The 1955 Holy Week Reform

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This paper is based in part on a series of articles which first appeared almost eleven years ago on the New Liturgical Movement website, and I must express my gratitude to the founding editor, Mr Shawn Tribe, both for giving me the opportunity to publish them, and for his wise editorial guidance.

Those who have written about the 1955 Holy Week reform usually cite as its most significant change the timing of the services, frequently described as a "restoration," since the principal services of the Triduum, which for many centuries had been done in the morning, were moved to the evening or night. For example, Avery Cardinal Dulles, who was born in 1918, and converted to Catholicism in 1940, once wrote that in his early years as a Catholic, "Jesus rose from the dead a whole day early, on Saturday morning," and that the 1955 reform restored a proper sense of Easter Sunday as the day of the Resurrection. [2] It is often stated that the rites were also "simplified", and if any detail of the change to the text is mentioned, it is almost always the removal of the word "perfidis" from the prayer for the Jews on Good Friday. It is understandable that the more salient details of the reform have been largely forgotten, since the ceremonies promulgated by it were in general use in the Church for only 14 years. My purpose here is to show that the changes made in 1955 were in fact far greater and more significant.

Of course, the pastoral concern which motivated the change in the timing was a real one. I own a copy of a Rituale published in the 1930s for use in the diocese of Passau in Germany, which contains a special paraliturgical service for the evening of Holy Saturday. This service includes certain parts of the Easter vigil, such as the Gospel, and the Magnificat from the Vespers with which the vigil concludes, as well as Benediction; obviously, it was created precisely because the Easter vigil itself was not attended by most of the faithful.

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[1] Lecture given at the 11th CIEL Colloquium in Rome, February 2020.

[2] In a similar vein, Roger Greenacre and Jeremy Haselock write in *The Sacrament of Easter*, "the reforms of 1951 and 1955 not only put an end to the anomaly of a nocturnal celebration performed in full daylight; they also changed the times of the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday ceremonies, shortened and simplified the rites… and introduced a number of changes that were later to be more generally applied."

However, when the Holy Week ceremonies of the Missal of the St Pius V were originally created, they were done according to a schedule much more like the one instituted in 1955. There is no reason, therefore, why the ceremonies not could have been moved to the new times without further alteration, if the timing of the services had been the principal concern of the reform. As I am sure you already know, the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* recently gave a three-year long permission *ad experimentum* for a number of churches to celebrate the unreformed Holy Week rites, and most them did in fact celebrate the old rites according to the new schedule. I will therefore state quite simply that the timing of the Holy Week services is irrelevant to their theological content.

It is also not to my purpose to go into all the details about the changes to the ceremonies, since I have documented these very thoroughly in the aforementioned series published on NLM. I will therefore limit myself to observing that anyone who has served both of these forms of Holy Week knows while that the Pius XII version is in some places shorter, it is not necessarily simpler – quite the contrary. To give just one very basic example, the "Solemn Afternoon Liturgical Action" of Good Friday requires three complete changes of vestments for the major ministers.

The theological issues related to both the text and ceremonies are in fact far more substantial, and it is these that I propose to address principally today.

I begin by noting two important characteristics of the Roman Holy Week. First, among the historical rites of Christendom, it is the only one in which the Passion narratives are read *before* the days on which they originally took place, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. In the traditional arrangement, the Passion of St Matthew is read on Palm Sunday, that of St Mark on Holy Tuesday, St Luke on Spy Wednesday, and St John on Good Friday. Secondly, it is almost the only rite in which the Passion narratives of the four Evangelists are read as a whole, which is to say, both chapters of each Passion are taken together as a single reading. (The printed version of this paper will explain the details of the one partial exception, the Ambrosian Rite, and give some examples that compare the Roman Rite with some others.)

