

LITURGY NEWSLETTER

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A Quarterly Newsletter prepared for the Liturgy Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

The Editor writes: Last Lent this Newsletter concentrated on aspects of baptismal practice. This year it will look at some issues surrounding the other feature “especially characteristic of Lent”, the sacrament of penance.

It is now nearly forty years since Vatican II called for the rite of penance to be revised “to express more clearly the nature and effects of the sacrament” (SC 72), nearly thirty years since the revised rites were issued in Latin, over twenty five since they appeared in English. After a quarter of a century, it would not be premature to say that of all the revised rites this has been perhaps the least successful.

Three distinct rites were provided for different needs and circumstances. The third, Reconciliation of Several Penitents with General Confession and Absolution, was immediately implemented with enthusiasm and remarkable results in a number of our dioceses, but its use was challenged and subsequently disallowed by the Holy See (even in the recent jubilee year). The first rite, Reconciliation of Individual Penitents, would appear, according to general consensus, to be used less frequently and by fewer people than its predecessor. The quality of celebration is, of its nature, difficult to monitor, but a quarter century of experience and anecdotal evidence would suggest that it is still barely recognised as a liturgy, an act of worship, and that even the rather timid liturgical enhancements made to it in the 1973 rite are not widely implemented. Some suggestions for improved practice are offered in ‘Tried and Tested’, p.2.

The second, hybrid, rite, Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution, has become a familiar and valued addition to the spiritual and liturgical lives of many individuals and communities, but its take-up has been patchy, its use rarely more than seasonal or occasional, and its celebration often problematic. Notoriously, the more successful it is in attracting penitents, the less satisfactory it becomes as a liturgy and as an experience of confession. (This is perhaps a logistical problem that could, in principle, be addressed by more frequent celebrations and more numerous confessors.) Just as unsatisfactory are its many weaknesses as a liturgy. Ways in which these can be overcome are discussed in ‘Second Thoughts’, p.3. Some would see the best hope for the future revival and development of the sacrament in the often disregarded ‘Penitential Services’ also contained in the 1973 rite, and in various forms of mutual reconciliation and rituals of conversion emerging in pastoral practice. We hope to discuss these in a future issue of the Newsletter.

Chris Walsh

New Secretary for Liturgy Office

Fr Allen Morris has been appointed as Secretary to the Liturgy Office. He succeeds Mgr Anthony Rogers. Fr Morris was born in 1956. Following a career with London Transport supplies, he studied at Allen Hall seminary and was ordained priest for Westminster diocese by Bishop John Crowley in 1991. For three years he was assistant priest in North Harrow and also chaplain at

Harrow School. In 1994, he joined the pastoral formation team at Allen Hall as lecturer in liturgy. From 1998 to 1999 he was director of the Allen Hall Study Centre, before being appointed parish priest in Shepherds Bush. From 1993 to 2001, he was secretary of the Westminster diocesan Liturgy Commission. He has also been a member of the diocesan Historic Churches Committee, and the Art

continued on page 2

Contents

The Editor Writes	1	Second Thoughts	3
New Secretary for Liturgy Office	1-2	Beg, borrow... or buy	3
Further News	2	Early Roman Rite for the Reconciliation of Penitents	4
Tried and Tested	2	Tried and Tested <i>continued</i>	4

This sacrifice (of the Mass) is truly propitiatory... if we approach God with true hearts and right faith, with awe and reverence, contrite and penitent, we will receive mercy... For, appeased by this offering, the Lord certainly grants the grace and gift of repentance, and forgives crimes and sins, even enormous ones.

Session XXII, ch.9
Council of Trent,

The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before night-fall; it should end before daybreak on Sunday.” This rule is to be taken according to its strictest sense. Reprehensible are those abuses and practices which have crept in in many places in violation of this ruling, whereby the Easter Vigil is celebrated at the time of day that it is customary to celebrate anticipated Sunday Masses.

Paschale solemnitatis
Congregation for Divine Worship

We only argue over the matters that are important to us. That we argue so much among ourselves about liturgy is still a good sign: it means that liturgy is very important to us Catholics.

