

The Liturgy, the Family,
and the Crisis of Modernity
Essays of a Traditional Catholic

Joseph Shaw



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From the West Door looking east. Taken by the author.

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Inquiries to

info@osjustipress.com

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*Domine, dilexi decorem domus tuæ,
et locum habitationis gloriæ tuæ.*

I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house;
and the place where thy glory dwelleth.

—Psalm 25(26):8

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Introduction

Six of the chapters in this book have been previously published in English, and two others in translation. In addition, seven have been presented as talks, but not until now printed. The remaining three have been specially composed for this collection, though I have written about these topics extensively on my own blog, LMSChairman.org. Since most of the chapters of this book were conceived as stand-alone pieces, they can be read as such, and I have not impeded this benefit by removing arguments and ideas which are found in more than one place across the collection. What I have done is to correct and sometimes expand the pieces, and introduce some cross-references.

These papers are efforts to address particular aspects of the great debate of our time: the crisis of modernity, particularly as it affects the Catholic Church. This encompasses the linked crises of faith, culture, and sexuality.

What I mean by the “crisis of modernity” can be described in this way. It is often observed that the project of Enlightenment rationalism, coupled with capitalism and building on the Protestant Reformation, weakens the ties that bind individuals to each other: to family, village or city, religious communities, nations, and so on. Many regard this as a positive development: as a liberation from expectations, habits, and norms that inhibit the freedom of individuals to go their own way. Certainly, the things that bound together local, national, and religious communities in former times were far from perfect. The negative results of the loss of these ties, nevertheless, are increasingly making themselves felt. As I note in chapter 7, the sociologist Hillary Putnam summarises these negative consequences as the “loss of social capital.”

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As I see it, the long process has become a crisis, as more and more fundamental social connections are undermined and severed. The crisis can be seen in particular with the family and the liturgy. A purely rationalistic and individualistic family is a contradiction in terms. Something with emotional bonds and commitments is necessary to sustain the family, and there is no satisfactory alternative to the family as a means of bringing up children. In a similar way, a purely rationalistic and individualistic religious rite is a contradiction in terms. A set of words and rituals in some sense “given,” not self-created, is essential to the idea of the worship of something beyond ourselves.

The development of the process of the dissolution of bonds, which characterises modernity, has not (yet) entirely destroyed these institutions, but it has brought them close enough to collapse to give us an insight into the inevitable consequences. This is why I call it a crisis: it is a moment when we may be able to gain the wisdom to avert the final stage, or we may simply plunge into it.

The theme of part 1 of this volume is the transformation of culture. This transformation means that, for those of us on the wrong side of it, a special effort is required to understand the traditional Mass: what it is for, what are its principles of development, and how worshippers are supposed to engage with it. As I note in chapter 1, this distance does not make this Mass less attractive, but rather a revelation: a message from another world, which cuts through those aspects of modern culture that isolate us from our own spiritual instincts, and from the supernatural. I develop an understanding of the traditional Mass in chapters 2, 3, and 4. In chapter 5, I turn to the non-Catholic philosopher Byung-Chan Hul, who sees pre-modern ritual culture as an antidote to modernity’s mechanised and commercialised narcissism—an idea that would have appealed very much to the Catholic apologists who evangelised industrial Britain and America with such success a century ago. In chapter 6, I confront the Enlightenment argument directly: whether destroying tradition liberates or impoverishes us.

In part 2, I focus on the era of the revolution itself. Chapters 7 and 8 assess the sociological effects of the Second Vatican Council and the liturgical reform, and their effect on Catholic belief. This leads to my

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responding to some particularly bitter critiques of the ancient Mass and its adherents, which try to connect them with racism (chapter 9), sexual repression (chapter 10), and clerical sexual abuse (chapter 11). In regard to this abuse, chapter 11 examines one of the roots of this problem within the Church—clericalism—and chapter 12 addresses the way abusers have been able to take advantage of the adoption, particularly by the educational establishment, of the morality of consent.

In part 3, I turn to issues surrounding the family and the sexes. I start with another aspect of the historical development of the crisis in the Church, which is critical to its complete understanding: the well-documented way in which religion came to be seen as feminine (chapter 13). This is followed by discussions of the male and female roles in the Church and the economy of salvation (chapters 14 and 15), the effect of feminism on sexuality (chapter 16), and the role of the family in recovering, maintaining, and transmitting culture to future generations.

