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Who Is The Proper Minister Of Exposition Of The Blessed Sacrament?

The Rite of Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction is found in nos. 82-100 of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (1973):

The ordinary minister for exposition of the Eucharist is a priest or deacon. At the end of the period of adoration, before the reposition, he blesses the congregation with the sacrament.

In the absence of a priest or deacon or if they are lawfully impeded, the following persons may publicly expose and later repose the Eucharist for the adoration of the faithful:

- a. an acolyte or special minister of communion;
- b. upon appointment by the local Ordinary, a member of a religious community or of a pious association of laymen or laywomen which is devoted to Eucharistic adoration.

Such ministers may open the tabernacle and also, as required, place the ciborium on the altar or place the host in the monstrance. At the end of the period of adoration, they replace the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. It is not lawful, however, for them to give the blessing with the sacrament (no. 91).

An "acolyte" and a "special minister" of Communion (now called an "extraordinary minister") are laypersons. In the circumstances noted in the rite, it is lawful for a layperson to repose the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, though a layperson may not perform the rite of benediction.

This rite of simple exposition is performed as such: The layperson may bring the pyx (a small round metal case used to carry the Host) to the altar and place the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance on the altar itself, but should not bring the monstrance with the Eucharist in procession.

The function of the extraordinary minister of exposition is limited to the simple exposition or reposition of the Blessed Sacrament with a minimum of ceremonial, though the exposition may be accompanied by a Eucharistic song.

Of course, should a priest or deacon be available, he may not delegate the exposition to someone else.

In selecting a suitable person for extraordinary ministries of this kind when the priest is unable to do so, the order is: instituted acolyte, instituted lector, major seminarian, religious brother, nun, layperson of either sex (see the 1973 instruction "Immensae Caritatis").

Fr. Ignatius Yeo

Reflection

Some of you may have already read the following article on Zenit recently. For the benefit of those who did not, here it is for your reflection:

Observance of Liturgical Norms and Ars Celebrandi

ROME, JULY 9, 2010 (Zenit.org).- *Here is a translation of the last article of the Spirit of the Liturgy series, which has been directed by Father Mauro Gagliardi, a consultant of the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff and professor of theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum of Rome.*

This article by Father Gagliardi concerns the importance of the observance of the liturgical norms and the "ars celebrandi."

During the Year for Priests, which ended last month, the column "The Spirit of the Liturgy" developed the topic "The Priest in the Eucharistic Celebration," chosen because of the coincidence in 2009-2010 of several anniversaries: the 150th of the death of the Holy Curé d'Ars (1859), the 40th of the promulgation of Paul VI's Missal (1969) and the 440th of Saint Pius V's Missal (1570), which in the edition approved by Blessed John XXIII (1962) represents the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite.[1] Hence the opportunity to make clear the peculiar dignity of the ordained priesthood, reflecting further on the theology and spirituality of the Holy Mass, particularly in the perspective of the minister who celebrates it.

In this last article, with which we also wish to take leave of our readers before the summer pause, we wish to reflect with the usual brevity on the topic of the "ars celebrandi."

1. The Post-Conciliar Situation

Vatican Council II ordered a general reform of the sacred liturgy.[2] The latter was effected after the closing of the Council, by a commission commonly called, for reasons of brevity, the Consilium.[3] It is known that, from the beginning, the liturgical reform was the object of criticisms, at times radical, as well as exaltations, in certain cases, excessive. It is not our intention to pause on this problem. We can say instead that it is generally agreed that an increase of abuses can be observed in the celebratory field after the Council.

The recent magisterium has also taken note of the situation and in many cases has called for the strict observance of the norms and of the liturgical indications. On the other hand, the liturgical laws established for the ordinary form (or of Paul VI) -- the one which, exceptions aside, is always and everywhere celebrated in the Church of today -- are much more "open" in relation to the past. The latter allow for many exceptions and different applications, and also provide many forms for the different rites (the pluriformity also increased in the passage from the Latin "editio typica" to the national versions). Despite this, a great number of priests believe that ultimately the space left to "creativity" must be enlarged, which is expressed above all with the frequent change of words or whole phrases in relation to those fixed in the liturgical books, with the insertion of new "rites" often completely foreign to the liturgical and theological tradition of the Church and even with the use of vestments, sacred vessels and decorations that are not always appropriate and, in some cases, even fall into the ridiculous.

