witness to this: ‘We, who mystically represent the cherubim... now cast aside all earthly cares...’. More specifically, the feeling that naturally wells up in the face of the sacredness of the mysteries is awe: thus, in the Byzantine ‘litany of supplication’, we pray ‘for this holy house, and for those who enter it with faith, piety and the fear of God’; similar terms are used in the invitation to communion and in the litany of thanksgiving. The Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, which, compared with other Eastern liturgies, is rather moderate in this regard, uses expressions related to ‘fobos’ (awe) some fourteen times. In the other Eastern rites, similar expressions abound; thus, when the deacon of the Syrian rite, for example, places incense in the censer, he refers to the ‘holy and awe-inspiring liturgy’; and the Maronite rite featured this eloquent diaconal exclamation (unfortunately fallen into disuse for some time) at the beginning of the anaphora: ‘Let us stand in reverence and pray. Let us stand in awe and trembling. Let us stand in purity and holiness. For behold, the offering is about to be made, the majesty revealed, the gates of heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descend and hover over these holy mysteries; standing in the place of awe and dread, joined with the Cherubim and Seraphim, made brothers and partners of the Watchers and Angels, we fulfil with them the ministry of fire and spirit’<sup>45</sup>. During the ‘supplices’ of the Ambrosian Canon, it is also said ‘ante conspectum *tremendae* maiestati tuae’.

This attitude is even more essential for the celebrant who must present himself before the altar to offer the sacrifice. At the beginning of the Armenian Pontifical Liturgy, for example, the bishop says: ‘We turn to you with open arms and with loud groans of supplication before your immense presence. We approach with fear and trembling in order to offer this rational sacrifice, first and foremost

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<sup>45</sup> At the beginning of the anaphora of the Syriac rite we also find similar expressions: ‘Let us stand firm; let us stand with reverence, with modesty, with purity, with holiness; let us therefore all stand, my brothers, in love and true faith. Let us contemplate in spirit, and with the fear of God, this holy and awe-inspiring offering which is set before us and which is offered up for us all, the living Host, in peace and tranquillity, to God the Father, through the hands of the venerable priest’. Similarly, in the Chaldean rite: “Let us all give thanks, ask and implore the Lord in purity and contrition. Stand upright and contemplate the awe-inspiring things taking place before your eyes: the priest is here, praying that, through his intercession, peace may abound within you. Lower your eyes and lift your spirits towards heaven in contemplation and attentiveness. Pray and entreat at this hour, and let no one dare to speak. Let those who pray do so in their hearts. Persevere in prayer with calm and reverence”.

‘Give way to your unfathomable power, You who share the throne, the glory and Creation with the unchanging majesty of your Father.’

Likewise, the Chaldean celebrant, after the Sanctus, recites this prayer with great emphasis, interrupting the anaphora: ‘Woe, woe is me! I am seized with dread, for I am a man of unclean lips, living amongst a people of unclean lips, yet my eyes have beheld the King and Lord of hosts. How dreadful is this place where, face to face, I have beheld the Lord today! This place is truly the House of God and the gate of Heaven.’

At present, this understanding of the liturgy as a theophany seems to be exclusive to the Eastern tradition; yet Saint Gregory the Great expressed it thus: ‘At the hour of sacrifice, heaven opens at the voice of the priest, for the choirs of angels are present at this mystery; what is above is united with what is below, and the visible and the invisible become one’<sup>46</sup>.

#### ***e) Liturgical languages***

Another aspect we cannot fail to mention when discussing the sacred nature of the liturgy is that of language; at first glance, there would seem to be no exclusive criterion on this matter: there are rites closely linked to a specific language (sometimes having their own alphabet<sup>47</sup>), whilst others use a translation of the liturgical text into different languages, with several languages able to coexist within the same liturgy, as is the case with the Copts<sup>48</sup>, the Melkites, etc.

This is an indisputable fact; however, it seems necessary to us to critically examine the usual explanation given for this phenomenon. Apparently, only two criteria are possible (which, moreover, are mutually exclusive), namely: either the language must be sacred and used exclusively for liturgical purposes, and therefore a ‘dead language’; or, conversely, the language must be one spoken and understood by the people. Once this criterion is accepted, liturgical traditions are necessarily classified into one group or the other as follows: on the one hand, the ancient languages: Latin<sup>49</sup>, the

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Saint Gregory the Great, Dialogue (IV, 60), Gamber, pp. 6–7.

<sup>47</sup> For Old Church Slavonic, two distinct alphabets were used: the Glagolitic alphabet, in the Latin rite celebrated in the Slavonic language, and the Cyrillic alphabet, in the Byzantine rite. The latter differs in some respects from the alphabet of modern Slavic languages. The Copts use the Greek alphabet with a few modifications for liturgical texts, and in the Georgian rite, the Khutsuri script, which since the 11<sup>th</sup> century has been used only in the liturgy.

<sup>48</sup> Although the language used in most texts is Coptic, many passages have remained in Greek, and from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the codices have a second column containing the Arabic translation.

<sup>49</sup> A language which the people had ceased to understand by the ninth century.

Greek<sup>50</sup> , Old Slavonic<sup>51</sup> , Georgian, Armenian<sup>52</sup> , Syriac, Coptic, Ge'ez<sup>53</sup> and Arabic<sup>54</sup> (the latter, although not a dead language, is not the vernacular but literary Arabic); and on the other hand, the modern languages: for the Byzantine rite, Romanian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Turkish, some languages of the Far East and, in general, more or less widespread use of the language of the place of immigration. For the Syrian rite: Turkish, Kurdish, Malayalam and other languages of the places of immigration.

However, there is no evidence whatsoever that the criterion for adopting different languages was that of comprehensibility; moreover, in several cases, the use of a particular language can clearly be explained by other reasons. In any case, the phenomenon of linguistic diversity does not have a single cause everywhere. It follows that drawing a distinction between liturgies using a liturgical language and those using a vernacular, attributing to the former a primacy of the sacred and to the latter that of pastoral care, appears to be a distortion of the facts.

In reality, on several occasions it was politico-religious motives that led to this differentiation; this was the case with the Copts who, upon embracing Monophysitism, sought to abandon the 'imperial' language and adopted the Coptic language<sup>55</sup> ; later, they were forced to adopt Arabic when it was imposed by the Islamic invaders in Egypt in 669. There are also rites in which the use of a language other than the one officially imposed in the country has been entirely impossible, as in Turkey or Kurdistan. In other cases, it was nationalist movements that led to the use of the regional language, as in the case of Ukraine<sup>56</sup> .

Finally, in the case of missions to foreign territories, the choice of the language understood by the faithful was an obvious one, which also sometimes occurred within the

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<sup>50</sup> As early as 650, liturgical Greek differed from the spoken language; from the 10th century onwards, it was no longer understood by the people.

<sup>51</sup> Although the roots of Old Church Slavonic coincide with those of modern Slavic languages, their declension and conjugation differ, and archaic terms are retained; pronunciation varies by region, but that used in Russia does not correspond exactly to that of modern Russian.

<sup>52</sup> Classical Armenian from the 4th century is still used exclusively by both dissidents and Catholics.

<sup>53</sup> Ge'ez, the literary language of Ethiopia, used between the 4th and 7th centuries, remained the liturgical language when Amharic began to be used as the vernacular.

<sup>54</sup> Used by the Melkites, Syriacs, Maronites and Copts.

<sup>55</sup> However, they never used a language that was entirely accessible to ordinary people. As Coptic is a language without a literary or theological tradition, many Greek terms and even entire texts have been preserved; consequently, a certain level of theological and literary education was necessary to understand the liturgical text.

<sup>56</sup> This is a phenomenon similar to what is currently happening in Masses celebrated in regional languages, such as in Catalan in Barcelona; a fact which is not, of course, due to pastoral reasons, since everyone understands Spanish.

the Roman Rite itself<sup>57</sup>. Yet this criterion is not unique to the entire Eastern tradition either. Indeed, the more missionary Church of the East (that is, the Chaldean Church), which succeeded in evangelising China and India during the first millennium, had retained the Syriac language for the liturgy within these entirely different cultures.

It therefore seems that the choice of the vernacular is due to multiple factors, and not to the sole and exclusive criterion of intelligibility; moreover, the liturgical language specific to each rite retains a privileged place, even if it is used very little<sup>58</sup>.

According to these historical examples, with the exception of mission territories—and sometimes those of immigration—it is the strong symbolic significance implied by the use of a particular language that explains its adoption<sup>59</sup>, rather than the need to understand everything (a rationalist conception entirely alien to people of antiquity).

In this sense, the fact that we find rites which are translated from one language to another for the reasons mentioned above, but which are not translated from an archaic language into the corresponding modern language, is not without significance; that is to say, the Russians have translated their liturgy from Old Church Slavonic into French, English or Japanese, depending on the circumstances, but not into Russian; nor have the Greeks done so with regard to Byzantine Greek and Modern Greek; one could cite numerous examples, emphasising that intelligibility is not the absolute principle.

Perhaps something similar to what happened regarding the orientation of the altar has occurred here: having discovered ancient basilicas in which the altar faced the entrance to the church, some people assumed that the intended purpose was indeed to celebrate ‘facing the people’, but there is no evidence that this was the intention. In fact, this arrangement occurred only ‘by chance’, as the church door faced

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<sup>57</sup> Boniface IX, in 1398, authorised a Dominican-rite missal in Greek; the Glagolitic missal (in Old Slavonic), in use since the 9th century, was definitively approved in 1631 by Urban VIII; there is also authorisation to celebrate Mass according to the Dominican rite in the Armenian language (14th century); in turn, the Capuchins, the Carmelites and the Theatines obtained permission to celebrate Mass, or part thereof, in Armenian and Georgian; in 1624, Urban VIII granted the Carmelites permission to celebrate the Roman Rite in Persian, although, apparently, a translation was never actually produced; furthermore, from its foundation in 1668, the Caughnawaga mission amongst the indigenous peoples of Canada had the privilege of celebrating even the solemn Mass in the language of the latter (Mohawk Iroquois). Finally, there were attempts to replace certain Eastern rites with the Roman Rite, whilst retaining the language of the rite being replaced; thus, Syriac was used for the Malabars of southern India and Ge’ez amongst the Ethiopians, but this experiment was short-lived and they soon reverted to their own rites.

<sup>58</sup> In some regions, the Syrians use Arabic or Turkish or other dialects, but on certain feast days (the eve of Holy Saturday, Christmas) they celebrate in the liturgical language.

<sup>59</sup> In this regard, it should be borne in mind that in the Byzantine rite it is customary to sing the Gospel during the Easter Vigil Mass in several languages.