With this final essay I return to the hope I expressed in the first one. A sober assessment of the problems our society faces and of the abject condition of the Church at the current moment seems overwhelming; nevertheless, we all have our work to do. We cannot bring back past generations, but we can ensure there is a new one.

Pro patribus tuis nati sunt tibi filii.

Instead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee.

Psalm 44:17 (45:16)

Joseph Shaw
January 6, 2023
Feast of the Epiphany

Part I

Liturgy

Discovering and Rediscovering the Traditional Mass

Finding the Old Mass

God has been good to me: I stumbled over the traditional Mass twice before I really appreciated it.

One Lent in my childhood, it must have been in the early to mid 1980s, my mother proposed to me that we get up early to attend a daily Mass. This pious resolution did not long survive contact with reality, but for a few days we went to one of London's great churches, the Oratory of St Philip Neri, at seven in the morning, and walked its considerable length to the chapel of St Wilfrid, which is to the right of the high altar. This was closed with a curtain, enormous, thick, opaque, and sound-deadening, which we had to struggle through to enter the crowded but tiny chapel, where an old priest, Msgr Alfred Gilbey, was celebrating the traditional Mass. When this nefarious activity, the celebration of this form of the Mass, was not taking place, which is to say for the rest of the day, this curtain was drawn aside and hardly noticeable.

Msgr Gilbey died in 1998, at the age of 97, so he must have been in his eighties at this time, and it was his age which allowed him to freely celebrate the ancient Mass. My family knew him, and no doubt this encouraged the choice of this Mass for our devotion, despite it being so well hidden. However, the combination of our always being late, and the speed of Msgr Gilbey's celebration, meant that we invariably arrived about half-way through. What is clearest in my memory is his saying the long, traditional formula for the

This was first published in Polish translation in Tomasz Rowiński, ed., *Odwieczna Msza Świadcstwa* (Wrocław: Rosa Mystica, 2021).

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distribution of Holy Communion, quietly, rapidly, repeatedly, and without break or pause, as he went down the kneeling line of Communicants.

It was, for me, a deeply mysterious, though not unattractive, liturgical experience. It must have been in my mind when, in about 1988, I used a newly acquired bank account of my own to respond to an advertisement to join the Latin Mass Society. I had had no chance to attend the ancient Mass since those first experiences, and there was no immediate prospect of attending one again. But the 1980s in Britain was a decade of reaction, and just as in dress, architecture, and politics, much of what had been done in the 1960s and 1970s was being critically reassessed, the idea of a group preserving a form of the liturgy which had been casually cast aside in those decades appealed to me a good deal. I read the messages from the then Chairman, the late Christopher Inman, expressing both his frustration and the extraordinary perseverance characteristic of the movement in those years. I didn't really understand the background, but I sympathised with him all the same.

I remained an inactive member of the Society for more than a decade, seeing in their quarterly lists of traditional Masses none in Oxford, where I arrived as an undergraduate in 1991. The real situation, as I eventually discovered, was that Masses were being celebrated by a retired priest, but the archbishop had insisted that they not be advertised. However, before this changed, I had another curious encounter with the Old Mass at the other side of the globe.

While I was studying for my doctorate I made a trip to New Zealand, and while crossing the country from north to south I stayed the night with a cousin I had never met before. I realised it was her looking for me at the railway station, thanks to her remarkable family resemblance to my mother. She was not a Catholic but found out on my behalf about Mass times which would fit my itinerary. She gave me the details of a Saturday evening Mass in the Cathedral at Christchurch. Sensing my conservatism, she remarked "You'll find us very informal here." When I got there—late, again—I slunk into a pew at the back and gradually became aware of an old priest celebrating in Latin with his back to the nave, a considerable distance away. It was the traditional Mass.

Discovering and Rediscovering the Traditional Mass

It was a year or two after this, the autumn of 2001, that I found the situation in Oxford had changed: a traditional Mass was finally being advertised as taking place, on Sundays. The location, however, was obscure, and my first attempt to find it was a complete failure. This failure, however, was partly one of credulity. I could not at first believe, what the following Sunday I found to be a fact, that this Mass, taking place with the permission of the archbishop, was celebrated in a small meeting-room in a nondescript municipal building, the West Oxford Community Centre, which local groups could hire by the hour.