Because of this arrangement, by which the accounts of the Lord's Supper and the events of His Passion are always joined together, and spread through the whole week, we should look

upon the Roman Holy Week as a conceptual unit, within which each part is intimately connected with the others. And it is in this light that we should examine the different ceremonies, and how they were changed in 1955.

The first ceremony of Holy Week, the blessing of the Palms, is unique within the Roman Rite as the *only* example of a blessing that imitates the rite of Mass. It has an Introit, Collect, Epistle, Gradual, and Gospel, followed by a Secret (which, however, is said aloud), a Preface dialog and Preface, the Sanctus, several prayers for the blessing, analogous to the Canon of the Mass, and then the distribution of the palms accompanied by antiphons. This imitation is close, but not perfect; there is no equivalent to the Offertory antiphon, and the *Sanctus* is the only part of the Kyriale included, in reference to the closing words of the Gospel, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." The liturgical texts are full of references to the other events of the week, as for example, the opening Collect, which mentions both the death of the Lord and the Resurrection, and the prayer which stands in the place of the Secret, which makes reference to two of the Prophecies of the Easter vigil. This use of the rite of Mass (which, I repeat, is unique to this ceremony) looks forward to Holy Thursday, the commemoration of the Lord's Supper and the institution of the Mass.

In the 1955 reform, this imitation of the Mass is no longer done, and the new form of blessing is effectively isolated as a completely separate ceremony from the Mass that follows it. The two parts are done in two different liturgical colors, since that of the blessing and procession is changed to red. The opening antiphon is kept in its place, but is followed immediately by the blessing, which is done with a single prayer, the last of the five which formerly made the "canon." Palms are distributed to the faithful, and then the Gospel is sung. The removal of all of the other prayers, the epistle, and the responsory formerly sung in place of the Gradual, brings with it the removal of all of the references to the other days of Holy Week.

There follows the procession. In the Roman tradition, any procession held *before* the Mass is treated as a penitential act, and therefore celebrated in the penitential color, violet. This applies to those of Candlemas, Palm Sunday, and the Rogations, as also formerly to the procession held on Ash Wednesday everywhere in the Middle Ages, which is not part of the Missal of St Pius V. As mentioned above, in the 1955 reform, the color is changed to red. The connection with the Passion is further deemphasized by the designation of the hymn *Gloria laus*

et honor, as a "hymn to Christ the King", and a rubrical permission to sing the " 'Christus vincit' or another hymn to Christ the King" during the procession. The most distinctive symbol of the liturgical season of Passiontide, the veiling of the processional cross in violet, is removed. Most tellingly, the final rubric of the first part of the ceremony states that the blessed palm branches are not to be held during the Passion at the Mass, as was the custom in the earlier rite.

Although this new version of the rite is unquestionably much shorter than the traditional version, it is also more complicated. Since the liturgical color for the first part is changed to red, a complete change of vestments is required for the Mass, which remains in violet. The blessing is not done at the altar, but rather a table which is set in the middle of the sanctuary, and therefore must be removed for Mass. It is also here that *versus populum* worship conceived as such was introduced into the Roman Rite for the first time; the rubrics explicitly prescribe that the blessing of the palms, and the new prayer inserted added after the procession, be said by the priest facing the people.

The Mass of Palm Sunday remains essentially unchanged in 1955, with one extremely important exception; the Passion of St Matthew is shortened by the removal of the first 35 verses of chapter 26, and the last six verses of chapter 27. The verses removed from the beginning recount the conspiracy of the elders and chief priests against the Lord, the anointing of His feet at Bethany, Judas' betrayal, the preparation and celebration of the Last Supper, the Institution of the Eucharist, the departure to the Mount of Olives, and the prediction of Peter's betrayal. The verses removed from the end recount the placing of the guard at the tomb, which is not in any of the other Gospels.