Liturgist Cesare Girardo has summarized the situation with these words: *"If before [the liturgical reform] there was fixation, sclerosis of forms, unnaturalness, which made the liturgy of the time a 'liturgy of iron,' today there is naturalness and spontaneity, undoubtedly sincere, but often understood, misunderstood, which make -- or at least run the risk of making -- of the liturgy a 'liturgy of rubber,' slippery, elusive, soapy, which at times is expressed in an ostentatious liberation from all written normatives. [...] This badly understood spontaneity, which in fact is identified with improvisation, taking the easy way out, superficiality, permissiveness, is the new 'criterion' that fascinates innumerable pastoral agents, priests and laymen. [...] Not to speak of those priests who, at times and in some places, arrogate to themselves the right to use wild Eucharistic prayers, or to make up their texts or parts of them here and there."*[4]

In the encyclical "**Ecclesia de Eucharistia**," Pope John Paul II manifested his displeasure over the liturgical abuses that have often taken place, particularly in the celebration of Holy Mass, in as much as *"the Eucharist is too great a gift to endure ambiguities and diminutions."*[5] And he added: *"Unfortunately, it is to be lamented that, above all beginning with the years of the post-conciliar liturgical reform, because of a misunderstood sense of creativity and adaptation, there has been no lack of abuses, which for many have been the cause of uneasiness. A certain reaction to*

'formalism' has led some, especially in certain regions, to consider the 'forms' adopted by the great liturgical tradition of the Church and her magisterium as not obligatory and to introduce unauthorized innovations often all together unsuitable.

"Hence, I feel it my duty to make an urgent call to attention so that liturgical norms are observed with great fidelity in the Eucharistic celebration. They are concrete expressions of the authentic ecclesiality of the Eucharist; this is its most profound meaning. The liturgy is never someone's private property, either of the celebrant or of the community in which the mysteries are celebrated."[6]

2. Causes and Effects of the Phenomenon

The phenomenon of "liturgical disobedience" has extended in such a way, because of the number and in certain cases also because of the gravity, that the mentality has been formed in many by which the liturgy, with the exception of the words of the Eucharistic consecration, can be subject to all the modifications "pastorally" considered suitable by the priest or the community. This situation induced John Paul II himself to request the Congregation for Divine Worship to prepare a disciplinary Instruction on the Celebration of the Eucharist, published with the title "**Redemptionis Sacramentum**" on March 25, 2004. Indicated in the quotation reproduced earlier of "Ecclesia de Eucharistia" was the reaction to formalism as one of the causes of the "liturgical disobedience" of our time. "Redemptionis Sacramentum" points out other causes, among them a false concept of liberty [7] and ignorance. The latter in particular refers not only to knowledge of the norms, but also to a deficient understanding of the historical and theological value of many eucological texts and rites: *"Finally, abuses very often find their foundation in ignorance, given that in general that is rejected whose profound meaning is not understood, nor is its antiquity known."*[8]

Introducing the topic of fidelity to the norms in a theological and historical understanding, in addition to the text of the ecclesiology of communion, the instruction states: *"The mystery of the Eucharist is too great 'for someone to allow himself to treat it with his own personal choice, which would not respect either its sacred character or its universal dimension.' [...] Arbitrary acts do not benefit true renewal, but harm the true right of the faithful to liturgical action, which is expression of the life of the Church, according to her tradition and discipline. Moreover, they introduce in the very celebration of the Eucharist elements of discord and deform it, when it tends, by its very nature and in an eminent way, to signify and realize admirably communion with divine life and the unity of the People of God. Derived from these arbitrary acts are uncertainty in doctrine, doubt and scandal for the People of God and, almost inevitably, a violent repugnance that confuses and afflicts forcefully many faithful in our times, in which frequently Christian life suffers the very difficult environment of 'secularization.'*

"On the other hand, all Christian faithful enjoy the right to celebrate a true liturgy, and especially the celebration of the Holy Mass, which should be exactly as the Church has desired and established it, as written in the liturgical books and in the other laws and norms. Moreover, the Catholic people have the right to have the holy sacrifice of the Mass celebrated for them in keeping with all the teaching of the magisterium of the Church. Finally, the Catholic community has the right to have the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist carried out in such a way that it seems truly a sacrament of unity, excluding absolutely all the defects and gestures that can manifest divisions and factions in the Church."[9]

Particularly significant in this text is the appeal to the right of the faithful to have a liturgy celebrated according to the universal norms of the Church, in addition to stressing the fact that the transformations and modifications of the liturgy -- even if done for "pastoral" reasons -- in reality do not have a positive effect in this field; on the contrary, they confuse, disturb, and tire and can also make the faithful abandon religious practice.