There, at last, I attended the traditional Mass: not arriving late, or seeing it from a great distance, but with about twenty people crowded into a plain box of a room, where the young priest had to vest in front of us and celebrate on a portable altar.

I came out of that ridiculous room—we later moved to a larger one, which doubled as a basketball court—with but one thought: “This is it.” This is what I had been looking for, the real thing, Mass as it ought to be, and as I wanted always to attend it from then on.

The philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre expressed my feelings well: “Upon encountering a coherent presentation of one particular tradition . . . such a person will often experience a shock of recognition: this is not only, so such a person may say, what I now take to be true but in some measure what I have always taken to be true.”¹

Recognising worship

Our experiences are conditioned by what we already know and have experienced before. My own liturgical experiences, with the exceptions just noted, were of the *Novus Ordo*, with a strong bias in favour of liturgical “conservatism”: liturgy celebrated somewhat more in continuity with the pre-Vatican II tradition. I had encountered progressive liturgies at my Catholic school and had no wish to repeat the experience, a sentiment shared, I think, with my school-fellows, who mostly ceased to attend

¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988), 394.

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church altogether after they left. Another Oratory of St Philip Neri was founded in Oxford at around the time I arrived as an undergraduate, and I usually attended their *Novus Ordo Latin* celebrations on Sundays, though I also attended a variety of other Masses, particularly with my parents in the vacations. As far as liturgical abuses and theological confusion were concerned, I was living a sheltered life, though aware, to an extent, of this shelteredness.

I became interested in the question of liturgical abuses, and read an aptly titled book called *Mass Confusion*² about it. It seemed that while priests tended to find their way through the texts, give or take the odd addition of their own, the rubrics were effectively meaningless. They were not only ignored by progressive clergy, they were fudged by conservatives in favour of what was done in the older missal: genuflecting as they crossed the sanctuary, elevating the Host above, and not beside, the Chalice, and the like. I wouldn't necessarily criticise these deviations, but it was undeniably a state of lawlessness. I realised that I had almost certainly never witnessed the *Novus Ordo Missæ* celebrated in complete accordance with the rules. But this problem was a mere detail in a much bigger picture.

Apparently something very big and very strange had happened to the Church in the years immediately before my birth in 1971. The institution taken for granted in the novels of Evelyn Waugh or the apologetics of Msgr Ronald Knox, the Church to which both my parents had converted in the 1950s, had suffered some disfiguring calamity. I was used to defending the orthodox Catholic position, as I understood it, against liberal Catholics and non-Catholics, but I was only groping towards what the Church truly, historically, was like: what generations of Catholics had regarded as normality, in the liturgy and in everything else. Notwithstanding the peculiar setting, it was this that I saw in that little meeting room in the West Oxford Community Centre: a long-lost normality.

² James Akin, *Mass Confusion: The Do's and Don'ts of Catholic Worship*, 2nd ed. (San Diego: Catholic Answers, 1999).

Discovering and Rediscovering the Traditional Mass

This I recognised, though without having seen it properly before, rather as I recognised my New Zealand cousin, by a kind of family resemblance to what I did know. It fitted in to the works of Waugh and Knox, to the architecture of old churches and the ethos of old prayers, like a piece of jigsaw puzzle temporarily mislaid under a rug. This Mass was what was needed for the rest to hang together and make sense.

One disorienting aspect of this shock of recognition was that I had always been the most conservative Catholic of my acquaintance, and usually attended the most conservative liturgy available, and yet I had encountered something which represented, if one must think in these terms, a whole additional wing of the spectrum of opinion which I had not properly taken in until that moment. I had been in the centre-ground of the Church all those years, and never realised it! I did not remain there long, however. I found my fellow-worshippers incomparably better-informed and better-read than I was, and with the help of their recommendations I began to read up on the situation, starting, as is usual, with the works of Michael Davies. With this, and continued exposure to the traditional Mass, which I was able to attend almost every Sunday and Holy Day, I stopped being a “conservative” Catholic and became instead a traditional Catholic: a “trad.” That is to say, a Catholic who wishes to live in continuity with previous generations.