The Masses of the following three days remain essentially unchanged, with the same very notable exception; the Passion of St Mark on Holy Tuesday is shortened by the removal of the first 31 verses of chapter 14, and that of St Luke on Spy Wednesday by the removal of the first 38 verses of chapter 22. These passages parallel those removed from the beginning of St Matthew's Passion, and thus the Synoptic accounts of the episodes narrated in them, which occur nowhere else in the liturgical year, are removed entirely from the Roman Rite. This change therefore eliminates the custom of reading the accounts of the Lord's Supper and the rest of His Passion together.

The separation of the Passion from the Institution of the Eucharist becomes far more pronounced with the reform of the Holy Thursday and Good Friday ceremonies.

In the Missal of St Pius V, at the Mass of the Lord's Supper, the celebrant consecrates two large Hosts, one for the Mass itself, the other for the rite of the following day. The latter is placed in a chalice, not in a pyx or ciborium, and then covered with a soft pall, a paten turned upside down, and a thin white veil, which is then tied with a ribbon around the node of the chalice. The Host thus enclosed is left on the corporal until the end of the Mass, when it is brought to the Altar of Repose with a solemn procession. Since Communion was not given to the faithful on Good Friday, no other hosts were consecrated. The link between the first Mass, the Lord's Supper, and the Sacrifice of the Cross, which takes place on the following day, is emphasized by the fact that the instruments of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the chalice, pall, paten and veil, are used on both days. The Lord Himself describes His Passion as a "chalice" when He goes to pray in the garden. (Matthew 26, 39-42 and Luke 22, 42.)

In the reformed version of the Holy Thursday Mass, the entire rite of enclosing the second large Host in a chalice is omitted, and indeed, no large Host is consecrated for the celebrant of Good Friday. Instead, two ciboria of small Hosts are consecrated, one for the general communion of Holy Thursday, and another for the general communion of the following day.

The ceremony of Good Friday is commonly known as the "Mass of the Presanctified"; although this term is not actually used in the Missal itself, it is commonly found in Holy Week books printed for the convenience of the clergy. Although it is in that sense purely informal, it nevertheless gives an accurate sense of what the rite actually does and means. To the largest degree possible, it imitates the rite of the Mass, to signify that what it commemorates, the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, was anticipated at the Last Supper, and is intimately and essentially connected with it.

The celebrant wears black vestments as for a Requiem. The deacon and subdeacon, however, wear black folded chasubles, the traditional vestments of penitential seasons, which are not used at a Requiem; indeed, black folded chasubles are only used at this service. At a Requiem, the vestments of joy, the dalmatic and tunicle, speak of the hope of the Resurrection;

on Good Friday, this hope is not in any way anticipated, and the day is lived as one of the deepest mourning.

At the first part of the ceremony, the readings, tracts, and prayer are done as they normally would be at other Masses. The Passion is sung with the same ceremonies as on the previous days of Holy Week; the last part is not sung by the cantors of the Passion, but rather, with the ceremonies of the Gospel at a Requiem, by the deacon of the Mass, without candles or incense. The solemn prayers are said at the Missal on the Epistle side, with the same ritual used on the Ember Days.

The adoration of the Cross has no direct analog in the Mass, and was originally a separate ceremony. Communion is not distributed to the faithful, since the "communion" which they received that day is the kissing of the Cross, for which they come forth to the area of the sanctuary as they did the previous day at the Mass of the Lord's Supper. This relatively late practice of the Roman Rite is in harmony with the broader tradition of historical Christian liturgies, which have no ritual involving the Eucharist on Good Friday. The cross is brought for them to adore from the altar, and returns to the altar, just as the Sacrament is brought from the altar, and returns to the altar when Communion is given at any other Mass. It is worth noting in this regard that the rubrics of the Missal of St Pius V, and various decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, assume that the same Cross, which comes from the main altar, is kissed by the clergy and all of the faithful. Likewise, the S.R.C. strongly prohibited all attempts at having any kind of Eucharistic adoration or procession on Good Friday.

