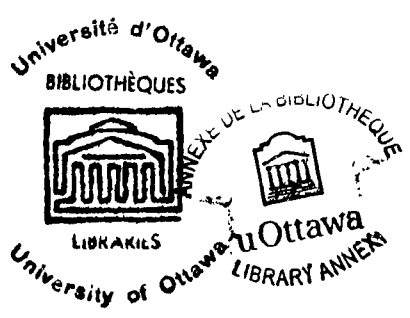


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THE PRAYER OF MODERN SISTERS
by Sister Rosemarie Hudon, S.O.S.

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of Ottawa in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Religious Studies.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION	iv
I.- CONCEPT OF PRAYER	1
I. Primitive Prayer	1
Opinions of Anthropologists on Primitive Ideas of God — Revelation — Starting Point of Prayer — Content of Prayer — Sacrifice — Physical Attitudes — Communal Prayer	
II. Prayer of the Old Testament	21
Idea of God — Fundamental Attitudes — Variety in Prayer — Psalms — Physical Attitudes — Communal Prayer	
III. Prayer of the New Testament	31
Prayer of Jesus — Fundamental Truths — Kind of Prayer — When and What to Pray for — Sacrifice — Summit of Prayer — Use of Psalms — How to Pray — Communal Prayer	
IV. St. Thomas Aquinas on Prayer	38
Traditional Definition — Need for Prayer — Act of Religion — Definite Prayer — Prayer for Temporal Favors — For Oneself — For Enemies — For Efficacy	
II.- HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS OF PRAYER IN RELIGIOUS ORDERS	45
I. Early Christian Prayers	45
Didache — Hours — Idea of Vowed Virginity — Hermits	
II. Beginnings of Monastic Prayer	50
St. Anthony — St. Pachomius — Convents — Hilarion — St. Basil's Rule — St. Athana- sius — Roman Matrons — St. Jerome — Rule Given by St. Jerome — St. Basil's Foundation — Aetheria — Mass in the Early Centuries — St. Augustine — Caesarius	
III. The Divine Office	64
St. Benedict — Amplification of Office — Counter-reform — Franciscans — Meditation Office in Private — Reforms	
IV. Prayer in Religious Communities of Women	72
Office in Convents — St. Francis de Sales — St. Vincent de Paul — St. Alphonsus de Liguori — Father George Daly — Vernacular	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

iii

III.- THE LITURGY	83
I. General Principles	86
Paschal Mystery — Christ is Always Present — Renewal has become Necessary — Proper Dispositions — Instruction — Reform of Liturgy — Mother tongue	
II. The Mass	99
Definition of the Eucharist — Desire of the Church — Reiterated Wish — Action — Directives	
III. The Divine Office	114
Importance in context of Salvation History — Sequence of Hours — Norms of the Constitution — Nourishment for Personal Prayer — Challenge to Sisters — Reform of Roman Breviary — A Time Intended — Incentive — Vernacular	
IV.- PARA-LITURGICAL PRAYER	121
I. Private Prayer	121
A. Of Rule	122
Rising Prayer — Mental Prayer — Spiritual Reading — Examination of Conscience — Visit to Holy Sacrament — Rosary — Prayer for Vocations	
B. Personal Prayer	153
Way of the Cross — Devotion to St. Joseph — Conclusion	
II. Prayer in Common	158
Vocal Prayer in General — Angelus — Renewal of Vows — Meal Prayers — Founder's Prayers — Bible Services	
V.- MODERN TRENDS IN SISTERS' PRAYERS	165
Opinions of Individual Sisters	
Holy Mass — Mental Prayer — Vocal Prayer — Spiritual Reading — Examination of Conscience — Visit to the Holy Sacrament — Other Exercises — Options — Against the Trend — Spirit of Prayer	
VI.- SUGGESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY PRAYERS	202
I. Exercises of Rule	202
The Eucharistic Sacrifice — The Divine Office — Mental Prayer — Vocal Prayer — Spiritual Reading — Examination of Conscience	
II. Popular Devotions	218
CONCLUSION	226
BIBLIOGRAPHY	230

INTRODUCTION

This research was undertaken to discern what is essential in the community prayers of an order of sisters devoted to the active apostolate; to study the status, in the Church, of the prayers on the customary horarium; to inquire about the opinions of some of the sisters concerned; and, as a result, to suggest prayers in keeping with the liturgical movement in the Church that will strengthen the prayer life of sisters in active congregations in this the latter half of the twentieth century.

The word "modern" in this thesis is used with the meaning given in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: "that which belongs to the present time or is characteristic of it." It is not a derivative of the word "modernism", the adjectival equivalent of which is "modernist" or "modernistic". The word "modern" will not be used in any conjunction with methods or tendencies in the field of holy Scripture.

The method of procedure will be:

- I To study the concept of prayer in view of a deeper realization of the true meaning.
- II To follow the history of prayer in order to throw light on the riches of the liturgy and to see the reasons back of recent changes.
- III To examine in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy those articles which relate either directly or

INTRODUCTION

v

indirectly to the prayer of sisters.

- IV To inquire into the importance of certain traditional prayers, their status in the Church, and their conformity with Canon Law.
- V To consider the opinions of sisters on the subject of their community prayers by means of informal discussions, conversations, answers to questionnaires, and the trends supported by modern authors.
- VI The result of the research will lead to suggestions which it is hoped will be useful to the makers of horaria for modern sisters.

CHAPTER I

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

I. PRIMITIVE PRAYER

In a quest for desirable prayers for modern-day sisters it is necessary to begin with a clear concept of prayer. This chapter will be concerned with the development of this concept from primitive prayer, through the prayer of Bible times to the theological concept of St. Thomas Aquinas. Common tendencies in the prayers of different eras will be noted as well as any points specially applicable for the modern sister.