Asking the wrong question

This implied a programme of the restoration of continuity, the restoration, indeed, of tradition, which seemed Quixotic, even hopeless. Oxford had then, and still has, many well-filled Catholic churches on Sundays, and various programmes of conservatism and progressivism were being undertaken in and around them, by articulate, self-confident, and highly educated people. At the time I made the traditional Mass my usual Sunday option, in 2001, it seemed that Pope John Paul II had stabilised the crisis in the Church, and defeated Communism as well. The Oratorians had arrived just in time to save from destruction the altar-rails at St Aloysius, a formerly Jesuit church, though not the collection of relics. (These, donated to the Jesuits a century earlier, had been destroyed in a crematorium.) I

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was a member of a Benedictine house of studies in the University,³ where I saw a stream of conservatively-minded young monks do studies with the Dominicans down the road, in preparation for their ordination. The little group meeting for Masses in the Community Centre was not part of any of this. It seemed that all the clever people, the establishment people, the people with prospects, were part of a theological and liturgical project which took its start from Vatican II, but the Community Centre congregation were not only shut out of the physical churches, but self-excluded from this project. Their mistake, if indeed it was a mistake, was to notice the wrong thing and to ask the wrong question.

What they noticed was the sense that the Mass being celebrated in this little room was an act of *worship*. That is to say, it was a mysterious and awesome communication with the divine, directed wholly towards God, not to the congregation. A service which falls short in doing this also falls short in satisfying the psychological need, and the objective obligation, that humans have to worship God.

The question they seemed to ask was this: what possible justification could the Church's leaders have for doing away with this form of the liturgy, which had been the beating heart of the Church's inner life, her spirituality, for a dozen or more centuries? Ambiguous and slippery as they are, the documents of the Second Vatican Council do not present any such justification, and indeed they were promulgated before the enormity of the liturgical reform was apparent.

They nowhere say, for example, that the entire spirit and atmosphere of the ancient liturgy leads people away from true religion and must be expunged, regardless of the cost. This was indeed the view of a handful of influential liturgical writers of the 1940s and '50s (and since), but this idea is not expressed in Council documents. My conservative Catholic friends, again, would defend the superiority of the reformed Mass, but would never express themselves as strongly as that. And yet, nothing weaker could begin to explain or justify the reform which had actually taken place: the extirpation of Latin, the wholesale rewriting of texts, the

³ St Benet's Hall. This closed in September 2022.

reversal of the normal direction of worship, the smashing of altars, the dismissal of expert choirs, the destruction of whole libraries of liturgical, spiritual, and theological books, the nuns in short skirts, and wearing makeup, and all the rest. These things were the offspring, not of a desire to tinker and improve, but of a sort of infernal zeal, an *animus delendi*.

The house of cards

It is easy, and it is certainly true, to say that the reform process got out of hand, but at the time, and later, very few people with the power to do so took the trouble to restrict or reverse the excesses. What took place had the sanction, not of magisterial texts, but of ecclesiastical authority. It was the result not of theological debate or legal enactment, but, fundamentally, of raw power. The reasons for this were certainly complex, but the result was an objective fact which has shaped the Church since the 1970s.

What this means is that major planks of Catholic life—liturgical, devotional, catechetical, and disciplinary—lack theological or indeed rational justification. Why were references to sacrifice and grace removed from the liturgical texts? Why was Friday abstinence abolished? What happened to the nice old vestments? Why don't we hear Gregorian chant in Mass any more? What has happened to the Church's teaching on the relationship between husband and wife, on usury, or on the death penalty?

There are no satisfactory answers to these questions. In some cases what happened had actually been explicitly forbidden at the Council or afterwards: the reception of Holy Communion in the hand is the most famous example,⁴ but there are many others. Even things which did spring from some official initiative, such as the three-year Lectionary, often did so without any roots in the tradition. They simply presented themselves as things which someone, perhaps Pope Paul VI, perhaps his advisors, thought were a good idea. But is this how things should work? Should even the pope, or, for that matter, an ecumenical council, pluck radical

⁴ See the Instruction of the Congregation for Divine Worship *Memoriale Domini* (1969).

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ideas out of the air and use them to sweep away a millennium or more of the wisdom of the Church?

When I say these things lack *justification*, it may seem like a criticism of the Church, but in a way it is a defence of her. Catholics do not need to defend what does not derive from the Church's traditions and principles. Were an Eastern Orthodox Christian to point out that a one-hour Eucharistic Fast is ludicrously short; were a Quaker to point out that the disappearance of silence from the liturgy deprived it of its most powerful moments of communion in prayer with the Divine; were a Hindu to point out that an archaic, sacred language has irreplaceable value for preserving theological continuity and imbuing liturgical formulae with dignity; we can say: yes, you are correct, the Church agrees and has always done so.