For the final part of the ceremony, the Blessed Sacrament is brought back to the church's principal altar, with a solemn procession which reproduces in reverse order all the ceremonies of the previous day, by which it was brought to the Altar of Repose. This ritual of the double procession emphasizes in the clearest way possible the connection between the Lord's Supper and His Sacrifice upon the Cross.

Once this has been done, the ritual that follows reproduces step by step the rite of the Offertory of the Mass, and the prayers of the celebrant's communion after the Canon, omitting all of those elements which refer specifically to the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, along with the Canon itself. Here we have another clear sign of the sacrificial nature of the death of

Christ. The rubrics of the Missal underline this principle that the rite is modeled on the Mass; everything in them is described in reference to the practice of the normal celebration of Mass.

It is of signal importance to note here that the ritual of the Presanctified also represents this by having a fraction rite which is, so to speak, incomplete, because the particle is dropped into unconsecrated wine. (This is a very ancient feature included in all of the historical *ordines* of the rite.) At a normal Mass, the Fraction rite, the reunion of Christ's Body with the Blood, represents the Resurrection; on Good Friday, the Resurrection is not made manifest, because the Body is broken, but not reunited with the Blood.

The "solemn post-meridian liturgical action" of 1955, as it is called, goes to extremes in the opposite direction, separating the ceremony from the rite of the Mass as far as possible. At no point are the major ministers dressed as they would be for Mass. In addition to the three full changes of vestment, the maniple is everywhere omitted; this is significant because the maniple is traditionally removed for ceremonies that are connected to, but not part of, a Mass, such as the Corpus Christi procession. The sense of deep mourning expressed by black vestments, including the folded chasubles proper to penitential seasons, is diminished not only by the use of the garments of joy, the dalmatic and tunicle, but also by the inconvenience of the ministers constantly changing their clothes.

At the start of the ceremony, the altar is completely bare, without altar cloths, candlesticks or a Cross, whereas in the Mass of the Presanctified, it is set up as it would be for Mass, and the cloth is put on at the beginning. No part of the Mass of the Catechumens is said as it would be at a Mass. For example, a prayer is added to the beginning, which the celebrant says at the foot of the altar with his hands joined, without "Dominus vobiscum" or "Oremus. Flectamus genua. Levate.", and ending with the short conclusion. No prayer is ever said this way during a Mass. The solemn prayers are no longer said like the prayers of an Ember Day Mass, but with a wholly new ritual that occurs nowhere else. The veiled Cross is brought for adoration from the sacristy, rather than from the altar, along with two candles.

After the adoration, the acolytes, rather than the deacon, set the Cross and candles on the altar. The ministers change from black to violet, as mentioned above; the deacon extends a

corporal on the altar, while an acolyte places the Missal on the Gospel side, with a purification vessel and purificator.

The solemn procession by which the Sacrament is brought to the altar at the Mass of the Presanctified, which is the procession of Maundy Thursday in reverse, is no longer done. The deacon and acolytes go to the Altar of Repose to bring the Blessed Sacrament back to the main altar. The Sacrament is carried by the deacon under a humeral veil, with two acolytes carrying candles on either side of him. The priest and subdeacon do not participate, and incense is not used.

The deacon places the vessel with the Sacrament on the corporal; the acolytes place their candles on the altar, which now has four candles on it, where there would be six for a solemn Mass. All the subsequent actions in imitation of the Mass – the preparation of the consecrated Host upon the corporal, the preparation of the chalice, the incensation, the washing of the hands, and the prayers from the Offertory – are no longer performed, again, separating the rite from that of the Mass.

The introduction "Oremus. Praeceptis salutaribus..." is recited, not sung. The Lord's Prayer is also recited, not sung, by everyone in the church, not just the priest as at Mass. The priest keeps his hands closed for the Lord's prayer, whereas they are open at the Mass. The "Libera nos" is recited, not sung, by the priest, but with hands open. He then says in silence the prayer "Perceptio Corporis tui", and communicates with the normal rites of Mass. Holy Communion is then distributed to all who wish to receive, with the normal ceremonies.

