

Q's and A's on Liturgical Matters

1. Question:

What is a high Mass nowadays? Does the priest have to sing his usual parts (orations, preface, Our Father), or is the singing of the people enough to call the Mass a high Mass? There is the question of how to satisfy the high Mass stipends.

Answer:

The distinction between a read (low) Mass and a sung (high) Mass no longer exists. The last trace of the former distinction that had survived the publication of the general instruction in 1969 of the new Missal was abolished when the Missal itself appeared in 1970: the expression "Missa *in cantu*" was changed into "Missa *cum cantu*." This implies that the new Missal takes it for granted that *all* Masses with a congregation present, will include some singing. It is, however, proper that the priest, if he receives a special stipend, sings those parts of the Mass which he was accustomed to sing formerly in high Masses (i.e., the presidential prayers, and, together with the people, the Our Father, etc.).

2. Question:

What about binations on weekdays? We get enough calls to say such a second Mass: for instance a late Mass for a group in schools. Some religious communities want to have a later Mass, especially for retreatants or for people on the day of a spiritual recollection. But nearly everyone of our religious community is assigned to a sisters' convent where he has to say his first Mass. Is a special permission needed for these bination Masses?

Answer:

Bination on weekdays depends on the permission of the local ordinary who should consider the pastoral needs, as is said in the *Motu Proprio* "Pastorale munus." You find this information in the *Ordo* for the Philippines 1970, p. XI f. Ask, therefore, for general permission from your local ordinary.

3. Question:

Why are some religious communities introducing the praxis to sit during and after the distribution of holy communion? The same praxis is also propagated, as I saw, in theological and liturgical periodicals, which come from abroad. Unde haec omnia?

Answer:

The section "Actions and Postures" of the introductory part of the new Missal says that the people *may* sit after holy communion, for the sake of silent reflexion and thanksgiving (n. 21). It seems advisable that this posture is taken right after the beginning of the distribution of holy communion, particularly if the distribution takes a relatively long time.

4. Question:

Is it allowed to have evening Masses in religious houses, schools, etc.? Are there any basic objections to this praxis?

Answer:

While the Tridentine Missal had a section in its general rubrics on the time of the day for saying holy Mass, thereby restricting it to the time from one hour before dawn until one hour after midday, the Missal of Vatican II does not contain this section any more. This is not surprising in view of the gradual liberalisation concerning afternoon and evening Masses from World War II on. As a consequence, the "Ordo Universalis" for 1971, published by the Vatican Press, for the first time does not contain a time table for determining the hours of Mass.

5. Question:

A religious priest who on certain days of the week has to work late into the evening hours, with the permission of his superior, sleeps longer the next morning. May he say Mass in the evening — eventually regularly — e.g., on his weekly day off?

Answer:

I do not see any difficulty. But he should avoid saying Mass alone and join a community, if possible.

6. Question:

We still get a good number of Liberas. Our seminarians, however, who have to sing these responses, dislike them so that it sounds terrible, not in itself, but because of the disgust with which the boys sing it. The procurator of the seminary, on the other side, is very glad to get these responses. What should we do?

Answer:

You will look in vain in the new Missal and in the new funeral ritual for the *Libera*. The same holds true of the sequence *Dies irae*. If you cannot, or think you cannot as yet abolish the *Libera*, use at least another text for the old responsory, "I know that my Redeemer lives", found in Matins of the Office for the dead.

You may eventually also formulate some short other service, instead, comprising a short lesson of the Word of God (e.g., Phil 3, 20-21; 1 Jn 3, 1-2; Apoc 14, 13) to be followed by a short response. This text may be taken:

I will praise you, Lord,
You have rescued me.

V. You have changed my mourning into rejoicing.

R. You have rescued me.

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
I will praise you, Lord,
you have rescued me.

This response should be followed by one of the Prayers of the Faithful for the dead, as found in the booklet "Twenty-four Prayers

of the Faithful", published by the Liturgical Commission of the Philippines and available in all good Catholic bookstores. The Our Father and one of the orations for the dead conclude this short service.

7. Question:

In the new Lectionary there is quite a long text for the meditation song after the first reading. Are we expected to read all these "numbers" (they are numbered) or are we allowed to choose? I observed that both are being done.

Answer:

The responsorial psalm, to which you refer, is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and is usually taken from the Lectionary, since these texts are directly related to and depend upon the respective readings. To make the people's response easier, however, some texts of psalm and responses have also been selected for the several seasons of the year or for the different kinds of Saints. These may be used instead of the texts corresponding to the reading whenever the psalm is sung. If *sung*, therefore, the following texts may be chosen: the psalm in the lectionary, the gradual in the Roman Gradual, the responsorial psalm or the Alleluja psalm (outside Lent) in the Simple Gradual, as these books indicate (Instruction to the Missal, n. 36). The Alleluja psalm is particularly easy to sing, because the response to be sung by the people is always the Alleluja, for which there exist many simple and appealing melodies in the Gregorian tradition. As the Simple Gradual states, one should take at least five verses of the psalm. If there are more, one may select from among them (p. XI). Avoid also, if ever possible, the mere *reading* of this psalm; it makes of the psalm a new lesson.

8. Question:

Has the priest always to kiss the altar when coming to the sanctuary for holy Mass and before leaving?

Answer:

If the priest has to return from his seat at the end of the Mass only for the sake of kissing the altar, he may omit the kiss (Notitiae, May 1970, p. 184, n. 125).

9. Question:

Is it still allowed to ring the altar bells before the consecration and during the two elevations? Many parishes discontinued doing so.

Answer:

It is still allowed according to n. 109 of the general instruction of the new Missal ("pro opportunitate" and according to local customs).

10. Question:

What is actually the position of the faithful during the acclamation after the consecration? There are some who say, that we should stand, because it is a proclamation.

Answer:

The bishops of the Philippines decreed that we should kneel throughout the Eucharistic Prayer from after the Sanctus to the final doxology before the Our Father inclusive. It is true, according to the general instruction of the Missal, the faithful stand "from the prayer over the gifts to the end of the Mass" with the exception of the consecration when they are supposed to kneel "unless prevented by lack of space, large numbers, or some other reasonable cause" (n. 21). The conference of bishops may adapt these postures. Keeping an ancient Philippine tradition and also for the sake of those who have difficulties to stand over a longer time, the Philippine hierarchy decreed that the faithful should kneel from after the Sanctus on.

Even then, the kneeling position during the acclamation "Christ has died . . ." makes sense. The whole Eucharistic Prayer is a proclamation, even the whole Mass. "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you *proclaim* the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11, 26) This acclamation and the whole Eucharistic Prayer is not *only* a proclamation. Its very position — after the words of the Lord, "Do this in memory of me" — shows that it is anamnetic in character; it shares in the complexity of the whole Eucharistic celebration. To stress, therefore, exclusively only *one* aspect does not seem to be correct.

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