According to L. Bouyer, the idea that the celebrant should face the congregation “is surely the last thing the ancients would have thought of”<sup>60</sup>. Furthermore, and coinciding also with the example of the orientation of the altar, it was only with Protestantism that the criterion—established as a principle—of using solely the vernacular, on the grounds of its comprehensibility, began to emerge; and this criterion has even come to influence certain churches in the East, as in the case of the Romanians<sup>61</sup>.

However, even when a people’s language is adopted, it is not the common spoken language that is used, but the literary language, if one exists<sup>62</sup>; failing that, a special language is coined, possessing the necessary theological precision and, as far as possible, endowed with literary quality (as was the case with Slavonic, and, typically, with Latin<sup>63</sup>). Finally, beyond the criteria employed in each tradition regarding the liturgical language, the common feature is the use of a language distinct from the vernacular and everyday language—that is to say, the ‘secular’ language—whether in its entirety or in terms of its vocabulary, style or literary quality.

#### *f) Liturgical music*

Another aspect, closely linked to the sacred nature of the liturgy and one that would require a lengthy discussion, is the musical aspect.

Unfortunately, in the West the tradition of liturgical chant has all but disappeared, and even though papal documents from the last hundred years provide us with a clear and illuminating doctrine regarding what sacred music ought to be, these teachings have not been sufficient to revive it in all its fullness.

The decline of the tradition of sacred music in the West has a long history. One of the starting points was undoubtedly the process by which the low Mass became the ‘normal’ form of celebration, whilst the sung Mass—and, moreover, the solemn Mass—became more ‘ornamental’ forms, suited to enhancing the solemnity of major festivities: thus music ceased to be an integral and necessary part of the liturgy. The loss of the distinctive character of the sacred and liturgical style, as well as the adoption of secular art from

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<sup>60</sup> \*Le rite et l’homme\*, p. 241, quoted by K. Gamber, \*Tournés vers le Seigneur\*, p. 47. See also L. Bouyer, \*Arquitectura y liturgia\*, Bilbao, 2000, pp. 58–64.

<sup>61</sup> See Raes O.C., p. 225.

<sup>62</sup> As in the case of Arabic or Armenian Grabar as opposed to hasharabar (the modern spoken language) or Ethiopian Ge’ez; similarly, in ancient pagan India, a distinction was made between Sanskrit (‘perfect’) and Prakrit (‘in its natural, unrefined state’).

<sup>63</sup> The Latin language began to be used in worship in the 4th century under Saint Damasus, that is to say, once it had acquired sufficient literary and theological sophistication.

At that time <sup>64</sup>, this constituted a second element. Throughout the last four centuries, ‘church’ music gradually lost the technical and stylistic characteristics that made it an art form entirely distinct from secular music, to the extent that the sole condition for its admission into sacred services seems to have been that it possess a ‘religious’ inspiration, often taken in its broadest sense.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, things went even further, with genuinely secular compositions<sup>65</sup> even being introduced into the church, which prompted a reaction from Pope Saint Pius X and led to the musical reform of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst helping to eliminate these abuses, this reform aimed to restore Gregorian melodies to their original form. However, it failed to establish a living tradition and, unwittingly, destroyed those elements of the traditional chant from earlier periods that had managed to survive <sup>66</sup>.

As regards the current state of sacred music in the West, there is no need to go into detail.

In the Eastern Churches, sacred music continues to hold the same importance it once enjoyed in the West<sup>67</sup>. First and foremost, music remains an integral part of the liturgy<sup>68</sup>, and as such can never be omitted<sup>69</sup>; consequently, there is no equivalent to the Latin ‘low Mass’<sup>70</sup>. Music plays

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<sup>64</sup> In this regard, the famous Medici edition of the *Graduale de Tempore* and the *Graduale de Sanctis* (1612–1615), which attempted to eliminate so-called ‘barbarisms’ by distorting traditional chant whilst seeking to adapt it to classical theoretical concepts, marked a turning point.

<sup>65</sup> Not only were compositions inspired by the style of opera theatre abundant, but one could also find the most unusual ‘adaptations’, such as the ‘Messa funebre’ celebrated on the first anniversary of Rossini’s death, whose music was drawn from the composer’s major operas and adapted to the texts of the *Ordo Missae*; or the Credo sung to the music of the famous ‘Là ci darem la mano-là ci darem di sì’ from Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*\* (see Valentino Donella, *\*Musica e Liturgia; Indagini e riflessioni musicologiche\**, Edizioni Carrara, p. 95).

<sup>66</sup> On the nuances of this reform, see Marcel Pérès and Jacques Cheyronnaud, *\*Les voix du Plain-Chant\**, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 2001. CIEL.

<sup>67</sup> See E. Butler, ‘The Liturgical Role of the Choir’, *Proceedings of the Fourth Colloquium on Historical, Theological and Canonical Studies of the Roman Catholic Rite*, CIEL, p. 208.

<sup>68</sup> In the Latin rite, it forms an integral part of the solemn liturgy, which must always be ‘in cantu’; yet, as we have said, the low Mass is the norm, and when this is celebrated

‘cum cantu’, the music is merely an incidental and contingent ornamental element. In the East, Mass is always sung, as there is no equivalent to the ‘Low Mass’; moreover, strictly speaking, the liturgy is normally ‘solemn’, because if a deacon is present, he always presides; in the Byzantine Rite, the priest celebrates alone only in the absence of a deacon, and in that case he performs the parts proper to the deacon. In the Ethiopian Rite, four ministers must usually accompany the celebrant, for in addition to the deacon, the subdeacon and the lector, there must always be an

‘assisting priest’ who has specific duties; and even this is the result of a relaxation of the canons, which require six ministers for a normal Mass, a number that can rise to thirteen on solemn occasions.

<sup>69</sup> In Byzantine churches, one sometimes finds the priest celebrating accompanied only by a layperson, who sings the parts corresponding to the ‘choir’; and in extreme cases, the priest celebrates alone, singing himself the parts normally assigned to the choir.

<sup>70</sup> Owing to Latin influence, a rite similar to the Latin low Mass has developed amongst Ukrainian, Armenian and Maronite Catholics; however, this adaptation has, in a sense, distorted the rite.

As part, therefore, of the 'liturgical language', it is the 'garment' or 'liturgical ornament' of the text, and for this reason strictly liturgical music is solely vocal<sup>71</sup>. As a consequence of music's place in liturgical worship, it is worth emphasising, in general terms, the high level of musical aptitude among the clergy, ministers and the faithful in the Eastern Churches<sup>72</sup>.

Furthermore, the musical genre retains its distinctiveness, in that it is entirely different from genres of secular music. Generally speaking, traditional Eastern liturgical music is octotonal, that is to say, based—as Gregorian chant was—on a system of eight 'tones' or 'modes' (four authentic and four plagal<sup>73</sup>), known in the Greek tradition as 'ichos', in the Slavonic as 'glas', in the Armenian as 'tzain' and in the Syriac as 'qinto'.

Finally, a distinction must be made between traditions of fixed chants, such as those of Syriac, Chaldean, Coptic or Ethiopian chant, which have remained unchanged for centuries; and evolving traditions, such as the Armenian and Byzantine traditions, which have incorporated elements of Western music without, however, losing their liturgical specificity.

#### ***g) The rites***

From the point of view of the structure of the ceremonies, it is important to note the traditional conception of the liturgical rite as a unified whole, not merely a succession of rites, chants, etc., as if it were a sort of 'suite' or 'potpourri'. It is also worth noting the importance of gestures and a certain harmonious and dignified 'staging' or 'direction'. The Byzantines, and especially the Russians, also make use of lighting effects, switching the church lights on and off in accordance with the various parts of the rite in order to highlight the most significant moments, such as the singing of the Gospel, the Great Entrance and Communion.

#### ***h) The 'apologies'***

Another element that recurs consistently across all liturgical traditions is the attitude of the priest who, whilst acknowledging himself unworthy to stand before the altar of God because of his sins, nevertheless dares to approach it, filled with

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<sup>71</sup> This was also the view held in the medieval West, but it has faded over time. Not all instruments are excluded, since in the Syriac, Maronite and Alexandrian traditions certain percussion instruments are permitted as accompaniment.

<sup>72</sup> Not only in terms of sophisticated vocal technique, but also in terms of a great capacity for improvisation based on pre-established patterns; a capacity that has been lost in the West, even in the professional secular musical sphere.

<sup>73</sup> In the most ancient traditions, these are different scales, that is to say, tonal systems; in the adaptations, they are merely distinct melodic figures.

trust in divine mercy, in order to celebrate the sacred mysteries and to offer the sacrifice in atonement for the sins of the people. This is why he humbles himself and asks God to make him worthy of this ministry; he frequently invokes the intercession of the Virgin Mary and all the saints, followed by the prayer of those present<sup>74</sup> .

This type of prayer is found above all at the culminating moments of the liturgy when the celebrant is about to present himself in a special way before the divinity, specifically at the following moments: at the beginning of Mass, through a penitential rite performed in some rites outside the sanctuary and in others simply at the foot of the altar; and then, closely linked to this, a rite of entry into the sanctuary, which is, in a sense, also present in all rites. Prayers of this nature are also found at the reading of the Gospel, at the Offertory, at Communion and, in many cases, at the final blessing from the altar.

In Western liturgies, all rites include, before proceeding to the altar, a 'Confiteor' with its response. There are many forms of the 'Confiteor', varying in length, from the most extensive form used in the Missale Romanum to the very brief one of the Carthusian rite<sup>75</sup>, but they all contain the same elements: a) acknowledgement of one's sinful condition before God, the Virgin, the Saints<sup>76</sup> and the 'brothers'; b) acknowledgement of the various categories of sins committed; c) a request for intercession with God.

After confession, the priest proceeds to the altar, usually accompanied by a prayer<sup>77</sup>; the most common is the one that appears, with a few variations, in the

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<sup>74</sup> In the West, this is represented in a particular way by the 'apologies', which came into use from the 8th century onwards and became extremely widespread in the 10th and 11th centuries, though they later almost disappeared, with only a few examples remaining. They are frequently disparaged by contemporary liturgists because they regard them as a late addition; however, prayers of this type are found in all liturgical traditions.

<sup>75</sup> The Armenian rite, probably due to the influence of the Crusaders, has a similar penitential rite, with its own Confiteor: 'I confess to God and to the Holy Mother of God, to all the Saints and before you, brothers and sisters, all the sins I have committed: for the sins I have committed in thought, word and deed, and for every sin that men commit: I have sinned, I have sinned; I pray that you will ask the almighty and merciful Lord to forgive me. ' Then absolution is granted to the congregation in the following words: 'God, You who love mankind, deliver us and forgive us our sins; grant us time for repentance and the practice of good works, and guide our lives towards eternal life'.