Archbishop R. Weakland,
Worship, January 2001

Coming Events

Two Music and Liturgy events this summer:

Crossing Borders—
Coming Home 25–28
July, Newman College
Birmingham, **National
Network of Pastoral
Musicians**. 01638 716
579

The **Society of St Gregory** will be holding its
Summer School, 19–23
August, New Hall
School, Chelmsford.
secretary@ssg.org.uk

Further Information

Rite of Penance
Goodlife Neale are planning to
reprint the *Rite of Penance*

Queen's Golden Jubilee
A booklet will be produced by
the Liturgy Office
020 7901 4850
lifeworsh@cbcew.org.uk

Ecumenical Worship Material
Churches together in Britain and
Ireland
020 7523 2121
jubilee@ctbi.org.uk
www.ctbi.org.uk/jubilee

Common Worship: Daily Prayer
Church House Publishing
020 7898 1306
bookshop@c-of-e.org.uk
www.chbookshop.co.uk
www.cofe.anglican.org/
commonworship/resources/
products/20638.html

**From the Rising of the Sun
to its Setting**
Is still available for Lent & Easter
price £1.75(Lent) £2.75(Easter)
from Liturgy Office see above

Catholic Media Office
020 79014800
cmo@cbcew.org.uk

Nolan Report
www.nolanreview.org.uk
Also available from:
Catholic Media Office see above

and Architecture Committee.
He was editor of *Westminster
Worship* from 1995 to 2001.
He presently serves as Roman
Catholic representative on the
Churches' Group on Funeral
Services at Cemeteries and
Crematoria. In 1999, he com-
pleted an MA in Liturgy
from the University of Notre
Dame, Indiana, USA. He takes
up the post of Secretary
full-time in February 2002.
Martin Foster continues to
serve as Assistant Secretary.

Liturgiam Authenticam

At the November 2001 meet-
ing of the Bishops' Confer-
ence the following statement
was made:

"The Bishops' Conference held
an initial discussion on the
Instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam*.

The Bishops' Conference
welcomes the emphasis given by
this document to the appropriate
expression of the worship of
God by his people through their
respective cultures and languages.

The Conference similarly
welcomes the Holy See's desire
for vernacular liturgical texts to
reflect the rich tradition of the
Roman Rite and the central role
of Bishops' Conferences in this
regard.

The Conference acknowledges
that *Liturgiam Authenticam* has
raised world-wide discussion with

Tried and Tested

To recover and foster an
understanding of Rite 1 as
an act of worship by the
Church, several enhancements
have been found useful:

Ritual context, by which
penitents (and confessors!) can
connect it with other sacra-
mental celebrations. E.g.:
transform the confessional
space from a cubby-hole into
a true 'sacramental chapel'; set
out an open bible and a large
crucifix or icon; light two
large candles outside the door.

Ministry: acting not simply as
a passive listener, kindly coun-

sellor, physician or judge, but
as a leader of worship. Dress
the part; no tatty ribbon-stole
over street clothes, but alb and
broad stole, etc. Pray with the
penitent; supply words and
formulas for them; print out a
variety of texts and resources,
and help them select.

Queen's Golden Jubilee

To mark the Queen's Golden
Jubilee later this year the bish-
ops agreed that one Mass in
every parish be celebrated for
the Queen on Sunday 2 June.
The bishops authorised the
use of an Opening Prayer
from the Masses for Various
Needs and Occasions and a
selection of scripture readings.
A booklet containing all the
texts is being prepared by the
Liturgy Office and will dis-
tributed through dioceses.

Ecumenical worship material
has been produced by CTBI.

The Search for Christian Unity

A popular adaptation of the
*Directory for the Application of
Principles and Norms on Ecu-
menism* has been published
by the Bishops' Conference.
Copies, price £4.00 are avail-
able from the Catholic Media
Office.

Common Worship: Daily Prayer

The Church of England
Liturgy Commission has
produced a draft text for
Morning and Evening Prayer,

the Holy See regarding a number
of canonical, ecclesiological and
pastoral issues."

the chair or kneeler for the
penitents, anonymity can still
be protected even in an open
space. Again, freed from the
constraints of the 'box', it is
possible to stand or kneel side-
by-side with the penitent.

Respect the **structure** pro-
vided in the Rite, which does
have a liturgical shape: greet-
ing, prayer, reading, reflection
on the reading, sacramental
action, thanksgiving, dismissal
(For a perfect form of the rite,
see the new *Methodist Worship
Book* pp. 422–425 — seri-
ously!) To overcome genera-
tions of contrary practice, in

Prayer during the Day and
Night Prayer. The 800 page
book published by Church
House Publishing also con-
tains seasonal material, along
with a questionnaire, in prep-
aration for a final edition
planned for 2005.