In many cases we could even quote modern magisterial texts to support this. On Latin, for example, the Congregation for Catholic Education declared in 1980:

The Council is far from having banned the use of the Latin language. Indeed, it did the contrary. Thus the systematic exclusion of Latin is an abuse no less to be condemned than the systematic desire of some people to use it exclusively. Its sudden and total disappearance will not be without serious pastoral consequences.⁵

Bear in mind the ridicule commonly poured on Latin liturgy in seminaries, and the persecution frequently suffered by priests who dared to celebrate even the reformed Mass in Latin. What the Congregation for Catholic Education is telling us is that the liturgical reality of ordinary Catholics since the Council is premised on an abusive disobedience to the Second Vatican Council, as well as to the tradition of the Church. It is not really the Church who has done this to us, but her wayward children.

I could fill this essay with similar quotations, but they had absolutely no effect when they were published, and are today read by no one but the occasional liturgical historian. They remind me of a scene from a TV series on the German prisoner-of-war camp at Colditz. The war is drawing to

⁵ Instruction *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*.

a close, but the honourable Commandant is powerless to prevent some atrocity by his superiors. He dictates a strongly-worded letter of protest, and says to his secretary: type it up, date it, and . . . put it in the safe.

Even as records of the Church's teaching, these documents are marred by half-hearted concessions to the progressives. (Why should people who want to use Latin exclusively be condemned? On what documents or traditions would such a condemnation be based?) What they do do is to serve to remind us that even basic principles of the postconciliar liturgical landscape, such as the insistence on the use of the vernacular, have no justification. It is a house of cards.

Progressives and conservatives

The project of restoration, then, seemed fragile, because it existed entirely outside the establishment and its well-resourced institutions, whether progressive or conservative, filled with clever people. On the other hand, for the reasons just outlined it was and is both inevitable and unstoppable.

The progressive project simply leads to apostasy: this was clear long ago. There are progressive theologians and prelates who are comfortable in their well-heated and well-carpeted institutions, with their squashy chairs arranged in circles and plenty of biscuits on little plates. But they preside over a conveyor-belt of young Catholics on their way out of the Church: lay people, religious, and priests. As this process has continued, their institutions are quietly closed down or merged. Selling buildings can produce lots of money, and this pays the bills, but we are approaching the final stages of the process. Ten years from now liberal Catholicism in Britain will be insignificant; in twenty years it will be gone. There will be a regretful notice in the last liberal Catholic periodical, comforting the few readers of its final edition with the thought that the faith journey continues, whether nominally Catholic or not. And we will hear from them no more.

The conservative project is intellectually dishonest. It depends upon pretending that the Church's tradition does not exist. An easy way to see this is by looking at the footnotes or bibliography of conservative books and documents. The references almost never go further back in time than

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the Second Vatican Council, and Pope John XXIII's famous calling of the Council in 1959, with the exception of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891): a document which anticipates the conservative approach by containing very few references to previous magisterial texts.

I was once asked to review a book which collected together texts on education. It was supposedly a conservative introduction to Catholic thinking on the subject. Why, I asked the editor, did it not include the most important document on education produced before Vatican II, Pope Pius XI's 1929 encyclical, *Divini Illius Magistri*? Oh well, he replied, it would have been nice to have had space for that, but somehow there wasn't. Instead, he had filled the book up with anodyne non-magisterial texts, including the writings of non-Catholics such as C.S. Lewis. Pius XI didn't make the cut because he insisted on an education suffused with Christian values, condemned sex education, and warned against the co-education of boys and girls.

Pius XI's views on education are deeply embarrassing to postconciliar conservatives. The same is true of Pope John XXIII's teaching on family life,⁶ Pius XII on the liturgy,⁷ or Pius X on modernism:⁸ and that is not even to stray beyond the twentieth century. For the conservative project to work, these must be ignored: hidden, like Msgr Gilbey's early morning Mass, behind a thick curtain, and not officially referred to.