<sup>76</sup> In some rites, the intercession of the saints also appears on other occasions: in the Mozarabic rite, the Mass begins with this invocation: 'For the glory of your name, Christ, Son of the living God, and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint James and all your saints, help and have mercy on your unworthy servants, and be in our midst, our God (...)'. And in the Armenian rite, before the Confiteor, the priest says: 'Receive, O Lord, our supplications through the intercession of the Holy Mother of God, the Immaculate Mother of your only Son, and the supplications of all the saints. Hear us, O Lord, and have mercy on us: forgive us and blot out our sins, and make us worthy to glorify you with your Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and for ever and ever.'"

<sup>77</sup> Closely linked to this entrance to the altar is the antiphon 'Introibo ad altare Dei', which is followed, in the Roman Rite (except in Masses for the dead and during Passion Week) and the Mozarabic Rite, by the full Psalm 42; in the Lyon and Ambrosian rites only the antiphon is recited; in the others, nothing is recited.

The Roman, Dominican, Carmelite and Mozarabic missals, the latter containing the longest version: ‘Aufer a nobis quaesumus Domine cunctas iniquitates nostras et spiritum superbiae et elationis cui resistis: et reple nos spiritu timoris: et da nobis cor contritum et humiliatum, quod non spernis: ut ad Sancta Sanctorum puris mereamur mentibus introire’<sup>78</sup>.

Once at the altar, he kisses it in veneration and again asks for the intercession of the saints (especially those whose relics are on the altar) to receive forgiveness of sins.

In the Mozarabic rite, the cross on the altar is venerated with the words: “Hail, precious cross, which art consecrated in the body of Christ: and adorned with His members as with pearls: save this assembly, ever gathered together in thy praise. (...)” and, after reciting two verses in honour of the Holy Cross and asking to be protected from all dangers through its triumph, the priest says a prayer similar to the “aufer a nobis” of the Roman Rite<sup>79</sup>.

The prayers used in the Lyon and Ambrosian rites place further emphasis on the priest’s role as mediator; in the former, the celebrant recites this lengthy invocation: “O God, who desire not the death but the repentance of sinners, do not cast me, a wretched and frail sinner, away from Your mercy, nor look upon my sins and misdeeds, and my unclean and shameful thoughts, by which I am pitifully separated from Your will; but look upon your mercies, and upon the faith and devotion of those who, through me a sinner, seek your mercy. And since you have willed that I, unworthy as I am, should be a mediator between you and your people, make me such that I may worthily implore your mercy for myself and for your people. And join our voices to the voices of your angels, so that just as they praise you in the highest bliss, so may we too, through their intercession, be worthy to praise you on this pilgrimage”<sup>80</sup>. The priest’s prayer is of a similar nature

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<sup>78</sup> In the Lyon rite it is stated: ‘We pray, O Lord, that by visiting our consciences you may purify them, so that when our Lord Jesus Christ comes, he may find a dwelling prepared for him by us’.

<sup>79</sup> “By the power of the Holy Cross; and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles; and of all the Saints: we beseech You, O Lord, to absolve us from the bonds of our sins; and whatever we may deserve for them, turn away in Your mercy; and grant that we may come rejoicing to the blessings with which You have deigned to restore us”. Finally, at the conclusion of the Offertory, he recites this other prayer: ‘May I come before you in the humility of my spirit; I shall speak to you, for you have given me great hope in your strength. You, therefore, Son of David, who came to us in the flesh through the revealed mystery: by the key of your Cross, open the secrets of my heart; sending one of the Seraphim, who, with that burning coal taken from your altar, may purify my defiled lips, clear my mind of confusion, and provide the material for teaching; so that my tongue, which serves the good of my neighbours through charity, may not fall into error, but may resound endlessly with the proclamation of truth.

<sup>80</sup> O God, who desire not the death of the sinner but his conversion, do not withhold the aid of your goodness from my weakness and my misery. Look not upon my faults, nor my crimes, nor the filthy and shameful thoughts that keep me separated from You; but remember Your mercy and the ardent faith of those who, through me, a sinner, place their hope in Your goodness. And since you have deigned to make me, though I am unworthy, the mediator between you and your people, make me worthy to obtain your mercy for them and for myself, and join our voices to those of your Angels, so that, just as they

before leaving the sacristy in the Mozarabic rite: “God, who makest the unworthy worthy, the sinners righteous, and the unclean pure: purify my heart and my body from all filth and thoughts of sin; and make me a worthy and zealous minister at your holy altars; and grant that at this altar, to which I presume to approach though unworthy, I may offer sacrifices acceptable to you for my sins and offences: and for my countless daily transgressions; and for the sins of all the living; and of the faithful departed; and of those who have commended themselves to my prayers; and may my offering be acceptable to you through him who offered himself to you, God the Father, as a sacrifice for us: who is the Creator of all and the only High Priest without the stain of sin. ‘Jesus Christ...’, and in the Ambrosian rite, when ascending to the altar: ‘I beseech you, Most High God, Sabaoth, Holy Father, that I may intercede for my sins, and merit forgiveness of sins for those present, and offer up the peaceful sacrifices of each one’<sup>(81)</sup>.

In the Eastern rites, prayers of this kind are frequent throughout the liturgy. They may be extensive and elaborate, such as those of the Chaldeans, or very brief, such as the following, repeated several times by the celebrant in the Byzantine liturgy whilst making the sign of the cross and bowing deeply: “O God, have mercy on me, a sinner”.

Those recited at the beginning of the liturgy are clearly penitential in character, although they do not include a prayer corresponding exactly to the Confiteor, which is always present, as we have already noted, in Western liturgies<sup>82</sup>. The Byzantines and Syrians recite them before putting on their vestments, whilst the Armenians and Maronites, as in Western rites, recite them once they have put them on.

In the Byzantine rite, the preparatory ceremony unfolds as follows: after beginning with a series of prayers (the same as those recited at the start of the rite of the sacrament of penance), the priest says, before the icon of the Saviour (which is always present in the iconostasis to the right of the royal doors), a prayer that begins as follows: ‘Before thy pure image we prostrate ourselves, O Most Gracious One, beseeching the remission of our sins...’ and then another prayer of the same tenor before the icon of the Mother of God; once the preparatory prayers are finished, bowing before the Holy Doors, he says before entering the sanctuary: ‘Lord, stretch forth thy hand from on high

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in the bosom of your blessedness, may we, through their intercession, be worthy to praise you during our exile on earth.

<sup>81</sup> The Roman Rite expresses something similar in the optional collect ‘Pro seipso sacerdote’: ‘Almighty and merciful God, graciously hear my humble prayers: and make me, your servant—whom you have granted to serve the heavenly mysteries, not through any merits of my own, but through the boundless generosity of your mercy—a worthy minister at the sacred altars: so that what is uttered by my voice may be confirmed by your sanctification’.

<sup>82</sup> As we have already noted, the Armenian liturgy is the only one amongst the Eastern liturgies to include the ‘Confiteor’, which, although influenced by the West, takes on a distinctive form.

‘from your dwelling place and strengthen me for this service, so that I may stand before your awe-inspiring altar without incurring condemnation, to perform the bloodless sacrifice’. Later, during the ‘Proskomidia’, after the commemorations of the living and the departed, he offers a particle of bread for himself, saying: ‘Remember, too, O Lord, my unworthiness and forgive me every wilful or unwitting transgression.’ Likewise, during the two great incensations of the church (at the beginning of the Liturgy and before the Great Entrance), he recites the penitential psalm (Ps. 50) in a low voice.

And at the moment of the entrance with the Gospel, he utters a secret prayer of a similar nature<sup>83</sup>, but the climax occurs when, before the Great Entrance, the priest recites this long and beautiful ‘apology’, as a preparation for the sacrifice, in which the main themes of the genre are present<sup>84</sup>: ‘None of those bound by carnal desires and passions is worthy to come before you, to draw near to you, or to offer you a sacrifice, O King of glory, for to serve you is a great and awe-inspiring thing, even to the heavenly powers. Yet, through your ineffable and immeasurable goodness, (...) you have entrusted to us the ministry of the liturgical and bloodless sacrifice (...) It is you whom I implore, the only Good and Benevolent One; cast your gaze upon me, a sinner and unworthy servant, purify my soul and my heart of every evil thought, and grant me the strength, through the power of your Holy Spirit, to stand, clothed in the grace of the priesthood, before this holy table and to consecrate your holy and immaculate Body and your precious Blood. I come before you, bowing my head, and I beseech you: do not turn your Face away from me, and do not exclude me from the number of your servants, but make me worthy—though I am a sinner and an unworthy servant—to offer these gifts to you. For in truth it is You who offer and are offered, You who receive and are distributed, O Christ our God (...)’.

In the Liturgy of Saint Basil, such expressions extend even to the Anaphora itself, where there is mention of ‘offering this spiritual worship with a heart broken with contrition and a humbled spirit’; after which the priest says: ‘Remember also, Lord, in accordance with the fullness of your mercy, my unworthiness. Forgive me every fault, whether willful or unwitting. Do not, because of my sins, withhold the grace of your Holy Spirit from these Gifts offered here.’

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<sup>83</sup> ‘You who grant us, your humble and unworthy servants, to stand once more at this moment before the glory of your holy altar and to offer you the glorification and adoration due to you, accept also, Lord, from our sinful lips the thrice-holy hymn. Visit us in your goodness. Forgive our voluntary and involuntary faults, sanctify our souls and bodies, and grant that we may serve you holy every day of our lives, through the prayers of the holy Mother of God and of all the saints, who from the very beginning have known how to please you’.

<sup>84</sup> This prayer, like the one preceding it, appears in the Armenian rite in similar places.

The Armenian Rite, as we have noted, shares many prayers with the Byzantine Rite and includes other elements due to Latin influence, such as the Confiteor and Psalm 42; however, it possesses elements specific to the rite that are worth noting, such as this prayer recited before putting on the vestments: ‘O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou who art clothed in light as in an ornament (...) make me, though I am an unworthy servant, worthy, when I dare to perform the spiritual service of Thy glory, to be delivered from my impiety, which is the garment of filth, so that I may be adorned with Thy light; take away my weakness and remove my offences, so that I may be worthy of the light which You have prepared. Grant that I may enter, clothed in priestly glory, to perform the ministry of holy things in the company of those who have kept your commandments in innocence, so that I may be found ready for the wedding feast with the wise virgins, in order to glorify you, O Christ, who forgives the sins of all mankind’.