Nolan Report

The report of the independent
review on child protection
in the Catholic Church in
England and Wales, September
2001, has this to say about
the sacrament of reconcilia-
tion: "The arrangements for
the sacrament of reconciliation
(confession) for children are
one particular aspect of man-
aging the organisation to
prevent abuse or even the sus-
picion of abuse which we
have considered further. It
is already the case that some
priests administer this sacra-
ment in a setting where both
priest and layperson can be
seen but not heard. We rec-
ommend that wherever pos-
sible this should be the
norm for the confessions of
children; other arrangements
should be replaced as opportu-
nity allows." (3.3.9 and Rec-
ommendation 25) .

Continued on page 4

Second Rite - Second Rate?

Among the nature and effects of the sacrament of penance which needed expressing more clearly (SC 72), surely the most important was the social/ecclesial dimension of sin, forgiveness and reconciliation, which found no expression at all in the old rite, and then the liturgical character of the sacrament as an act of the Church's worship.

The *Praenotanda* to the rite declare inspiringly: "In the sacrament of penance, the faithful... are reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which works for their conversion by charity, example and prayer" (4) and "Penance always entails reconciliation with our brothers and sisters who are always harmed by our sins. In fact, men frequently join together to commit injustice. It is only fitting that they should help each other in doing penance." (5).

While Rite 1 still contains not a hint of this, Rite 2 is presented explicitly as an ecclesial expression of penance, in that the faithful assemble, "listen together to the word of God... help each other by common prayer... and all praise God together for his wonderful deeds" (22). Despite this, the only reconciliation given expression in the actual rite is the several individual reconciliations with God, not any reconciliation with neighbour, near or far. A minimum improvement (which should not need any authorisation) would be an invitation to exchange a sign of peace, either

following the joint recitation of the Lord's Prayer before confession or after all have confessed. And if indeed "it is fitting that they should help each other in doing penance" (5), surely at the very least a part of the assigned penance could be some act or project done jointly as a congregation or community? Otherwise, the rite as celebrated fails seriously to implement the theological vision enunciated in the introduction.

The *Praenotanda* also speak eloquently of the sacrament as an act of worship: "The celebration of this sacrament is always an act in which the Church proclaims its faith, gives thanks to God for the freedom with which Christ has made us free, and offers its life as a spiritual sacrifice in praise of God's glory as it hastens to meet the Lord Jesus." (7). For this to be realised in the case of Rite 1 requires some serious rescue work. With Rite 2 it should be much easier, but as a liturgy it does have serious weaknesses.

Structurally, it is too easy to treat the liturgy of the word as merely a preparatory service for individual confessions, after which people may (and do) slip away. Continuity, flow, tension and involvement have to be maintained during the possibly lengthy period of confessions. This indicates, for instance, that confessors and penitents should not disappear from view; that music and meditation should not be purely passive but to some degree participatory,

and that the celebration should have a strong climax and conclusion.

Ritually, the rite is weak on action, being almost entirely verbal. To compensate, icons, spotlighting and other visuals should be considered, as should full uniform vestments for concelebrants. Even more important is common ritual action, of which there is none in the rite. Most effective is processional movement, not just of ministers but of the whole congregation. In processing forward to confession, or in returning from it, each, for instance, could take water from the font or kiss an icon, or throw incense on a brazier, according to season. Best of all, the entire rite could be enriched ecclesially, structurally and ritually by strengthening the rather feeble conclusion with elements from the ancient Roman rite of reconciling penitents on Maundy Thursday, in which the bishop reintegrated them into the assembled Church by personally leading them, hand-in-hand, to the altar for the great 'eucharistic' prayer of thanksgiving (see p.4). This could be imagined to provide a fitting climax, whereby, after the proclamation of praise, the presiding celebrant invites all to exchange the peace and then goes down into the congregation and leads them by the hand to the sanctuary, where they crowd around the altar for the great prayer of thanksgiving.

Chris Walsh

Beg, borrow... or buy

Most of the helpful recent writing on the liturgy of reconciliation has come from the United States, often as a spin-off from their experience of RCIA.

James Dallen, *The Reconciling Community: the Rite of Penance* (Pueblo 1986) is another excellent volume in the Pueblo series of studies on the revised rites. A history of the sacrament in its changing ecclesial and pastoral contexts is followed by a fine critical commentary on the 1973 rites and

their implementation.

Lawrence Mick, *Penance: the Once and Future Sacrament* (Liturgical Press 1987) pleads the need for the restoration of an 'order of penitents', analogous to the order of catechumens. Like initiation, conversion and penance are a process undertaken in common, supported by the community and rites of the Church. The subject is treated comprehensively by Joseph Favazza, *The Order of Penitents: Historical Roots and Pastoral Future* (Liturgical Press 1988), and exam-

ples are offered in James Lopresti, *Penance: a Reform Proposal for the Rites Pastoral Press 1987*

Two symposia have been edited by Robert Kennedy: *Reconciliation: the Continuing Agenda* (Liturgical Press 1987) has a wide variety of contributions on the historical, theological, pastoral and liturgical issues in their American context, and *Reconciling Embrace* (LTP 1998) has stimulating articles about the future of the sacrament, together with reflections and questions for exploration.