After Communion, the priest purifies his fingers in the vessel set on the altar for this purpose; there being no chalice present, he does not perform an ablution as at Mass. The Blessed Sacrament is returned to the tabernacle of the main altar; the Missal is then placed in the middle of the altar in front of it. The priest sings three new prayers, each one preceded by only "Oremus", (without "Dominus vobiscum", or "Flectamus genua - Levate."), ending with the minor conclusion ("per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum"), keeping his hands closed. The deacon and subdeacon stand on either side of him, rather than in line behind him. The major ministers descend from the altar, genuflect, and return to the sacristy. Afterwards, the Blessed Sacrament is brought to the sacristy or another tabernacle.

The radical separation between the Lord's Supper and the Sacrifice of the Cross is further emphasized by the shortening of the Synoptic Passions, as mentioned above, which removes the Gospel accounts of the Lord's Supper from Holy Week altogether.

As far as the Easter vigil is concerned, the reform of 1955 principally modifies the first part of the ceremony, before the Mass.

In the Missal of St Pius V, the Paschal candle is set on a large column on the Gospel side of the church's sanctuary, to represent the column of fire that led the Israelites out of Egypt. Once the fire has been blessed outside the church, it is brought in by the deacon via a pole ("arundo" in Latin, "reed" in English) with three candles on it, and the ritual of proclaiming "Lumen Christ" three times, at which all genuflect, is done with this reed. On reaching the sanctuary, the priest reverences the altar; the ceremonies in preparation for the *Exsultet* are done at the altar, exactly as for the Gospel at a solemn Mass. The *Exsultet* itself is sung from a lectern set close to the Paschal candle, where the Gospel is normally sung.

The *Exsultet* is interrupted three times. First, at the words "curvat imperia", five grains of incense, also blessed outside the church at the beginning, are inserted into the Paschal candle, representing the five wounds of Christ. At the mention of the column of fire, the candle itself is lit from one of the lights on the reed. Before the words "O truly blessed night", the lights of the church are lit; before the advent of electric lighting, they were lit only from the Paschal candle.

There follow twelve prophecies from the Old Testament; each one (together with the Tracts that accompany the fourth, eighth and eleventh) is followed a prayer, introduced by the formula "Oremus. Flectamus genua. Levate." All of this done exactly as in other Masses with extra readings, such as the Ember Saturdays.

If the church has a baptismal font, it is now blessed, and so all go in procession to the baptistery. Once the water is blessed, if there are persons to be baptized, this is then done as in the Rituale, after which, all return to the church, singing the Litany of the Saints. If there is no font to be blessed, the Litany is sung immediately after the prophecies.

At the words "Peccatores, te rogamus audi nos", the major ministers and servers return to the sacristy, and vest in white Mass for Solemn Mass, while the acolytes decorate the altar. All return to the sanctuary and the Mass begins.

The Mass of the Vigil has a few significant differences from a regular Solemn Mass. The Gregorian Mass propers such as the Introit are omitted, a sign that the Church's joy in the Resurrection is not complete until the Savior Himself appears. There being no Introit, when the Kyrie is done, the priest intones the *Gloria in excelsis*, and all the bells are rung; the images of the Saints, which have now been veiled for almost two weeks, are uncovered. After the Epistle, the priest sings three times a beautiful melismatic Alleluja particular to this rite, raising his voice at the second and third time. This is the official return of the Alleluja to the liturgy, which the choir repeats after the priest each time.

The Gospel, Matthew 28, 1-7, reflects the fact that the Church still awaits the appearance of Christ; it recounts the appearance of the Angel to the women the tomb, announcing the Resurrection. "And in the end of the Sabbath, when it began to dawn on the first day, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher." To represent the fact that the Light of the World has not yet been made manifest, the acolytes do not carry candles at the Gospel.