3. The "Ars Celebrandi"

Here are the reasons why in the last four decades the Magisterium has reminded priests several times of the importance of the "ars celebrandi," which -- although it does

not consist only in the perfect execution of the rites according to the books, but also and above all in the spirit of faith and adoration with which these are celebrated -- cannot be carried out, however, if it is removed from the norms established for the celebration.[10]

It is expressed thus, for example, by the Holy Father Benedict XVI: "*The first way with which the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is fostered is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The 'ars celebrandi' is the best premise for the 'actuosa participatio.'* The '*ars celebrandi*' stems from faithful obedience to the liturgical norms in their plenitude, as it is precisely this way of celebrating which has ensured for two thousand years the life of faith of all believers, who are called to live the celebration as People of God, royal priesthood, holy nation (cf. 1 P 2, 4-5.9)."[11]

Recalling these aspects, one must not fall into the error of forgetting the positive fruits produced by the movement of liturgical renewal. The problem indicated, however, subsists and it is important that the solution of the same begin with the priests, who must commit themselves first of all to know in a profound way the liturgical books and also to put faithfully into practice their prescriptions. Only knowledge of the liturgical laws and the desire to hold oneself strictly to them will avoid further abuses and arbitrary "innovations" that, if at the time might perhaps move those present, in reality soon end by tiring and disappointing. Saving the best intentions of those who commit them, after forty years of "liturgical disobedience" it does not in fact build better Christian communities, but on the contrary it puts in danger the solidity of their faith and of their belonging to the unity of the Catholic Church.

The more "open" character of the new liturgical norms cannot be used as pretext to pervert the nature of the public worship of the Church: "*The new norms have much simplified the formulas, gestures, liturgical acts [...]. But neither must one go in this field beyond what is established: in fact, by doing so, the liturgy would be stripped of the sacred signs and of its beauty, which are necessary so that the mystery of salvation is truly realized in the Christian community and that it also understood under the veil of visible realities, through an appropriate catechesis. In fact the liturgical reform is not synonymous with de-sacralization, nor is it the motive for that phenomenon called the secularization of the world. Hence, it is necessary to preserve in the rites dignity, seriousness, sacredness.*"[12]

Therefore, among the graces we hope to be able to obtain from the celebration of the Year for Priests is also that of a true liturgical renewal in the heart of the Church, so that the sacred liturgy is understood and lived for what it is in reality: the public and integral worship of the Mystical Body of Christ, Head and members, worship of adoration that glorifies God and sanctifies men.[13]

Notes

[1] Cf. M. Gagliardi, "The Priest in the Eucharistic Celebration," ZENIT, Dec. 11, 2009: <http://www.zenit.org/article-33257?1=spanish>

[2] Cf. Vatican Council II, Sacrosanctum Concilium, No. 21.

[3] Abbreviation of "Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia."

[4] C. Giraud, "La costituzione 'Sacrosanctum Concilium': il primo grande dono del Vaticano II," in *La Civiltà Cattolica* (2003/IV), pp. 532; 531.

[5] John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, No. 10.

[6] *Ibid.*, n. 52. Cf. also Vatican Council II, "Sacrosanctum Concilium," No. 28.

[7] "It is not strange that the abuses have their origin in a false concept of liberty. However, God has given us, in Christ, not a false liberty to do as we please, but the liberty so that we are able to do what is fitting and just": Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, "Redemptionis Sacramentum," No. 7.

[8] *Ibid.*, No. 9.

[9] *Ibid.*, Nos. 11-12.

[10] Sacred Congregation of Rites, "Eucharisticum Mysterium," No. 20: "To foster the correct development of the sacred celebration and the active participation of the faithful, the ministers must not limit themselves to carry out their service with precision, according to the liturgical laws, but they must conduct themselves in such a way as to inculcate, through it, the meaning of sacred things."

[11] Benedict XVI, "Sacramentum Caritatis," No. 38. See No. 40, which develops the concept properly.

[12] Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, "Liturgicae Instaurationes," No. 1. The text continues: "The efficacy of liturgical actions does not lie in the constant search for ritual novelties, or for further simplifications, but in deeper reflection on the word of God and on the mystery celebrated, whose presence is assured by the observance of the rites of the Church and not those imposed by the personal taste of each priest. It must be kept in mind, moreover, that the imposition of personal reconstructions of the sacred rites by the priest offends the dignity of the faithful and opens the way to individualism and to personalism in the celebration of actions belonging directly to the whole Church."

[13] Cf. Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, I, 1; Vatican Council II, "Sacrosanctum Concilium," No. 7.

[*Translation by ZENIT*]

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Please note:

Once again, the Liturgy Commission has to draw your attention to the fact that the "Sunday Missal" – printed and reprinted in Singapore without the Ordinary's approval and unfortunately still in use in some parishes – is incomplete and unreliable.

The case in point: The **Mass of the Vigil of the Solemnity of the Assumption** is missing. Yet, the Ordo indicates clearly that, on Saturday 14 August, all the "sunset" Masses must be of the Vigil – not of the Day.

Prayers and Readings are found, of course, in the Sacramentary and Lectionary at their proper place.

The pastoral reason, so often put forward, would be to allow the faithful to taste and enjoy the richness of the Liturgy – not to fit the personal convenience of the preacher who has to deal with two sets of Readings.

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