What this means, of course, is that for practical purposes the conservatives have created their own substitute magisterium, with the bits they don't like left out. As the case of *Rerum Novarum* indicates, this is not primarily a matter of chronology, but of content. They have applied an ideological filter to the teaching of the Church which they were prepared to accept.

It sounds harsh to say this, of those who fought hard for and suffered much for the Church, especially on "life" issues, and I should emphasise that much of this process, for many of those involved, was a matter of *embarrassment* rather than *denial*. My point remains, however, that as

⁶ See *Ad Petri Cathedram* (1959), §50.

⁷ See *Mediator Dei* (1947).

⁸ See *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (1907).

an intellectual project this was never going to work. Conservatives were the first to emphasise that the Church has a long history, and that the force of her teaching derives from the fact that it is unchanging. This is, however, incompatible with the way they themselves approached a long list of theological issues.

Becoming a traditional Catholic is a process of becoming *docile*: of starting to regard the historic teaching of the Church, not with contempt (the progressive attitude), or with a blind eye (the conservative attitude), but with love, attention, and respect. This attitude can and should be applied to the Second Vatican Council too, but the Council looks very different if viewed in a wider context, and not (as Cardinal Ratzinger memorably put it) as a “super-dogma” which cancels out everything else.⁹

The problem I have just outlined is increasingly acknowledged, especially by the younger generation. The conservative project is not going to peter out like the progressive one; the direction of travel, rather, is a merger with the traditional project. In this process one can begin to see a pathway out of the crisis.

The project of restoration

In his later life, having converted to High Anglicanism, the poet T.S. Eliot understood the crisis of modernity, and the demand the crisis makes of us. He wrote a series of poems called “Choruses from *The Rock*” which express the barrenness of the post-Christian world: the city with no meaning, the street with no end, “noise without speech, food without taste.”

This barrenness can be experienced not only in the secular world, but in aspects of the institutional Church, which has been invaded by the world. Before we can seriously address the task of converting society, there

⁹ “The truth is that this particular council defined no dogma at all, and deliberately chose to remain on a modest level, as a merely pastoral council; and yet so many treat it as though it had made itself into a sort of super-dogma which takes away the importance of all the rest.” From the address by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger to the Chilean bishops, Santiago, July 13, 1988; full text at <https://www.cwatershed.org/2019/11/07/13-july-1988-josef-cardinal-ratzinger>.

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must be a restoration of the Church as it appears to society: the physical churches, the schools, the people one finds in them, the liturgy celebrated in them, the books used or sold in them: all the things people encounter when spiritual hunger drives them to seek out the Mystical Body of Christ.

This task of restoration is an enormous one. Rather than be daunted by this, I take comfort from it, because it means that there is something for everyone to do: even those of us with a very deficient Catholic education and limited natural gifts. I may not be a second St Thomas Aquinas, but I can teach my children the old catechisms, and help arrange the odd pilgrimage. In these simple tasks I can be confident that I am doing something pleasing to God, and perhaps even irreplaceable in my little corner of the world. As Eliot expressed it:

Without delay, without haste
We would build the beginning and the end of this street.
We build the meaning:
A Church for all
And a job for each
Each man to his work.

What Is the Liturgy For?

There seem to me to be three different views of the liturgy doing the rounds in Catholic discussion today.

The first sees the liturgy primarily in terms of sacramental validity. The purpose of the Mass is the confection of the Blessed Sacrament, so the validity of the rite is the focus of attention. Making the ceremonies attractive in various ways is obvious a good thing, but ultimately if Mass is validly celebrated, the key objective has been attained. The same goes for the ceremonies which accompany the other sacraments. This is for practical purposes the view of many, if not all, conservative Catholics, specifically, those of them who have decided that the liturgy is not a hill upon which they are willing to die.

The second sees the liturgy primarily in terms of community. Sunday Mass is the only event which brings Catholics together with the frequency and intimacy necessary to develop and sustain any sense of fellow-feeling and of human community, and it is this aspect of the celebration that is emphasised. This is the view of many more liberal Catholics.

The third sees the liturgy primarily as a privileged opportunity of making contact with God, even if the participant does not receive Holy Communion.

The peculiar nature of our current situation is that the third view is not so much rejected, as simply incomprehensible, to many Catholics. Why should attendance at a formal church service have a greater potential for putting us in touch with God than private prayer, or some do-it-yourself

Address to the Keys, the Catholic Writers' Guild, November 27, 2019.