

Preface

A new generation

I am pleased to present the volume of Father Pietro Angelo (Pierangelo) Muroli, *The Mystery of Christ in Time and Space. The Christian Celebration*. Above all, because Pierangelo is a colleague of mine, teaching at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute of St Anselm, where we both studied and were formed in the authentic spirit of the liturgy. My own liturgical studies date back to the 1960s when the Pontifical Liturgical Institute (PIL) was enthusiastically taking its first steps and when the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*¹ had been promulgated just two years previously. The studies of Prof. Muroli in the PIL, from 2002 to 2006, already belong to the third millennium, to a period in which the liturgical reform desired by the Second Vatican Council can be considered implemented following the publication of almost all the liturgical books.² True, there is a difference here of time, but a continuity of place and content.

I am therefore pleased to present the volume of a colleague and of a friend. However, what gives me most inward pleasure is not so much his friendship as a generational fact. I belong to the generation of the period of the Council, a Council awaited with trepidation and lived with enthusiasm. Not only that, but immediately after the Council sittings I had the opportunity to work for twenty-two years in the institutions of the Holy See in charge of implementing the liturgical reform; and immediately afterwards, providence allowed me to spend another twenty years celebrating the liturgy desired by the Council in countless communities across all the continents of the world, in the service of Saint John Paul II and, for a brief period, also of Pope Benedict XVI. I was thus able to experience directly the fact that the renewed liturgy had been received everywhere in the Church by the great majority of pastors and the Christian people, “in a spirit of obedience and indeed of joyous fervour”.³

Despite the passing of the years, my generation has not lost its passion for the liturgy of the Council; however, especially in the last decade, it has felt ever

¹ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (December 4th, 1963).

² JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter, *Vicesimus quintus annus*, on the 25th anniversary of the Conciliar Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the Sacred Liturgy (December 4th, 1988), 10, 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

more strongly the void and nostalgia for the loss of the witnesses who lived the experience of the Council: the Council Fathers and the great figures of the liturgists who collaborated in the drafting of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and in the implementation of the reform. With the passage of time, in fact, have grown fewer and fewer those who lived through that unique period which the fathers of the Council themselves defined as “a passage of the Holy Spirit in his Church”.⁴

And yet the loss of its witnesses does not mark the end of an era. Indeed, every time I have the opportunity to meet priests, students or laity who are enthusiastically interested in discovering the riches of the liturgy, every time I meet some young professor full of enthusiasm for teaching, I feel that the Spirit continues to act in the Church. So, when I had the draft of this study in my hands and I could read the text, I felt an inner consolation: the season of the Council is not ended, the liturgical reform continues its journey under the Spirit’s guidance, because the generation of witnesses has been able to transmit the same enthusiasm of its beginnings to the new generation. Yes, the Spirit continues to renew the beauty of the liturgy and to render more resplendent the face of the Church.

The content of the volume

As the title says, the volume has at its centre the Mystery of Christ considered in the passage of time and in the space of the church. It is very important, however, not to forget that the Mystery of Christ has as its source the concrete Christian celebration, that is, the liturgical action.

In the eight chapters that make up the volume, the author deals with the issues that the liturgical studies of the last fifty years have brought into focus and addressed. Of course, there is no lack of historical references that relate to the liturgical movement, but attention is always centred on the celebration of the Church today. The first chapter aims to help the reader understand the meaning of the liturgical celebration. In the following chapters, after having specified that the Mystery of Christ is the primary object of the celebration, the author deals with other aspects of the celebration that relate to time and to space, such as the language of the rite, the liturgical assembly, the celebration of the Word of God, the liturgy of time and in time, the liturgical year, the Liturgy of the Hours and finally liturgical space and the places of celebration.

As you can imagine the subject matter is well distributed and organised in a logical sequence, so it is not difficult for the reader to follow the thread of the argument. In fact, at the end of each chapter is a Summary, that is, a re-

⁴ SC 43.

sumé of the subject matter discussed, so it is easy to revise and memorize the material covered.

So the publication is presented in a way that is suitable for easily learning the fundamental aspects of the liturgy. It is a volume that should be in the hands of liturgy students and that can also serve as a guide for teachers' teaching. Finally, the volume can also be useful to a wider audience of those who wish to become aware of the fundamental aspects that liturgical science has developed in the post-conciliar years.

The harmony between principles and concrete celebration

In the volume, it seems to me that Professor Pierangelo Muroni has managed to forge that harmony between general principles of reform and its concrete implementation in the sequence of its various rituals and rubrics, which was one of the most evident novelties of the liturgical books of the Council reform. This harmony had its prototype in the method inaugurated by the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Before the conciliar document, the separation between general principles and celebration was already and unfortunately a legacy of centuries. For since the Middle Ages, the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi et intelligendi* had gone their separate ways, increasingly impoverishing Christology, separated from every soteriological perspective, and reducing the liturgy to a pure rubricism and legalism. The celebration of the liturgy, separated from the general principles of liturgical theology, had been effectively reduced to a mechanical execution of rubrics disconnected from history and from the life of men and women of any period.

This volume, along the lines of the conciliar Constitution on the Liturgy, brings the liturgy back into space and time of men and women today.

The spring of the Church

The Mystery of Christ in Time and Space. The Christian Celebration introduces the liturgy as an experience for the believer of our time, and therefore remains a sign of hope for the future path of reform.

I would like to conclude this brief presentation with a passage by Pope Paul VI, which I have never tired of rereading.

Hope, which is the gaze of the Church towards the future, fills her heart and says how it beats in new and harmonious expectation.

The Church is not old, it is ancient; time does not bend it, and if it is faithful to the intrinsic and extrinsic principles of its mysterious existence, it is rejuvenated.