At the beginning of the pontifical liturgy of this same rite, the bishop, kneeling at the foot of the altar, recites a long prayer, of which we quote only a few fragments: “It is with sighs and tears from the depths of our souls that we ask and implore Your glorious title as Creator,... deliver us from all our impure deeds which are not in keeping with Your dwelling within us; may the light of Your Grace, which illuminates the eyes of our spirit, not be dimmed, since we are taught that it is through prayer and the incense of a pious life that we are united with You.

And as one Person of the Trinity is offered and another, the Father, accepts Him—in whom we rejoice through the reconciling Blood of His firstborn Son—receive our supplications and make us a dwelling place, so that we may honour You with every preparation to partake of the divine Lamb, and receive, without the pain of damnation, the manna of life, of the new salvation, which grants immortality. And grant that all our transgressions may be consumed by this fire, as were those of the prophet by the burning coal that touched his tongue, so that Your mercy may be proclaimed in all things, just as the loving kindness of the Father is manifested through the Son. It is He who brought the prodigal son to his father’s inheritance and led the prostitutes to the Kingdom of Heaven, to the bliss of the righteous. Truly, I too am one of them: receive me through Thy Grace, since I have been redeemed by the blood of Christ: so that, through this and through all that exists, His divinity may be revealed to all people, which is glorified together with that of the Father, rendering Him the same honour with one will and one power of praise.”



After the Great Entrance, just before the Anaphora, the priest says: “Lord God of hosts and Creator of all beings, You Who brought all things into being out of nothing, Who, moreover, out of love for humanity, have honoured our earthly nature by raising us to the status of ministers of such an immense and inexplicable mystery: You, O Lord, to Whom we offer this sacrifice, accept this offering from our hearts!” And in the Anaphora, before the Epiclesis: “We do indeed praise Thee and give Thee thanks continually, O Lord our God, Who, overlooking our unworthiness, hast made us ministers of this awe-inspiring and ineffable mystery, not because of any good works on our part—which we utterly lack and of which we are entirely devoid— but, always trusting in Your boundless mercy, we dare to approach the ministry of the Body and Blood of Your only Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...”

In the Syrian rite, one finds similar elements, but in a completely different order and style. The liturgy begins with two ‘offices’, celebrated one after the other, called, after the central theme around which they are structured, the ‘Office of Melchizedek’ (the offering of bread and wine) and the ‘Office of Aaron’ (the offering of incense). At the start of the first, the priest offers a prayer beseeching God to stand before Him with ‘knowledge’, ‘reverence’ and ‘spiritual integrity’ and to serve Him ‘with purity and holiness’; he then recites Psalm 50 and proceeds to the altar, where he prepares the bread and wine with clear sacrificial allusions; after leaving the altar once more, he concludes with a ‘Sedro’<sup>85</sup> of forgiveness. Towards the end of this, he exclaims: “O Christ, who accepted the sacrifice of the high priest Melchizedek, accept, O Lord, the prayer of your servant and forgive the sins of your flock”<sup>86</sup>.

He then removes his jubba (street cloak), saying: ‘Strip me, Lord, of the filthy garments with which Satan has clothed me because of the abomination of my sinful deeds, and clothe me in garments of election that are worthy of your service and of the praise of your glorious majesty (...)’ and he begins to put on his vestments<sup>87</sup>.

Finally, at the foot of the altar, before ascending, he says: “Lord, almighty God, who forgives the iniquities of men, who do not desire the death of the sinner, to you I lift up my heart and from you I seek forgiveness for all my

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<sup>85</sup> The Sedro is a special type of liturgical hymn specific to the Syriac rite.

<sup>86</sup> This prayer concludes with a supplication known as the ‘Houtmo’ (seal): Pure and spotless Lamb, who offered yourself to your Father as a sacrifice worthy of acceptance for the salvation and redemption of the whole world, make us worthy to offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice that is pleasing to you and resembles your sacrifice for us.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. the prayer recited by the bishop in the Latin rite as he removes his cope: ‘Exue me, Domine, veterem hominem cum moribus et actibus suis: et indue me novum hominem qui secundum Deum creatus est in justitia, et sanctitate veritatis’.

sins, though I am unworthy of it. I beseech you to preserve my mind from all the snares of the Enemy, my eyes from every impure gaze, my ears from hearing vain things, my hands from committing any defilement, and my loins so that they may be moved by you; so that I may be wholly yours and that through you the gift of your divine mysteries may be granted to me”.

Then, after prostrating himself, the celebrant returns to the altar for the Offertory, reciting this prayer: “Grant us, O Lord, now that our hearts have been cleansed and purified of every evil intention, that we may be found worthy to enter your sublime sanctuary; that we may stand before your altar with purity, innocence and holiness, and offer you the sacrifices of our minds and souls with sincere faith (...)”.

Finally, after the incensation, he concludes by saying: ‘Have mercy on us. Make us worthy, O Lord, to offer to you, as a sacrifice of pleasing fragrance, the sacrifices of praise from our priestly ministry. May our thoughts, our words and our deeds be spotless burnt offerings, pleasing to your divinity, and may we appear before you, O Christ, Lord God, all the days of our lives”.

At the end, before beginning the Anaphora, during the washing of the hands—unlike in other rites (where Psalm 25, verse 6 is recited: ‘Lavabo inter innocentes...’)—he recites the following ‘apology’: “Wash away, O Lord, the filthy impurity of my soul; purify me by your life-giving sprinkling, that I may be worthy to enter your Holy of Holies in purity and holiness; that I may touch, without defiling them, your divine and adorable mysteries; that I may, with a pure intention, offer you a living sacrifice that pleases your divinity and resembles your glorious sacrifice for us, our Lord and our God”.

In other rites, we find similar expressions. Thus, in the Maronite rite, the priest, after preparing the offerings, says: ‘Lord, I beseech you, make me worthy to approach your holy altar without blemish or defilement. For I am a sinful servant who has committed evil and abominations before you, and who am unworthy to approach your holy altar and your sacred mysteries; but I beseech you and implore your generosity and mercy, O Clement, O Merciful, O Philanthropist, cast upon me a glance of pity and kindness. Grant that I may be admitted into your presence at this moment and at all times. Pour out upon me the grace of your Holy Spirit and purify me from my sins’.

In the Coptic rite, the priest begins the liturgy with the ‘preparatory prayer’, spoken in a low voice whilst arranging the sacred objects on the altar:

‘Lord, You who know the hearts of all, You who are the Holy One, and who are in the midst of the Saints; You alone are without sin, You who have the power to forgive sins; You know, O Lord, my unworthiness, my inadequacy and my unfitness for Your holy service; and I dare not approach You or open my mouth before Your sacred glory; but, according to the abundance of Your tender mercies, forgive me, a sinner, and grant that I may find grace and mercy at this hour, and send me strength from on high so that I may begin and be made worthy to complete Your holy sacrifice according to Your will, in a manner pleasing to You and as a sweet fragrance of incense’. Immediately afterwards, he recites another prayer which repeats almost verbatim the ideas of the previous one, but which adds the offering of the sacrifice: ‘May our sacrifice be pleasing in Your sight; deign to receive it as an atonement for my sins and the ignorance of Your people, and may it be made holy through the gift of the Holy Spirit (...)’.

Once the Offertory is complete, he recites the lengthy prayer of absolution for the ministers: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Only-begotten Son, Word of the Lord the Father, Who hast loosed from us the bonds of our sins through Thy life-giving and liberating sufferings, and Who hast breathed upon the faces of Thy holy disciples and pure ministers so that they might receive the Holy Spirit, saying: ‘Whatever sins men’s sins may be that you forgive, they shall be forgiven them; and whatever sins you retain, they shall remain retained.’ Therefore, O Lord, You have now granted to Your ministers, who at all times exercise the office of priest in Your holy Church, the power to forgive sins on this earth and to bind and loose every bond of iniquity. Now once more we pray and implore Your goodness, O Lover of mankind, on behalf of these servants of Yours: my parents, my brothers and sisters, and myself, Your sinful and weak servant, and those who bow their heads before Your holy altar: pave the way of Thy Grace for us, break and remove all the bonds of our sins, even if we have sinned against Thee: knowingly or unwittingly, or through deception; whether by deeds, words or through despondency, for Thou knowest the frailty of human nature. O good Lover of mankind and Lord of all creation, grant us forgiveness for our sins, bless us and purify us, set us free and deliver us, release all Your people and fill us with the fear of Your name, enable us to do Your holy will, O our Good: for You are our God and our Saviour, and to You belong glory and praise, together with Your good Heavenly Father and the life-giving Holy Spirit, Who is co-equal with You both, now and ever and unto ages of ages.”

Finally, after listing the officiating ministers, the priest asks for the intercession of a long list of saints: ‘May Your servants, the ministers on this day—the abbot, the priest, the deacon, the clergy, all the faithful and I, Your humble servant—may we all be absolved by the word of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, by the word of the Church of God, One, Unique, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, by the word of the twelve Apostles, and of the contemplator of the Divinity, the Apostle Mark, Evangelist and Martyr; by the word of Saint Severus the Patriarch, our master Dioscorus, by the word of Saints Athanasius, equal to the Apostles, Saint Peter the Archbishop and the last Martyr, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Cyril, Saint Basil and Saint Gregory; from the mouths of the 318 Fathers of Nicaea; the 150 of Constantinople; the 200 of Ephesus; through the words of our Most Holy Father Anba (...) and through my own words, I, an unworthy sinner. For blessed and glorious is Thy Holy Name, O Thou who art Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen’.

The Ethiopians, in addition to the foregoing, have this formula, recited before putting on their vestments: ‘Lord, our God, who knowest the thoughts of men and who search the hearts and minds: since, unworthy as I am, Thou hast called me to Thy ministry in this holy place, do not spurn me nor turn Thy face away from me, but take away my sins and purify the defilements of my soul and body. And now, I pray that You will forgive my error and the offences of Your people, and that You will not let us succumb to temptation. Lord, do not cast me aside, and let me not be put to shame in my hope, but send me the grace of Your Holy Spirit, and grant that I may be worthy to enter Your sanctuary to offer You a pure sacrifice with a contrite heart for the remission of my error and my sin: and do not remember the offences of your people, whether wilful or unwitting; deign to grant rest to our parents and our brothers and sisters who have died; preserve and defend your people’.