The Creed is not said, nor is there an Offertory antiphon; the *Agnus Dei* is not said, and the peace is not given, all signs that the Risen Lord has not yet appeared directly to give peace to His disciples. (John 20, 19-21) In place of the Communion antiphon, first Vespers of Easter are sung, in a very simple form: one Psalm, the shortest of the Psalter, followed directly by the Magnificat with its antiphon, which is the first words of the Gospel of this Mass. The Postcommunion is sung as the conclusion of both Mass and Vespers together, and the deacon sings "Ite, missa est, alleluja, alleluja"; the dismissal is sung thus with two allelujas through the whole Octave of Easter.

In the 1955 reformed rite, as with the other parts of Holy Week that were significantly altered, the first part of the ceremony is reordered so as to detach it from the second part; the focus of the rite becomes the Paschal candle, rather than the altar. The column on the Gospel side is replaced by a small bracket ("parvum sustentaculum") set in the middle of the sanctuary; at the beginning of the ceremony, the candle itself is not already in it, but outside the church. The fire is blessed, but the grains of incense are not; the prayer with which they were formerly blessed is modified to be applied to the Paschal candle. A new rite is inserted by which the priest uses a stylus to "cut" various symbols into the candle, which were previously a common but purely informal custom, and then insert the grains of incense.

The reed is no longer used, and the fire is brought into the church via the Paschal candle, which the deacon carries in, singing "Lumen Christi" as before; the lights of the church are lit at the third "Lumen Christi."

On reaching the sanctuary, the priest goes straight to the seat without reverencing the altar. The deacon places the candle in its bracket. The ceremonies to prepare for the *Exsultet* are done at the sedilia. The lectern is set on the Epistle side, facing the candle; the deacon incenses both the book and the candle, the latter by walking around it. Since the candle is already lit, the five grains of incense already inserted, and the lights of the church already lit, the *Exsultet* is sung all at one go.

The prophecies are then sung by the readers, who stand at a lectern on the Epistle side, turned one quarter to the left from the usual position, so that they face the candle. Of the twelve prophecies of the pre-1955 rite, eight are suppressed. The prayers are said at the sedilia, rather than at the altar.

The blessing of the font is now in the middle of the Litany of the Saints, which therefore begins immediately after the prophecies. It is permitted, but not obligatory, to bless the water not in the font itself, but in a vessel set in the middle of the sanctuary, which is to say, near the Paschal candle; the water is then brought to the font and poured in. The blessing of the water is not changed. However, a new rubric specifies that, if the blessing of the water is done in the baptistery, "the cantors and the people remain in the church, and continue the chant of the Litanies, repeating them … if need be"; meanwhile, the clergy go to bless the font without them.

After the first part of the Litany, and the blessing of the water (if this is done), a rite of renewal of baptismal promises has been inserted, which may be done in the vernacular. The rest of the Litany is sung, and as in the previous rite, all return to the sacristy, and dress for solemn Mass, while the acolytes prepare the altar. The Paschal candle is moved from its bracket to the column ("in candelabrum suum"), no longer an essential element of the rite, but a purely decorative object to hold it during the Mass. Having held such a central place in the first part of the ceremony, it is henceforth ignored.

The Mass itself remains essentially unchanged. However, the Vespers at the end are replaced by something entirely new, a form of Lauds, similarly abbreviated. A single Psalm is

sung with its antiphon, followed by the Benedictus, with the antiphon taken from the beginning of the Gospel of Easter Sunday. These Lauds replace both Matins and Lauds of Easter, which therefore becomes the only feast of the year that has no first Vespers, no Matins, and no *Te Deum*.

This is the most appropriate place to mention the timing of the ceremonies, since the change of schedule had the most significant impact on the Easter vigil, and was first introduced for that ceremony *ad experimentum* in 1951. There can be no doubt that the anticipation of the ceremonies of the Triduum to the morning was partially motivated by the traditional discipline that required fasting from midnight before celebrating Mass or receiving Communion. However, this is not the only motivation.

