

Appreciating the liturgy

An exciting new project, springing from the Benedictine family, will bear its first fruit in September of this year with the publication of 'Appreciating the Collect: An Irenic Methodology'. This considerable contribution to liturgical scholarship is the child of members of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute at Sant' Anselmo in Rome, and comes with the endorsement of the Institute and an enthusiastic foreword from Dom Notker Wolf, Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Confederation. 'Appreciating the Collect' will be but the first volume of a series of volumes 'appreciating' (*Liturgiam Aestimare* is the title of the series) the current liturgy of the Church.

'Appreciating', because many Catholics of the Latin West look whimsically to the Christian East for their liturgical ideal, or else they look to a liturgical golden age which they believe to be in the past or in the future. Some hope for a restoration of the pre-Conciliar liturgy. Some hope for a 'reform of the reform', a revisiting and changing of the direction of the initial direction of the liturgical reform. Others would like to see the reform we have seen since Vatican II continue its pace and direction. Some would like to re-catholicize the reform, in other words stop the external changes whilst spiritualizing and internalizing liturgical participation. Others would like to see the reform inculturated following the principles established by the Vatican II Constitution on the Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 37-40).

The *liturgiam aestimare* series, however, examines the missal of 2002 – the current Latin ordinary form of the Roman Mass, the English translation of which is currently being prepared for our altars - and simply *appreciates* it. It endeavours to inform and deepen the liturgical debate vibrant in today's Church, but aligns itself with no particular party. In this it serves a valuable purpose, for little attention has been given to the detailed study of the renewed *editiones typicae* in the effort to translate and implement them pastorally. The time is now opportune to deepen the academic study and appreciation of the renewed liturgical books. Accordingly, this new model of liturgical renewal was proposed at the *Societas Liturgica* meeting in Palermo in 2007, and entitled *Liturgiam Aestimare*: Appreciating the Liturgy, for, it is only by deepening our appreciation of the current liturgical documents, that the whole Church will discern its way forward. As Robert Taft SJ wrote earlier this year, 'Roman Catholics must learn to understand, appreciate and market the riches of their own Latin tradition.'

'Irenic' because the Colloquia and associated publications are marked by an academic serenity which affords the current missal due respect without the often unmeasured criticism of it in our day. These prayers are, after all, means by which the Catholic Church strives to effect the salvation of her children, and should not be lightly treated or dismissed. Far from polarizing positions, a detailed and delicate study of the renewed liturgical texts offers liturgical scholars the resources for deeper and more irenic study. Even as contributions from England, North America, Africa and Australia witness to an international consensus, so too contributions from both Roman Catholic and other ecclesial perspectives ensure that this gift is offered to the wider Church.

'Methodology' because the genius of the series, masterfully revealed in its first volume, is its establishing of a critical apparatus by which liturgical texts of the Mass may be examined and discussed. This methodology is the result of the collaboration of a number of important scholars, some of whom met at the inaugural colloquium of the project at Sant' Anselmo on May 31st 2008. Its subject matter was the Collect, the Opening Prayer of the Mass.

Five papers were given. The first paper, given by Msgr Renato de Zan, a priest of the diocese of Pordenone, Italy was a revision of his own article, now the standard methodology used in interpreting

liturgical texts. Msgr de Zan is professor of liturgical hermeneutics at the Pontifical Institute, and also teaches in Padua and Pordenone. He is a liturgical consultant for the Italian Bishops' Conference.

The second paper was given by Dom James G. Leachman OSB, monk of Ealing Abbey, London, England, and professor of both liturgy and of liturgical spirituality at the Institute. His paper was entitled, "The Easter Vigil Collect".

An Anglican contributor to the conference Dr. Bridget Nichols, originally from South Africa, now the Lay Chaplain to Bishop of Ely, England, gave the third paper entitled "An Anglican Experiment in Appreciating the Liturgy: The Easter Day Collect (First Holy Communion) in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI". Her paper analyzed the Easter Sunday Collect in the Book of Common Prayer of 1549 and developed the historical context of the prayer and its source in the Sarum Missal.