But it is the Chaldean rite that contains the greatest number of these prayers (some twenty prayers throughout the liturgy), known in Syriac as ‘Koushapa’, which not only introduce the main sections but appear constantly, sometimes interrupting the flow of the ceremonies, to the extent that they cut short the anaphora itself on several occasions. We give here just two examples, but they are highly representative. The first, recited on Sundays and feast days at the end of the Liturgy of the Catechumens: “Lord God Almighty (bis), Yours is the Holy Catholic Church which, through the great passion of Your Christ, has acquired the sheep of Your flock. And it is also through the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is of the nature of Your glorious Divinity, that the ranks of the true priesthood are conferred. In Your mercy, You have deigned, Lord, to grant us—who are so vile and wretched by

, to be members set apart within the great body of Your Catholic Church to dispense spiritual blessings to believing souls; therefore, Lord, deign to fulfil Your grace towards us, and pour out Your gift abundantly through us, and may Your tenderness and Your divine mercy descend upon us and upon this people whom You have chosen”. Then, a little later, as he ascends to the altar, the priest recites: ‘...Glory to You, Lord, who, through Your grace, have called me, though I am wretched, and through Your goodness have brought me near to You, and have placed me within the great Body of the Holy Catholic Church as a distinguished member to offer You this living, holy and pleasing, which is the memorial of the passion, death, burial and resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whom You have placed all Your delight and through whom You have granted the forgiveness of the sins of all mankind”.

It should be noted that these acts of humiliation, acknowledgement of sins and unworthiness on the part of the priest, present in all rites, are not identical to those of the laity. The latter, of course, are also unworthy to attend the divine services, but it is specifically because of his priestly function as mediator that the celebrant acknowledges his unworthiness. This is why he does not acknowledge his sins together with the congregation, nor even in his capacity as its presider, but as one unworthy of the sublime ministry through which he offers the divine sacrifice for the sins of the people. These prayers, spoken in a low voice, are incomprehensible from a Protestant perspective, according to which it is the entire congregation that prays to God and asks forgiveness together—both from God and from one another—before doing so; they can only be understood when it is a priest who offers the sacrifice on behalf of the people<sup>88</sup>.

#### ***i) Entry into the sanctuary***

Generally in the East, with the exception of the Alexandrian liturgy, there is also a rite of entry into the sanctuary: in the Byzantine, Syriac and Maronite rites, this entry is made whilst reciting verse 8 of Psalm V: ‘I shall enter your house; I shall bow down in your holy temple, filled with awe of you’. In the other rites (Armenian and Chaldean), there is a suitable prayer. In the Armenian rite, the celebrant sings as he enters the sanctuary: ‘In this place of holiness and praise, this dwelling of angels and this place of atonement for mankind, in the presence of these divine, luminous and holy ones’

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<sup>88</sup> In the new missal, a Protestant-style penitential rite has been adopted, as stated in an article published in the journal *\*Notitiae\**, the official organ of the Congregation for Divine Worship: “Among the experts of the ‘Consilium’, some would have liked to abolish this rite, which is foreign to the Roman tradition, in which penitential prayer in fact accompanies the entire course of the celebration. Others, on the contrary, drawing on the experience of the Reformed Churches, proposed a prayer by the whole congregation at the beginning of the celebration, as an echo of Jesus’ words: ‘Go first and be reconciled with your brother’ (Mt 24). This latter view prevailed.” (*Notitiae* No. 118, May 1976, p. 18).

“From this sacred place, bowing in awe, we venerate, bless and glorify Your holy, marvellous and triumphant Resurrection; and to You, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, united with the heavenly host, we offer blessing and glory, now and ever, for ever and ever.” In the Chaldean rite, during the feasts of the Lord, it is said: ‘Before the awe-inspiring tribunal of Your greatness and the sublime throne of Your divinity, the venerable seat of Your majesty, and the glorious throne of Your Sovereignty, where the cherubim ceaselessly sing Your praises, and where the seraphim proclaim Your holiness without end, we prostrate ourselves in awe, and we worship You with trembling. [*The priest and the sanctuary choir kneel in adoration*] We give thanks to You and glorify You ceaselessly and at all times, O Lord of the universe, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.”

Moreover, the Syriacs, Maronites and Armenians recite the verse ‘Introibo ad altare Dei...’, to which the Armenians add—probably due to Latin influence—the entire psalm, which is, however, perfectly integrated into their liturgy; indeed, it takes on an original form as it is recited whilst ascending the steps leading to the sanctuary<sup>89</sup>.

In the Alexandrian rites, the entrance is simpler, without any specific prayers.

#### ***j) The reading of the Scriptures***

Finally, a few words on the readings from Holy Scripture. These undoubtedly have an instructive aspect, but in the liturgy they are not merely a simple, instructive and ‘edifying’ reading, as understood in Protestantism, but rather an epiphany of Christ<sup>90</sup>, which is witnessed with special reverence. To emphasise this reverence, the readings—especially the Gospel—are chanted<sup>91</sup>; the Gospel book is richly bound and is venerated by kissing it. In the Armenian rite, it is not only the ministers but also the faithful who have requested the service who approach it to venerate it at the end of the reading. In the Byzantine rite, it is placed on a lectern in the nave of the church during the ‘canon’ of Sunday and feast-day Matins, so that it may be venerated by the faithful. Generally, in the Eastern rites, it is often placed on the altar: in the Byzantine rite, laid horizontally in the centre; in the Armenian rite, standing vertically on the north side (in

<sup>89</sup> Similarly, the Last Gospel has taken on a wholly original form, distinct from that of Western rites, since it is sung at the end of Mass with great solemnity.

<sup>90</sup> This is acknowledged even by a liturgist inclined to prioritise the pastoral aspect, such as Pius Parsch: ‘Let us not regard the Gospel so much as a teaching, but rather as an epiphany (appearance) of Christ’ (*Das Jahr des Heils*, 10th ed., Klosterneuburg, 1932, p. 16. Quoted by K. Gamber, *La réforme...* p. 61.)

<sup>91</sup> Among the Syrians and Armenians, custom dictates that whilst one deacon chants the Gospel, another deacon incenses it at each punctuation pause.

Furthermore, during this rite, the priest or deacon always handles the book using a precious cloth, thus avoiding touching it directly; the Syrians place it on a lectern in the centre of the sanctuary. One detail which, in a way, illustrates the difference in approach compared with Protestants is the latter's custom of placing the Bible open for the faithful to venerate, with the text visible, whereas in traditional rites it is always venerated whilst closed<sup>92</sup>.

### ***k) The Offertory***

The manner of preparing the offerings varies greatly across the different rites; with the exception of the Roman Rite, this is always done at the beginning of the liturgy (thus reinforcing the unity of its two parts around the idea of sacrifice); the Syriac rites carry out the preparation without ornamentation; the Nestorians and Copts knead the bread and bake it before the liturgy in an outbuilding adjoining the church, whilst reciting psalms and appropriate prayers. In some rites, the Offertory follows this preparation; in others, it is brought forward to the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful.

When studying the prayers of the Offertory in the Roman Rite, what strikes one first of all is what liturgists call 'prolepse', that is to say, 'anticipation', which consists in treating the bread and wine, when they are offered, as if they were already the Body and Blood of Christ, and in offering them for the living and the dead. This seems inappropriate to many and is the subject of some of the main criticisms levelled at the Roman Ordo Missae by Protestants and, in general, by liturgists of a more or less rationalist bent. And yet, there are many examples of this phenomenon (which is neither unique to nor exclusive to the Missal of St Pius V<sup>93</sup>) in both the West<sup>94</sup> and the East.

The structure of the formula for the offering of the bread in the Missale Romanum is as follows:

'Súscipe Sancte Pater hanc immaculátam hóstiam, quam ego (...) óffero tibi, pro innumerábilibus peccátis (...) meis (...) sed et pro ómnibus fidélibus vivis atque defúntis: ut (...) proficiat ad salútem in vitam aetérnam.'

In the Mozarabic Rite, we find a similar formula (also used in the rite of the Church of Braga, with a few differences): 'May this offering be acceptable to your majesty (...) which we offer to you for our sins and transgressions, and for the stability of the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church and the upholders of the faith (...)'. Shortly afterwards, whilst covering the Chalice with the paten, the priest says this other prayer, which is also found (almost identically) in the Lyon Missal: "Hanc oblationem

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<sup>92</sup> In the Roman Rite, one kisses the open book, but this is because the reading has just been completed.

<sup>93</sup> It is exactly the same as that found a century earlier in the 'editio princeps' of the Roman Missal.

<sup>94</sup> For a study of the historical aspect, see Tirot, History of the Offertory Prayers in the Roman Liturgy from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

‘quaesumus Domine ut placatus admitte, et ómnium offeréntium, et eórum pro quibus tibi offértur, peccáta indúlge.’

The Offertory of the Ambrosian Rite, for its part, reads: ‘(...) may this offering be pleasing and acceptable to You, which I, unworthy as I am, offer to Your mercy on behalf of myself, a wretched sinner, and for my innumerable sins, that You may grant me forgiveness and remission of all my sins (...)’<sup>95</sup>.

Finally, the Dominican Rite, addressing the Most Holy Trinity, expresses itself thus: “Receive, O Holy Trinity, this offering which I present to You (...) and grant that it may ascend before You, pleasing to You; and that it may bring about eternal salvation for me and for all the faithful.”

At the moment of the offering of the Chalice, the Roman Missal refers to it as the ‘Calix salutaris’ and it is offered whilst imploring Divine mercy, so that it may rise as a sweet-smelling fragrance for the salvation of the whole world—a formula also used by the rite of the Church of Braga. Among the other rites, only the Mozarabic rite includes a formula for the offering of the chalice, which, moreover, is merely a variant of that of the Roman rite; whilst the Ambrosian rite repeats the formula already mentioned for the offering of the bread, with the corresponding changes. The other rites have no special formula to accompany the offering of the chalice<sup>96</sup>.

This is followed by the prayer taken from Daniel 3:39–40: ‘In spíritu humilitátis...’, which appears, with minor variations, in all the Latin rites<sup>97</sup>.

The last of the offertory prayers, ‘Suscipe Sancta Trinitas...’, is the oldest<sup>98</sup>, and although at first glance it appears to be merely a repetition of the ‘Suscipe Sancte Pater’, it is in fact its complement. Its most complete form is as follows: the priest asks the Triune God to receive the oblation offered in memory of the

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<sup>95</sup> The Offertory formulas in this rite, for both bread and wine, are not anticipatory, but they ask for the transformation of the bread and wine offered into the Body and Blood of Christ respectively; nevertheless, the bread is called ‘sanctus’, an adjective which can only be accepted in the context of this transformation: ‘Suscipe, clementissime Pater, hunc Panem sanctum, ut fiat Unigeniti tui Corpus’ (furthermore, in the relevant rubric, it is referred to as the Host). Towards the end of the Offertory, the priest recites an epiclesis of a strongly anticipatory nature: ‘May the abundant blessing of God the Almighty Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, descend from heaven upon this our offering: and may this offering be acceptable to You, Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Eternal God, most merciful Creator of all things.’

