

LITURGICAL MOVEMENT

by

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The similarities between the life-situation of the Philippines and Latin America make this article on the Liturgy and some particular problems of the Latin American Church relevant to us.

The ecclesial renewal that must result from the liturgical reform, duly applied, will take into account also the specific situations of the Church in the Latin American continent, situations which are the expression of a history, a life, the reflection of a rich past, and which can contribute to a new enrichment, therefore offering reasons for great hope. If all this is put into practice in a suitable way, it will not be a cause of useless and curious differentiations, but a note that manifests the riches that spring from plurality in unity.

In this connection, we are happy to emphasize some aspects of the religious life of the continent which must be kept in mind in the liturgical renewal.

a) One of the characteristic notes of the Latin American people is its so-called "popular" religiosity. Sometimes the latter is the expression of a faith not completely formed or instructed; at other times it is the expression of a faith which is manifested in forms outside the liturgy or which reflects cultural and religious traditions of the past. In spite of their imperfections, these manifestations of faith constitute as a whole an authentic value and it would be an error to wish to wipe them out from the life of the people, particularly the most simple of them, without replacing them adequately. On the contrary, it is necessary to study them, understand them, utilize them, purify them of all the aspects that are least true, and start from them for a profitable evangelization. They must be enriched with elements that are characteristic of the liturgy so as to help them to develop and lead to the true liturgy, intelligently

and prudently adapted to the particular situations. These same forms of faith and popular devotion, which have often come into being to replace a liturgy that is too far from the understanding and the expressions of the faithful people, can and must be, when opportunely purified, even a starting point for a liturgy prudently adapted to particular situations, groups of persons, stages of maturity and deepening of the faith.

b) The faith and Christian life of many communities has been preserved and developed, as still happens today, thanks to the gifts of ministry that the Spirit of the Lord brings forth incessantly in the Church. It is necessary to promote and take care of vocations to the priestly and diaconal ministry. But the discovery and realization of new forms of ministry, which include liturgical life not reserved for the ministry properly speaking, and other aspects of the religious and human life of the community, above all if it lacks a priest, also constitutes one of the aims that the Latin American Church must pursue most intensely. These lay ministries, which in the past were dedicated almost exclusively to the prayer life of the community, helping to preserve the faith by means of religious practices that were often devotional, have a far vaster field of action open to them today, also as regards the liturgy. These ministries must be stimulated and cultivated and those who exercise them must be opportunely formed: they are a gift of the Spirit and a hope for the future of ecclesial communities.

c) The particular situation of the Latin American Church frequently leads to the creation, within the traditional communities, of smaller groups or communities. Everyone can grasp their importance as a source of Christian commitment which, more often than not, passes through liturgical celebration. On the pastoral plane it is clear that these smaller communities cannot be an element of separation within the ecclesial community, creating groups withdrawn into themselves. They must rather constitute living, responsible and effective nuclei for a Church that will have greater influence on the human reality in which it is integrated. On the liturgical plane, too, these smaller communities can have a real influence of renewal if they assimilate the authentic values of the reform to the extent of making them a source of life and if they succeed in communicating them to their brothers, helping and animating the celebrations of the wider local community. It is, therefore, indispensable that their celebrations should not be arbitrary or needlessly affected creations. They should be a more committed deepening of that content of the mystery which must nourish their spiritual life more intensely, and through their life, the life of the whole local community.

d) The presence of different cultures. In these the Latin American continent is so rich, whether it is a question of native cultures still preserved with a certain purity of tradition, or of cultures that have sprung from the merging of original elements with those imported from the old continent and from countries with a different tradition. This presence of different cultures raises the problem of finding a way to adapt them to the liturgy of the Roman rite. It is not a question of creating a new liturgy, nor of novelty for the sake of novelty, nor, in deference to archeology, of bringing to life again elements that are already obsolete. Pastoral insight, based on a staunch faith that is deeply lived by the Christian community, close collaboration between pastors of the Church and persons competent in the different fields of science, will indicate the way to make good use of certain worthy elements of authentic local traditions so that the liturgy, in conformity with the prudent indications of the Second Vatican Council, may express itself more clearly in the language, the mentality and the life of the different local Churches, while respecting the essential unity of faith and in deep communion of charity.

e) Finally, the Holy Father exhorts Pastors of the Latin American Church to continue ardently the work of guiding, organizing, directing and promoting the liturgy in the continent. He exhorts the -organisms of -CELAM. These providentially -permit fruitful coordination of pastoral efforts, stepping in even when local forces are lacking. The different national and regional organisms can and must intensify that effort. Already it has yielded heartening results, to deepen the faith and the life of prayer of the People of God. May the Bishops encourage their collaborators and may they also be an example and stimulus, showing how the liturgy, prudently applied in its possibilities, duly used in pastoral action as a whole, is a vital force for the fulfillment of the Church mission. With these wishes, the Holy Father accompanies the work of this Meeting of the National Liturgical Commissions, he invokes the graces and light of the Spirit on the participants, and he imparts the Apostolic Blessing to Your Excellency, to your collaborators in the organization of this Meeting and to all those taking part in it

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