A fourth paper was presented by Fr. Anthony Igbekele, priest of the diocese of Ondo, Nigeria. His paper was entitled, "The Opening Prayer for Epiphany: A Grammatical and Literary Analysis". Fr Igbekele recently completed a Doctorate of Sacred Liturgy at the Institute. His doctoral thesis is entitled: "Eucharist as *oblatio* and *sacrificium* in the Latin Fathers". He presented the only philological study of the vocabulary of a collect.

A fifth paper was presented by Dom Daniel P. McCarthy OSB, monk of St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kansas, USA. His paper was entitled "Between Memories and Hopes, Anamnesis and Eschatology in the Sunday Collects". Dom Daniel's name will be recognised by readers of the Tablet, in which he has a regular column.

Each of the five papers considered its respective collect or collects primarily in light of its literary structure, and then in light of the historical and cultural context of the origin of the collect. The respective collect's biblical allusions were explored and interpretative keys were presented for understanding the collect.

The Papal Latinist, Fr Reginald Foster, commented on the Latin of the prayers. Fr Foster has, for some forty years, been responsible for the Latin translations of papal and other ecclesiastical documents. He is one of Rome's characters, and has an enthusiastic following of lovers of the Latin tongue amongst the students of Rome. His contribution to the colloquium was at once lively and entertaining. His anecdotes concerning modern Rome and Latin were second to none. His paper in the published proceedings will constitute the first ever presentation in print of his unique methodology of teaching the Latin language. This is, in itself, of great importance.

Abbot Patrick Regan OSB, Abbot Emeritus of St. Joseph Abbey, Louisiana, USA, and former Abbot President of the Swiss-American Congregation moderated the proceedings. Dom Patrick, whose paper is entitled, "The Collect in Context" presents the history of the Collect as a ritual unit.

In addition to those giving papers, there were also present Dom Ephraim Carr, monk of St Meinrad Archabbey, USA, professor of eastern liturgies at the *Augustinianum*, and a consultant for the Liturgical Commission of the Congregation of Oriental Churches. Dom Ephraim is the moderator of the series.

The Abbot of Farnborough, who is overseeing the publication of the series, was also present.

The Collects, Opening Prayers of the Mass, were described by Abbot Cabrol of Farnborough in 1920, as 'a much-neglected spring of living water.' This first volume draws deeply from that well. Akin in its method to that of *lectio divina* it examines the prayers collectively, and some individually, from a

great number of angles and gives fascinating insights into the weight of the yoke on a translator's shoulder.

How should one translate, for example, the venerable '*Deus*' at the start of the collects? Other languages offer better options than the stark, cold, Anglo-Saxon 'God'. Should one therefore begin the collect '*O* God', or should one find an alternative which is gentler on the ear but unfaithful to a tradition as old as the patristic era? Can one understand an individual collect without a working knowledge of the whole liturgical year? Did you know, for example, that the vocabulary of collects links feasts across the year, thereby punctuating the annual liturgical cycle? (e.g. the word *gloria* links Christmas, Epiphany and Easter in the Latin, though this is not even echoed in the present English translation). And what of the shape of the prayers? Have you ever given thought how fixed is the shape of the collect? God, who has...grant that...in order that.... It all makes for rich reading and a more profound appreciation of the treasures of the Missal.

It is hoped that '*Appreciating the Liturgy – the Collect*' will be launched during the Congress of Abbots in Rome in September of this year. Research libraries, monasteries and seminaries will find in it an invaluable tool and bishops will find the resources necessary to their ministry of directing the future course of liturgical renewal. It is hoped also that in future *lectio divina* and preparation for Mass we should not hurtle toward the readings, but pause at the opening prayer, appreciating the collect, and the richness distilled therein.

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