■ PREFACE

It does not fear the new; it lives from it. Like a tree with a sure and fruitful root, it draws from within itself the spring time for every historical period.⁵

Yes, hope is the Church's gaze towards the future, one historical cycle closes, and the signs of a new spring already bloom.

✠ PIERO MARINI
*Titular Archbishop of Martirano,
President of the Pontifical Committee
for International Eucharistic Congresses*

Rome, 27th April 2014

Low Sunday

The canonization of Saints John XXIII and John Paul II

⁵ PAUL VI, *Insegnamenti VII* (1969), 995.

Introduction

I am more and more convinced that what I wrote a few years ago when I published my first book as a contribution to liturgical science corresponds to reality: a book, a study, is never the work of the author alone, but is the result of reading, of encounters, of places, of times that the author has experienced and which remain indelible in his life, enriching it and stimulating its maturation, so as to become the impulse and the force behind the pen whose movements in ink indelibly mark out the patterns of human knowledge.

What I want to say by way of introducing the reader to the present study is not intended as the acknowledgement that normally ends the presentation of a book, but rather to make manifest the actual spirit and soul that has given life to it.

The origin of these pages, in fact, can be found in two places and in the historical moment we are currently living. Let's start by referring to the places.

This book has seen its gestation and writing in two places dear to the author and to the whole liturgical world: the Benedictine Monastery of Maria Laach, in Germany, and the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome.

The first, in which I had the opportunity to spend a long period of time as a guest and researcher, sharing in the life and liturgy of the monastery and profiting enormously from its precious library, enabled me to breathe the same air which nourished the life, the mind, the study and the research of the great personalities who gave a considerable impulse to the liturgical movement and to its subsequent reform: people like Abbot Ildefonsus Herwegen and Odo Casel, although in his case only for short periods because of his service as chaplain to the Benedictine nuns of Holy Cross in Herstelle. They are monks and scholars, thanks to whom today we have the honour and the burden of being at the service of liturgical science; an honour, because of the pride and gratitude with which we are able to serve such a "simple and noble lady"; a burden because, by bringing together its inheritance, we feel the obligation and the responsibility to continue the work begun by them at the service of the Church and of the science of the liturgy.

In my extended stay at Maria Laach, I had the joy of two totally different experiences. The first was to cross, in a small boat, the lake that lies within the monastery estate and on which the wonderful Romanesque church is reflected. It was a unique experience that made me sense how the image and the beauty of the Creator can be "legible" and "imaginable" in the beauty of his

creation. I thought that the liturgy is also this path of beauty through which we can experience “beauty” *par excellence* and are able to see ourselves reflected, wrapped in his profound Mystery which we celebrate in the Christian rites.

The second experience was that of accompanying the “Apple-man” (as the monk responsible for the great monastery orchards is affectionately called) in collecting fruit. I remember that not all the apples had to be harvested: the Apple-man strongly urged us to pick only those that had reached a certain degree of ripeness; the others, still green, should remain on the trees until the opportune moment was reached. I will return to this experience later on.

The second place that has contributed to giving life to these pages is the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in which, thanks to great figures including Salvatore Marsili, Cipriano Vagaggini, Burkhard Neunheuser, the insights of the pioneers of the reform and the study of the Tradition of the Church, especially in the scriptural, patristic and liturgical sources, led to the development of a theological way of thinking and a profoundly liturgical sensibility that contributed efficaciously and decisively to the conciliar discussions and clarifications about the liturgy. Today the author, in his study, having himself been able to draw on the human and theological sources that the Pontifical Liturgical Institute has always embodied and embodies in its teaching, finds himself to be mediator, in the teaching, of this same experience and of the faith that has been deepened in the liturgical books and celebrated in the Christian church. This is the source of the desire to publish this work in which the writer pauses to reflect on the various components of the Christian celebration understood as a celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ and through which the liturgy becomes a mediator of salvation, “in” and “through” the Church, for people today.

After an attempt to open up the concept of “celebration” in its deepest dimensions, starting from the two axes of space and time that are involved in the liturgical action, and which represent the common thread that characterizes and weaves through these pages, the present work covers those areas involved in the Christian celebration, and in which the *ars celebrandi* finds expression in its own liturgical language: the celebrating assembly, subject of liturgical action; the Word of God as the proclamation of salvation in the sounds of the words and in the animation of the Spirit; time, as a “place” in which the liturgy reveals the Eternal; the liturgical year, in which the Paschal Mystery of Christ is intelligibly and gradually represented and celebrated; the Liturgy of the Hours, the public prayer of the people of God, which prolongs the “summit” of the Eucharistic celebration; liturgical space which, in the mystagogy of the church and its rites, manifests the one faith in the Risen One. It is a research that always makes direct use of the sources, together with a concern to reaffirm the conciliar principles and to offer a serious and new theological-liturgical reflection.

I end these introductory words by mentioning the final element that crosses the path of this work: the historical moment we are living as a Church and

its liturgy, the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the Liturgical Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. We know well how many are 50 years in the life of a human being, but in relation to history, and to the history of the Church, in particular, they are a small matter. It is certainly a stage of the journey, but one that encourages us not to stop but rather to proceed with renewed enthusiasm and great confidence in continuing to promote the teaching, the concerns, the anxieties, the requests, the expectations that the Second Vatican Council, and that the liturgical reform emerging from it, have advanced, aware of the fact that, as the Apple-man teaches, even if we have gathered the ripe fruit, there is still much to be garnered, when the Spirit, with his “warmth” that is radiated in the historical sing of time and in the space of the Church, a community of believers in the Risen, will have ripened the fruit fertilised by the liturgical reform but still unripe. I hope that this work will contribute to this end.

PIETRO ANGELO MURONI

4th December 2013
50th anniversary of the promulgation
of the Liturgical Constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*