<sup>96</sup> In the Carthusian rite, the priest raises the chalice, saying: ‘in spíritu humilitátis...’ This was also the only private prayer of the Offertory in the monastic rites of Cluny and Cîteaux. Cf. Tirot, ‘Un ordo monastique...’, pp. 59 and 67.

<sup>97</sup> According to Tirot (‘Un ordo monastique...’), in the expression ‘sic fiat sacrificium nostrum in conspéctu tuo hódie, ut pláceat tibi’ found there, the terms ‘sacrificium nostrum’ do not refer to ‘our sacrifice’, as our subjective piety might tend to believe, but to the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross which the priest is about to offer.

<sup>98</sup> It already appears in the older missals; indeed, it is found in the Lyon and Ambrosian rites, and it also exists in the Carmelite rite, in a slightly modified form, as the sole formula for the Offertory. The Dominican Offertory, although it begins with the same words (cf. above), is, in terms of its structure and content, more akin to the ‘Suscipe Sancte Pater’.



the mysteries of Christ <sup>99</sup> and in honour of the Saints <sup>100</sup> : first and foremost, the Virgin Mary, Saint John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul <sup>101</sup> , all the Saints who have been pleasing to God since the beginning of the world <sup>102</sup> , those whose feast day is celebrated on this day<sup>103</sup> , those whose names are inscribed in the ‘diptychs’ and those whose relics rest on the altar where the Mass is being celebrated; and for our salvation, and so that all those whom we honour may intercede for us<sup>104</sup> .

Furthermore, this ‘anticipation’ is also found in many of the ‘orations secretae’ of the Roman Missal and in the first part of the Roman Canon itself, that is to say, before the consecration<sup>105</sup> .

Finally, the priest says, turning towards the faithful, the ‘Orate fratres’, which, with a few differences, is used in the Roman, Lyon, Dominican, Carmelite and Carthusian rites. In the Lyonese rite, the response is: “May the Lord God Almighty accept this sacrifice from your lips and from your hands, for the benefit of his holy Church, for the salvation of all the Christian people, and for the relief of all the faithful departed”. In the Carmelite rite: “May the Lord remember all your sacrifice; and may your burnt-offering be rich; may He grant you according to your heart’s desire and confirm all your plans”. In the Dominican rite, the ‘Orate fratres’ remains unanswered. And in the Carthusian rite, the priest merely says: “Orate Fratres pro me peccatore ad Dominum Deum nostrum”, without receiving a reply either<sup>106</sup> .

In the Eastern Eastern we also find, also, of frequent ‘anticipations’ of the Real Presence, which, in keeping with the style characteristic of these traditions

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<sup>99</sup> The Lyon Rite adds mention of the Incarnation and the Nativity to those of the Passion, the Resurrection and the Ascension found in the Roman and Ambrosian rites.

<sup>100</sup> The Lyon Rite adds ‘in honour of the Holy Spirit’ at the beginning.

<sup>101</sup> These three appear only in the Roman rite.

<sup>102</sup> In the Lyon and Ambrosian rites.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> The Ambrosian rite also contains two prayers beginning in the same way: one for the priest and the other listing in detail the intentions for which the sacrifice is offered: ‘And receive, Holy Trinity, this offering which we present to you for the governance, protection and unity of the Catholic faith; and also for the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and of all your saints together; and for the salvation and safety of your servants and handmaids, and of all those for whom we have promised to implore your mercy, and from whom we have received alms, and of all faithful Christians, both the living and the departed, that, through your mercy, they may be deemed worthy to receive the remission of all sins and the rewards of eternal bliss, whilst faithfully persevering in your praise, to the glory and honour of your name, O most merciful God, Creator of all things.’

<sup>105</sup> The secret prayers of the Missal of Saint Pius V use the term ‘hostia’ thirty-one times, ‘sacrificium’ thirty-nine times, and ‘immolatio’ four times. Cf. Tirot, ‘History of the Offertory Prayers...’, p. 76.

<sup>106</sup> In the Byzantine rite, before the Great Entrance, the priest bows towards the faithful, which implies a request of this kind. In the Chaldean rite, he says: ‘My brothers, pray for me so that this offering may be accomplished through me’. To which the choir replies: ‘May God, the Lord of the Universe, through His grace and mercy, strengthen you to fulfil His will, and may He accept your offering and take pleasure in your sacrifice, for us, for you and for the four corners of the world, for ever.’

Liturgical expressions are not limited to words, but are also frequently conveyed through gestures and rites.

In the Byzantine rite, the preparation of the gifts and the Offertory are placed from the outset within a distinctly sacrificial context: before beginning the ‘proskomidia’, the priest recites the troparion for Good Friday <sup>107</sup>: “You have redeemed us from the curse of the Law through Your most precious Blood. Nailed to the Cross and pierced by the spear, you bring forth a fountain of immortality for mankind. O our Saviour, glory to you.” And immediately this sacrificial meaning is powerfully reinforced when, during the complex preparation of the bread (evocatively called ‘the lamb’), the words of the prophet foretelling the sacrifice of the Suffering Servant are used: ‘Like a sheep, he was led to the slaughter. And like a lamb without blemish, silent before the one who shears him, he did not open his mouth. In humility, his judgement was exalted. Who shall recount his generation? For his life was taken from the earth’. (Isaiah 53:7–8). This same text is also used during the Offertory by the Armenians, Syriacs and Maronites, but unlike them, the Byzantine priest, whilst reciting it, cuts the lamb with the

‘spear’ <sup>108</sup>, then adding: ‘He is sacrificed, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, for the life and salvation of the world.’ (cf. Jn 1:29). He then pierces the left side of the ‘lamb’ with the spear, saying this formula: ‘One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water flowed out. The one who saw this bears witness to it, and his testimony is true’ (Jn 19:34), which in this context clearly takes on a character of foreshadowing. These same terms are also used—albeit without the ceremony that dramatises them—in the Syriac, Chaldean, Malabar and Armenian rites, and in the West, in the Lyon, Carthusian, Mozarabic, Ambrosian and Braga rites<sup>109</sup>

The Syriac Malabar Catholics (as well as the Chaldeans and Nestorians<sup>110</sup>) prepare the chalice, using an even stronger expression which emphasises this

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<sup>107</sup> This is a short hymn composed on the basis of a combination of biblical texts concerning redemption (Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 1:19; Jn 19:34).

<sup>108</sup> This is a liturgical implement specific to the Byzantine rite; it is a small knife shaped like a spear (in remembrance of the Passion), used to cut the bread into the square shape required for liturgical use, removing the excess parts. It is also used to remove pieces from the other small loaves offered in honour of the saints and for the intentions of the faithful.

<sup>109</sup> In the Roman Rite, the preparation of the chalice has no anticipatory significance; however, by adapting an ancient prayer from the feast of Christmas, the symbolism of the union of water and wine is employed to highlight the exaltation of human nature wrought by Christ, of whom it is asked that he may become ‘partners’ in his divinity. It is not clear why, in the *Novus Ordo Missae*, this first part of the prayer—of great literary, theological and spiritual beauty—was omitted; Paul VI himself expressed surprise at what he called a ‘mutilation’ (cf. Bugnini, *La riforma Liturgica*, p. 376). Neither the Carmelite nor the Dominican rite has a special prayer for the preparation of the chalice; in the latter, only ‘In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti’ is said at the moment of the blessing of the water.

<sup>110</sup> See Brightman, p. 251.

prolepsis: ‘the precious blood is poured into the Chalice of Our Lord Jesus Christ ...’ and then they pour water whilst also saying: ‘One of the soldiers ...’. When the bread is placed on the paten, the following is said: ‘May this paten be marked with the holy body of Our Lord Jesus Christ ...’<sup>111</sup>.

In the Coptic rite, the priest, holding the host in his hands, recites the Offertory Prayer, during which, after an apology in which he acknowledges himself unworthy of this high ministry, he implores: ‘Grant us, O Lord, that our sacrifice may be accepted before You for my sins and for the ignorance of Your people’. He then processes round the altar with the offerings, giving glory to God, asking for peace and edification for the Church and for those who have made the offerings, whilst saying: ‘Remember, O Lord, those who have brought these gifts before You, and those for whom they were brought. Grant them all the heavenly reward.’

In the rite of the Great Entrance, which in the Byzantine rite is marked by particular solemnity, the gifts are also treated as if Christ himself were present (in many places the congregation prostrates themselves before the procession); the priest blesses the congregation with them, and then the choir sings, concluding the Cherubic Hymn: ‘to receive the King of heaven and earth, invisibly escorted by the legions of angels’.

In the Armenian rite<sup>112</sup>, although the ceremony is not quite so elaborate (as the procession takes place inside the sanctuary, passing behind the altar), the words of Psalm 23 (vv. 7–10), spoken by the deacon whilst he carries the offerings, are no less significant: ‘Lift up your heads, O gates; be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in’; and to the priest’s question: ‘Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts’, he replies: ‘He is the King of glory!’ And he hands the chalice and the paten to the celebrant, who blesses the people with them, saying: ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’

In the Ethiopian rite, the priest leads the procession carrying the hosts in a special basket placed upon his head, whilst the choir sings: “You are the urn of pure gold in which lies the manna, the hidden bread that came down from heaven and gives life to the whole universe”.

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<sup>111</sup> The Syrians, as in the West in the Dominican and Lyon rites, recite verses from Psalm 116 during the presentation of the chalice: ‘Quid retribuam Domino... et calicem salutaris accipiam...’, as prescribed in the Roman Rite at the communion of the sanguis.

<sup>112</sup> At the beginning of the procession with the gifts, the following hymn (which also has a strongly anticipatory meaning) is always sung (it is used in the same way in the Chaldean and Malabar rites – ‘onitha dh’ raze’ – but only on Sundays): ‘The Body of the Lord and the Blood of the Saviour are set before us: the heavenly hosts sing unseen and say with one unceasing voice: Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts’.