Another unique characteristic of the Roman Rite is that it treats Holy Thursday as a solemn feast of the Lord, rather than as a penitential day; the *Gloria* and Creed are sung, and the vestments are white. Festal Masses are traditionally celebrated in the morning after Terce; this custom is attested for Holy Thursday in the first Ordo Romanus in the mid-7th century. The same ordo also says that the Pope celebrated the Presanctified liturgy after Terce, another among the many parallels between it and that of the Holy Thursday Mass, which serve to show the union between the Last Supper and the Crucifixion.

The proper hour for the celebration of the Easter vigil is after None, as in all the ferial days of Lent, again, as attested by the first Ordo Romanus. The blessing of a fire and the lighting of lamps is a ritual to be done when the sun is *going* down, not when it has already been down for several hours. The reform of Pope Pius XII did not in fact restore the Easter vigil to its proper historical time, since it mandated that the vigil is to start at such an hour that the actual Mass will begin around midnight. Where the former practice of anticipating the vigil to the morning jarred notably with the blessing of the fire and the text of the *Exsultet*, the newer practice has Lauds being sung at one or two o'clock in the morning.

The 1955 Holy Week reform was the first substantial modification to the liturgical text of the Missal of Saint Pius V, but many of its features remained in general use of for only fourteen years, and were abandoned when the post-Conciliar reform was promulgated in 1969. In some

respects, the new rite returns to the practice of the Missal of Saint Pius V prior to the 1955 reforms.

The synoptic Passions are now all read on Palm Sunday in the three-year lectionary cycle, and have all have returned to the Lectionary in almost complete form, although each has an optional shorter form as well. The Easter vigil now has seven prophecies three of which were re-introduced into the lectionary from the pre-1955 Missal. Along with them, seven of the eight prayers removed the Missal in 1955 have been put back.

Many of the new rituals of the 1955 Holy Week were cancelled. Most notably, in several places, the new manner of saying the prayers and readings has been abolished; they are said during Holy Week like the prayers and readings at other ceremonies of the liturgical year, in a manner consonant with the typical practice of the rite.

Many of the ritual complications introduced in 1955 have also been eliminated. Palm Sunday is celebrated in only one color, red; the palms are no longer blessed at a table in the middle of the sanctuary. On Good Friday, the celebrant wears a chasuble for the whole ceremony, restoring an important sign of the link between the Mass and the Sacrificial death of Christ on the Cross. The entire rite is celebrated in red vestments, eliminated the three complete changes of vestments introduced.

On Holy Saturday, the Missal of 1969 prescribes explicitly that the Paschal Candle be placed in a “candelabrum magnum” when it is brought into the church, restoring one of the most important symbols of the ancient rite. It is no longer required to place it in the middle of the sanctuary. All of the baptismal rites, including the blessing of the font, have been moved to after the Gospel, according to the typical practice of the 1969 missal. At the end of the Mass, the Lauds invented almost for the end of the vigil in 1955 have been abolished, and the same Hour has been restored to the Breviary for the morning of Easter Sunday.

It is no secret that many communities which celebrate the liturgy in the Extraordinary Form do so according to the older versions of the Roman liturgical books, and indeed, the number of such communities is growing. The Holy Week celebrations done in the older rite according to experimental permission mentioned above were very well-received by the clergy and the faithful, and will almost certainly continue. But these celebrations have also occasioned

many discussions on the lines of “What year do those people want to go back to? 1954? 1910? 1625? 1570?”

I submit that this question is essentially irrelevant. Authentic liturgical reform cannot take place in the Church without assessing each aspect of each past reform on its own terms, and according to its own merits, or lack thereof, regardless of the year in which it was promulgated, or the authority that promulgated it. As this process continues, the older liturgical forms of the Roman Rite must play a role in it, just as they played a role in the post-Conciliar liturgical reform.