The Methodist Church is inviting all women worshippers to smash crockery during next Sunday's service as a symbolic "act of violence".

The addition of plate-smashing to the liturgy is the Church's novel way of marking the International Day of Action against Violence on Women.

For health and safety reasons, women are asked to secure the crockery in a plastic bag before beating it with a hammer "to prevent flying debris harming participants".

The crockery smashing will happen during the Act of Confession and Reconciliation and worshippers will then make a cross out of the broken pieces.

The minister will lead a prayer, saying: "We stand in solidarity with women and all victims of violence who are piecing their lives together."

Daily Telegraph 20/11/01

Further Information

Liturgical Press (also Pueblo)
www.litpress.org
Distribution in UK—
Columba Books
00 3531 294 2556
www.columba.ie

Liturgical Training Publications (LTP)
www.ltp.org
Distribution in UK—
McCrimmons
01702 218 956
www.McCrimmons.co.uk

Early Roman Rite for the Reconciliation of Penitents

(Maundy Thursday)

“To those who fear that the liturgy may become “so ordinary that people lose the transcendent experience of God”, I can only suggest that the Incarnation - that radiant scandal of divine mercy, love and oneness with our flesh - is the supreme example of God’s bad taste.

Nathan Mitchell
Worship 1999

What may one think of inviting people, young or old, to spend hours before the Blessed Sacrament, while never inviting them to drink of the blood of Christ from the common cup?

David Power
Antiphon 2, 2000

Petition for Reconciliation

The moment of grace has come, the day of God’s mercy and humanity’s salvation, the day when death was vanquished and eternal life began.

In the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts it is time to plant new shoots and root out all that is withered up...

Our community is to be increased by those to be baptized; it will also be increased by sinners who return.

The waters of baptism wash clean; so too do the tears of the penitent...

Encouraged on their way by the example of those around them,

and in the presence of the whole Church praying with them, they cry out:

we acknowledge all our faults, our sins are ever before us.

Turn away your face from our sins, O Lord, and wipe away all our iniquity.

Give us again the joy of salvation and build up your strength within us.

Absolution

May almighty God absolve you from every bond of sin that you may have eternal life and live through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Solemn Prayer of Thanksgiving

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, holy Lord, almighty Father and everliving God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You willed that he should wondrously be born, that he should pay off the debt of Adam and by dying should destroy our death; that he should bear our wounds in his body and wash away our sins with his blood; that as we were brought down

by the envy of the enemy, we should rise again to life

by the compassion of your Son.

Through him we ask you, Lord, to hear our prayer for the transgressions of others, unable though we are to improve our selves.

*from page 2 - **Tried and Tested***

which the penitent took the lead, will require some catechesis and persistence, especially to insinuate a brief passage of scripture. Cards or leaflets with the liturgical outline and a selection of readings and acts of sorrow can easily be made available. New Testaments and Psalters can be left on pews. Even Missalettes

Loving Lord, your servants abandoned you to follow their inclinations but you in your loyalty welcome them back. You accepted the tears of Peter and gave him the keys of the kingdom; to the thief who confessed his faith you promised the rewards of that kingdom.

And so, most loving Lord, tenderly welcome home those for whom we pray and restore them to the bosom of your Church. Let not the enemy triumph over them, but let your Son reconcile them to yourself; let him cleanse them of all guilt and welcome them once more to his table.

May he so renew them with his body and blood that he may lead them hereafter

to his heavenly kingdom, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Grant to these your servants, Lord, worthy fruits of repentance,

that as they harmed by their sins the wholeness of your Church

they may be restored to it, pardoned and unharmed...

Let not your Church be weakened in any part of its body,

nor your flock sustain any harm; let not the enemy rejoice

over any loss to your family nor death have power

over any reborn in baptism.

Texts from the Gelasian Sacramentary (6thC. material), retained in Pontificale Romanum until Vatican II.

Liturgy Newsletter

www.liturgy.demon.co.uk/
newsletter

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can supply the following day's readings as a basis for examination of conscience. A Rite 1½ can be adopted, whereby the confessor joins a group of penitents to share a brief liturgy of the word together before entering the confessional space. Today's reduced numbers make such creative adaptations much more feasible.