The Syriac Rite, during the ‘Service of Aaron’—that is, the Offertory at the beginning of Mass—includes a prayer very similar to the ‘Suscipe Sancta Trinitas’ of the Latin rites, which we have outlined above; for it includes the memorial of the work of redemption, the commemoration of all the saints who have been pleasing to God ‘since the creation’, the commemoration of the departed, and in a special way of the offerers: ‘We remember our Lord, our God and Saviour Jesus Christ and the whole work of redemption which he has accomplished for us; his Annunciation by an angel, his Nativity in the flesh, his Baptism in the Jordan, his redemptive Passion, his Elevation on the Cross, his life-giving Death, his venerated Burial, his glorious Resurrection, his Ascension into Heaven and his Seating at the right hand of God the Father. We commemorate, over this Eucharist set before us<sup>(113)</sup> first and foremost our Father Adam and our Mother Eve, the Holy Mother of God, Mary, the Prophets, the Apostles, the Preachers, the Evangelists, the Martyrs, the Confessors, the Righteous, the priests, the holy Fathers, the true Shepherds, the Orthodox Doctors, the hermits and monks, those who pray with us, and all those who, since the creation of the world, have been pleasing to You, Lord, from Adam and Eve until this day. We also remember our fathers, our brothers, the teachers who have taught us the doctrine of truth, our departed loved ones and all the faithful departed, in particular and by name those of our own kin, those who have contributed or are contributing to the upkeep of this place, and anyone who is in communion with us, whether through word or deed, in small or great ways; and most especially of N..., for whom this sacrifice is offered today. [Here, the celebrant recalls the names of all those for whom he wishes to pray]<sup>114</sup> .

In the Byzantine rite, these commemorations are made by placing, beside the ‘Lamb’ pieces taken from other small loaves. First of all, that of the Virgin, whose piece is placed to the right of the ‘Lamb’ (whilst saying ‘The Queen is at his right hand...’ Ps 44:10) and then those of the Saints, arranged in nine categories, on the left; then, by placing further pieces beneath ‘the Lamb’, the remembrance of the living takes place, beginning with the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, followed by the dead and finally the priest himself.

It follows from the examples given that ‘prolepsis’ is not a phenomenon limited to the Roman rite, nor even to the Western rites of the Middle Ages; indeed, this phenomenon is also found in the Eastern rites and, moreover, in rites that had already broken communion with the rest of the Church in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, in the

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<sup>113</sup> The very strong prolepsis should be emphasised.

<sup>114</sup> Similarly, in the Maronite rite it is said: ‘Sanctify this offering and, through it, grant forgiveness of offences and remission of sins to all those for whom it is offered: to me, to my parents, to all the faithful who have laboured and co-operated with me, whether living or already dead...’

In the Eastern rites, there is an even more striking phenomenon, such as the epiclesis placed after the consecration. The fact is that both prolepsis and the epiclesis are difficult to explain if one considers the liturgical action from an illuminist perspective—a conception which holds that gestures and prayers must unfold according to a strict logical and chronological order, and that everything must be rationally comprehensible to all. It is only by considering the liturgical ceremony as a whole—as a unified whole (whose core is essentially the sacrificial aspect)—possessing its own ‘space’ and ‘time’ of its own, distinct from the ‘clear and distinct’ realm of human reason, that one can understand this, as well as the Offertory placed at the beginning of Mass, the frequent ‘duplication’ of prayers and formulas, and, in general, the abundant use of symbolic gestures.

### ***1) The Anaphora***

The abundance of anaphora is one of the characteristics specific to the Eastern rites, which distinguishes them markedly from the Western rites<sup>115</sup>. Among the former, the Armenian rite is the only one to have a single, unvarying anaphora<sup>116</sup>, but in the other rites there is a considerable variety. In this respect, the Syrian rite undoubtedly represents the extreme case, as it contains between seventy and one hundred anaphora, of which the Jacobites normally use around thirty and the Catholics have retained only seven<sup>117</sup>. Among the other rites we also find a certain diversity, even if the number of anaphora is more modest. Thus, amongst the Ethiopian Catholics we find seventeen anaphora (of which the Monophysites do not recognise

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<sup>115</sup> The only Western rite that does not use the Roman Canon is the Mozarabic rite; however, rather than a multiplicity of anaphors, this rite features a large number of variable proper parts within the fixed structure of the anaphora, so that the anaphora as a whole varies from day to day, as was also the case in the ancient Gallican rite.

<sup>116</sup> The Roman Canon is also unique, but it contains certain variable parts with texts specific to particular feasts.

<sup>117</sup> Assemani (1709–1782) states that, in his time, Syriac Catholics used twenty-five anaphors, but the 1843 missal contains only seven: those of Saint James, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Basil, Saint Xystus, Saint Peter, Saint John Chrysostom, and Matthew the Shepherd (one of the 72 disciples); the 1922 missal also contains seven anaphors, but it has replaced the last four with those of the Twelve Apostles, Saint Mark, Saint Eustace, Patriarch of Antioch, and Saint Cyril of Alexandria, respectively. The quintessential anaphora of the Syriac rite is that of Saint James, used on Sundays and on the feasts of the Lord, as well as at the ordination of a priest, during his first Mass and when it is celebrated for the first time at an altar; for feasts of the Virgin Mary, that of Saint John the Evangelist is frequently used; the choice of other anaphora is left to the discretion of the celebrant, although, generally speaking, on ordinary days the one commonly used is that of the Twelve Apostles.

whilst the Maronites retain nine <sup>119</sup>, and the Byzantines, Copts and Chaldeans have only three, which they use only on pre-determined occasions <sup>120</sup>.

The most widespread type is that of the Antiochene tradition, represented by the anaphors of Saint Basil, Saint John Chrysostom and Saint James, the Coptic anaphora of Saint Basil, the Armenian anaphora, and Anaphors II and III of the Chaldeans and Malabars. Although each has its own distinctive characteristics and wording, certain fundamental themes nevertheless form the core of their doctrinal content. We shall now present these fundamental themes, which already appear in the Apostolic Constitutions. This list, of course, is merely a summary outline, for no single anaphora contains all of them; some include a few, whilst others include different ones; likewise, their order is frequently altered.

Following the introductory dialogue, which generally concludes with the congregation's response 'it is right and just', the idea is taken up again in the formula 'It is truly right and just'. And the prayer is addressed to God the Father (even though the Son and the

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<sup>118</sup> These are: the Anaphora of the Apostles, the Anaphora of Our Lord, the Anaphora of Saint John the Evangelist, the Anaphora of the 318 Orthodox Fathers (of the Council of Nicaea), the Anaphora of Our Lady (I) (attributed to Kyriakos of Behnsa), the Anaphora of Saint Athanasius, the Anaphora of Saint Basil, the Anaphora of Saint Gregory of Nicaea, the Anaphora of Saint Epiphanius, the Anaphora of Saint John Chrysostom, the Anaphora of Saint Cyril (I), the Anaphora of Saint James of Sarug, the Anaphora of Saint Gregory, the Anaphora of Saint Dioscorus, the Anaphora of Our Lady (II) (by George of Gasseccia), the Anaphora of Saint Mark, the Anaphora of Saint James, brother of the Lord (the last three being rejected by the Monophysites). The most typical, oldest and most widely used anaphora of the Ethiopian Church is that of the Apostles, which is essentially the same as that recorded by Saint Hippolytus in his 'Apostolic Tradition'.

<sup>119</sup> The first edition of the Maronite missal (1594) included fourteen anaphors, largely corresponding to the Syrian ones; the second edition of 1716 omitted three (the Third Anaphora of Saint Peter, known as 'Charar', that of John Bar Chouchan, and that of Maruta of Tagrit) and added three: the one known as the 'Anaphora of the Roman Church' (composed by Andés Scandar for this edition, drawing inspiration from the prayers of the Roman Canon), that of John Maroun (15th century) and the Liturgy of the Presanctified (also composed by Scandar based on the ancient Anaphora III of Saint Peter, 'Charar'). The 1763 edition limits them to nine: those of Saint James, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Xystus, the Twelve Apostles, Saint Mark, Saint Peter and the three from the 1716 edition. A revision of the Maronite missal is currently underway.

<sup>120</sup> Among the Byzantines, the anaphors used are those of Saint John Chrysostom (used regularly) and of Saint Basil, used on the saint's feast day (1 January) and nine times during the year, particularly on Sundays during Lent. The Greek Orthodox of Jerusalem and Cyprus (Alexandria) celebrate once a year (on 23 October, that is to say, the feast of Saint James the Apostle) the very ancient Greek Liturgy of Saint James, which has its own proper ordinary. The Chaldeans normally use the 'Anaphora of the Apostles'; the second anaphora (called by the Nestorians 'that of Theodore of Mopsuestia') is used from the first Sunday of Advent up to and including Palm Sunday, and the third (attributed by the Nestorians to Nestorius himself) is used on Epiphany, on the feast day of St John the Baptist, on the feast day of the Greek Doctors, on the Wednesday of the Supplication of the Ninevites, and on Maundy Thursday. The Copts, for their part, use the Liturgy of Saint Basil (probably an abridged version of the Greek liturgy of the same name) throughout the year; on the feasts of Christmas, Epiphany and Easter, they use the anaphora known as that of Saint Gregory; finally, on the Friday preceding Palm Sunday, they use, just once a year, the anaphora of Saint Cyril, also known as that of Saint Mark. The Syrians and Ethiopians have a certain freedom of choice, although on Sundays and the days of the major feasts, they use that of Saint James and of the Apostles, respectively.

The Holy Spirit is sometimes mentioned) by calling Him ‘Creator’ or ‘Lord of Creation’, to whom all creatures offer praise and thanks; joining with the heavenly hierarchies, people sing the hymn ‘Holy, Holy, Holy...’. Once this is finished, the celebrant resumes his prayer with the words ‘You are Holy’ or ‘Truly, You are Holy...’ and, generally, invokes the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He then begins to recall the works God has done for humanity: He created man out of nothing, endowed him with intelligence and free will, and placed him in Paradise; after his fall into sin, despite everything, He did not abandon him, but instead gave him the Law, the prophets, the priesthood and the prefigurative sacrifices; but above all, He gave him His own Son, who humbled Himself by becoming incarnate and dwelt amongst men, fulfilled the divine plan, taught the precepts, destroyed idolatry, led them to the knowledge of the Father, and acquired a chosen people through baptism. Finally, He gave Himself up for us, descended into hell, rose again, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father, will return to judge humanity according to their deeds, and finally He left the memorial of His Passion.

Next comes the account of the Institution (with the words of consecration), at the end of which He utters the formula ‘Do this’ or ‘Whenever...’.

This is followed by the Anamnesis, which includes: the salvific sufferings of Our Lord, the cross, the three-day burial, the Resurrection, the Ascension, His sitting at the right hand of the Father, His Second Coming, and concludes with the expression ‘we offer to You what is Yours of what is Yours, in all things and for all things’ or a similar phrase.

Subsequently, the commemorations (diptychs) take place. First of all, ‘those who rest in the faith’: the saints and the faithful Christians. Next, for the living: the Church and its authorities; those who have brought the offerings; the governors; the faithful people present; the needy; and the hierarchy.

Over time, the practice of reciting the anaphora (in whole or in part) in a low voice became widespread<sup>121</sup>. The Syriac Orthodox Church, it seems, was the first to adopt the silent anaphora towards the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>121</sup> The fact that the priest recites certain parts in a low voice is, moreover, a widespread phenomenon. In some cases, this is because these are private prayers accompanying the rites being performed at the same time; in other cases, it is due to their sacred nature, especially when it comes to the most sacred part of the liturgy: the Anaphora.

<sup>122</sup> See A. King, *Liturgies of Antioch*, p. 239, note 102.

### ***m) Communion and the Treatment of the Eucharist***

In the various rites, we often find prayers of preparation for Communion, which, in general terms, consist of an act of confession of sins and an act of faith in the Eucharist<sup>123</sup>.

In the Roman Rite, this is carried out by means of the Confiteor, sung by the deacon at a solemn Mass or simply read at a low Mass, after which the priest says ‘Ecce Agnus Dei...’, whilst showing the Holy Host to the congregation.

In the Armenian rite, the deacon says: ‘Come forward with reverence and faith and receive Holy Communion. Say: I have sinned against God; I believe in the Holy Father, true God; I believe in the Holy Son, true God; I believe in the Holy Spirit, true God. I confess and believe that this is truly the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who takes away the sins of the world’<sup>124</sup>.

In the Byzantine rite we find this beautiful confession of faith, which expresses the same ideas in greater detail<sup>125</sup>: ‘I believe and confess, Lord, that you are truly the Christ, Son of the living God, who came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. I also believe that this is your most holy and most pure Body, that this is your venerable and precious Blood. I beseech you, therefore, have mercy on me and forgive my sins, whether committed wilfully or unwittingly, whether by word or deed, knowingly or through ignorance, and grant me to partake without reproach of Your most pure Sacraments, for the forgiveness of my sins and for eternal life. Amen.’ And he concludes with this petition: ‘Accept me at Your mystical Supper as a guest, O Son of God, for I will not reveal Your Mysteries to Your enemies, nor will I give You a kiss like Judas, but like the thief I confess to You: remember me, Lord, in Your Kingdom. May the reception of your holy Mysteries, Lord, not lead to my judgement and condemnation, but to the healing of my soul and body.’”

But it is in the Alexandrian rite that we find the most fervent confession of faith. Both the Copts and the Ethiopians say before Communion:

‘Amen, amen, amen. I believe, I believe, I believe, and I shall confess until my last breath that this is the life-giving Body of Your Only-begotten Son, Our Lord, Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. He received it from Our Lady and Queen, Saint Mary, Mother of God. He united it to His divinity without mixture, without confusion and without change. He confessed it publicly before Pontius Pilate. He freely gave up this Body for us on the tree of

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<sup>123</sup> In the Eastern rites, the expression ‘Sancta Sanctis’ is spoken during the elevation of the sacred elements; it also features in the Mozarabic rite.

<sup>124</sup> The solemn blessing with the Blessed Sacrament performed by the priest before Communion is a notable feature of this rite.

<sup>125</sup> Recited by the priest in a low voice before receiving Communion and then aloud by the faithful.



the Holy Cross. I believe, I believe, I truly believe that His Divinity was never separated from His Humanity, not even for a moment or the blink of an eye. He was given for our salvation and the remission of our sins, so that those whom He has redeemed might have eternal life. I believe, I believe, I believe that this is true, Amen’.

Finally, in the Chaldean rite, there is no explicit confession of sins, but the deacon (and on major solemnities, the choir and the congregation) sings: ‘Let us all, with fear and reverence, approach the mystery of the precious Body and Blood of Our Saviour. With a pure heart and firm faith, let us remember His Passion and meditate on His Resurrection (...). Let us participate in the mysteries of the Church with pure prayer and conscious contrition, and with the firm intention of repenting, turning away from our faults, regretting our sins, and asking for mercy and forgiveness from God, Master of the universe, whilst forgiving our brothers and sisters for their offences.’

Meanwhile, the priest breaks the bread and then says the following prayer of intercession in a low voice: ‘In Your tenderness, Lord, forgive the sins and faults of Your servants; and sanctify our lips through the power of Your goodness, so that in Your kingdom, in the company of all the saints, they may bear fruits of glory to Your sublime Divinity’.

The various rites also frequently demonstrate a special reverence for the Eucharist and particular care regarding the disposition with which it is received and towards the fragments of the Lord’s most pure Body, so that none of them may be lost. One may also note the responsibility of the priest should he fail to ensure this. Thus, the Ethiopian priest says:

‘If there is anyone who is pure, let him receive the Host; and whoever is not pure, let him not receive it, lest he be consumed by the fire of the Divinity, who harbours vengeance in his heart and whose mind is deranged due to a lack of chastity. I am innocent of the blood of you all and of your sacrilege against the Body and Blood of Christ: I have nothing to do with your reception of the Holy Sacrament. I am innocent of your error, and your sin will fall upon your own heads if you do not receive Him in purity.’ In the Syrian rite, whilst the priest is purifying the fragments, he says: ‘If any fragment remains, it remains with Him who created the worlds; if any fragment remains, may the Lord be its guardian and may He forgive us’ <sup>126</sup> .

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<sup>126</sup> In the Byzantine rite, no such prayer exists, but the rubrics state that ‘the deacon ... consumes the Holy Communion with reverence, taking great care that nothing, not even the smallest particle, falls or is left behind’.

## 5. Some dogmatic aspects

It would take too long to mention all the texts, gestures and rites that manifest faith in the various truths concerning the Eucharist and the Mass in the Church's diverse liturgical traditions, especially those of the East. We shall merely outline, in broad terms, some of the most significant ones, such as in the Russian Byzantine liturgy, the prostration performed by the priest after the consecration, until his forehead touches the ground; or the time-honoured custom, widespread throughout all Eastern Churches, of administering Communion to children, even before the age of reason, thereby manifesting belief in the efficacy of the sacrament 'ex opere operato'.

Also worth noting is the conception of the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice, reflected in the very ancient Syriac prayer of the breaking of bread, used from the earliest antiquity right up to the 8<sup>th</sup> century and restored in the Catholic missal of 1922: 'O Father of Justice, here is your Son who sacrifices himself to appease your wrath. Accept him. He died for me so that I might obtain forgiveness. Accept this sacrifice offered by my hands and forgive me. Do not remember the sins I have committed against your Majesty. Here is his blood, shed on Calvary by the criminals. He prays for me. Hear my prayer for his sake. How many sins on my part, and how much mercy on yours, if you were to weigh them up. Yet your mercy far outweighs even the heaviest of mountains. Look upon the sins, but look also upon the sacrifice offered for them; the sacrifice and the victim are infinitely greater than the sins. It is because I have sinned that your Beloved suffered the nails and the spear. His sufferings are sufficient to appease you, and through them I obtain life. Glory to the Father who gave up his Son for our salvation; adoration to the Son who died on the cross and gave us life; thanks to the Holy Spirit who began and completed the mystery of our Redemption'.

Or again, the concept of the priest as mediator, as expressed in this prayer from the Chaldean liturgy: 'I adore your grace, Lord; I confess your mercy in that, despite my unworthiness due to my sins, you have drawn me close to you in your compassion and appointed me minister and mediator of these glorious and holy mysteries; I pray and beseech Your Majesty that through them we may obtain peace and tranquillity in the world, the preservation of Your holy Church and the growth of the true faith, the exaltation of the righteous, the forgiveness of sinners and the acceptance of penitents, the return of those who are far from you, encouragement for the weak and refreshment for the tormented, comfort for the afflicted, healing for the sick, support for the poor, and a blessed remembrance of the departed; grant to us all, Lord, those things which help us and are pleasing to your Majesty'. Or the role performed by the priest in the

various Eastern liturgies is, in general, clearly distinct from that of the deacon; indeed, whilst the latter leads the prayer of the faithful and presents their petitions (in the Byzantine rite, outside the sanctuary), the priest, in some cases hidden from the sight of the people, addresses God in a low voice for most of the ceremony<sup>127</sup>.

Finally, the most remarkable intercession of the Mother of God and the saints, which appears very frequently in all liturgies and notably at the end of many litanies of the Byzantine rite, the most complete form of which is found in the 'Greek Liturgy of Saint James': 'As we commemorate the most holy, pure, most glorious Our Lady, the Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary, the glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist Saint John, the divine and all-praised Apostles, the glorious prophets and the martyrs who have won the prize of the struggle, together with all the saints and the righteous, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God'.

## **6. Conclusion**

The elements we have identified in the course of our research undoubtedly have certain aspects linked to the distinctive 'character' of particular cultures, peoples and eras; however, some are intimately connected with the very nature of the Church's liturgy throughout the ages. A few weeks ago, in a letter addressed to the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, the Holy Father alluded to this with the following words: 'The Sacred Liturgy... can never be reduced to a mere aesthetic reality, nor be regarded as a tool for purely pedagogical or ecumenical purposes. The celebration of the holy mysteries is, above all, an act of praise to the sovereign majesty of God, One and Triune, and the expression willed by God himself... The liturgical celebration is an act of the virtue of religion which, in keeping with its nature, must be characterised by a profound sense of the sacred. In it, both the individual and the community must be conscious of standing before the One who is thrice holy and transcendent. Consequently, the required attitude can only be imbued with respect and a sense of awe arising from the realisation of being in the presence of God's majesty. Was it not perhaps this very God that she sought to express when she commanded Moses to remove his sandals before the burning bush? Did not the attitude of Moses and Elijah—who did not dare to look upon God face to face—spring from this very awareness? ... The People of God need to see in priests and deacons a conduct full of

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<sup>127</sup> This is why, in the East, the liturgy is usually celebrated with a deacon (formerly indispensable in the West as well), and the priest celebrates alone and performs all the parts only when no deacon is available; likewise, the existence of a permanent diaconate is justified, since it must fulfil a specific liturgical function.

reverence and dignity, capable of helping him to penetrate the unseen, even without so many words and explanations. In the Roman Missal, known as that of Saint Pius V, as in various Eastern liturgies, there are some very beautiful prayers through which the priest expresses the deepest sense of humility and reverence before the holy mysteries: these reveal the very essence of the Liturgy, whatever form it may take. The liturgical celebration presided over by the priest is a praying assembly, gathered in faith and in anticipation of the Word of God. Its primary purpose is to present to the divine Majesty the living, pure and holy Sacrifice, offered on Calvary once and for all by the Lord Jesus, who makes himself present whenever the Church celebrates Holy Mass to offer the worship due to God in spirit and truth.”