A. Opinions of Anthropologists on Primitive Ideas of God.— A look at primitive religions by mirroring the opinions of some noted anthropologists should serve as a starting point for a survey of primitive prayer. We proceed from animism or naturism to the idea of a Maker, through magic to the belief in a Supreme Being.

1. Animism.— Edward B. Tylor, a leading ethnologist of the nineteenth century, introduced the idea of animism, or religion of the spirits, in 1871. In this evolutionary theory man gets the idea of a spirit or soul from his dreams; but if the spirit goes out temporarily in dreams, then it must go out altogether at death; this discarnate

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

2

spirit may be good or bad; finally, if man has a spirit, so must every other thing have one: animals, fish, plants, stones, and so on.

The idea of the soul which is held by uncultured races, and is the foundation of their religion, is not difficult for us to understand, if we can fancy ourselves in their place, ignorant of the very rudiments of science, and trying to get at the meaning of life by what the senses seem to tell.¹

From this point of departure proceeds the notion of nature-worship, fetishism and idolatry; these inevitably lead to dual polytheism (good and bad), and eventually to monotheism. It is evident that Tylor was influenced by the method of the evolutionists who were so popular in his day.

2. Naturism.— Naturism is the name given the religion in which primitive man, feeling overwhelmed by the great cosmic forces, such as sun, moon, wind, rivers and sky, found it necessary to assign a cause to these phenomena, over which he has no control; he envisions a Superior Being who exists outside of himself and upon whose power he is forced to depend.

These mysterious powers of nature are often gruesome and frightening but on the other hand they are often

¹ Edward B. Tylor, Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilisation, New York, Appleton and Co., 1891, pp. 242-243. Cf. also "Animism", reprinted in abridged form from Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture, 2 vols., 2nd ed., London, John Murray, 1873, chap. 11, in William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt (eds.), Reader in Comparative Religion, An Anthropological Approach, Evanston, Ill., Row, Peterson and Company, 1962, pp. 11-23.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

3

useful, beautiful and inspiring. Their totality arouses in man an emotional response which could be the starting point of religion. One of the chief proponents of the naturalistic theory was F. Max Muller in 1856.²

For some, animism is the primitive religion, of which naturism is only a secondary and derived form. For the others, on the contrary, it is the nature cult which was the point of departure for religious evolution; the cult of spirits is only a peculiar case of that.³

3. Idea of Maker.— For at least three decades Tylor's animism was considered the "classical theory" until one of his pupils and ardent supporters, Andrew Lang, discovered further facts which forced him to reject Tylor's tenets, and contradict his own previously published views.

The system of animism taught that the idea of God as a spirit could not be reached before the conception of spirit itself was reached. But Lang upset this theory by asking the simple question: "Do these primitive peoples regard the Supreme Being as a spirit?" He holds that they neither affirm nor deny the spiritual nature of the Supreme Being, such metaphysical questions are beyond them; he is a personal Being who exists, that is all. But as soon as they

² Alexander Goldenweiser, "Religion and Society: A Critique of Emile Durkheim's Theory of the Origin and Nature of Religion", in The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Method, Vol. 14, 1917, pp. 113-124, reprinted in Lessa and Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion, p. 77.

³ Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, trans. J.W. Swain, London, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1915, reprinted in abridged form in Lessa and Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion, p. 69.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

4

were able to use tools and make things themselves they realized that all other things about them also had a Maker.

In Lang's own words:

This conception of a magnified non-natural man, who is a Maker, being given; his Power would be recognized, and fancy would clothe one who had made such useful things with certain other moral attributes, as of Fatherhood, goodness, and regard for the ethics of his children; these ethics having been developed naturally in the evolution of social life. In all this there is nothing "mystical", nor anything, as far as I can see, beyond the limited mental powers of any beings that deserve to be called human.⁴

Lang concludes that the fundamental idea of the animistic theory, the origin of the idea of God from the idea of spirit misses the mark.⁵

According to Paul Schebesta,⁶ Lang had a too rationalistic and exclusive concept of religion, but even if his explanation of polytheism is not absolutely valid, he still has the merit of having been the first to oppose the principle of evolutionary religion and to have shown the reality of primitive belief in one high god.⁷

4 A. Lang, The Making of Religion, 3rd ed., London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1909, p. xii, quoted by W. Schmidt, S.V.D., in The Origin and Growth of Religion, trans. H. J. Rose, New York, Dial Press, 1931, p. 178.

5 Schmidt, The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 176.

6 Paul Schebesta, Le sens religieux des primitifs, Paris, Mame, 1963, pp. 299-300.

7 Ibid., p. 308.

4. Totemism.— Durkheim holds that "since neither man nor nature have of themselves a sacred character, they must get it from another source."⁸

This theory rules out naturism and animism and introduces a new cult called totemism. It is a socio-religious institution, the principle of which is that the social group or clan is the god of the clan. This god is represented by certain species of the animal kingdom, a different one being chosen for each clan, who then become objects of adoration.

The whole chapter VII of Lowie's book, Primitive Religion, is a refutation of Durkheim's theory.⁹ Alexander Goldenweiser, also, has written a scathing criticism.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Durkheim's theory continues to be of interest even in contemporary thinking because of the implications it contains of group psychology. Totemism implies the division of people into clans each of which has its own totem and therefore its own loyalties. The celebration of great feasts would inevitably create occasions for the expression of mob psychology.

⁸ Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, p. 71.

⁹ Robert H. Lowie, Primitive Religion, London, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1936, pp. 153-163.

¹⁰ Goldenweiser, "Religion and Society: A Critique of Emile Durkheim's Theory of the Origin and Nature of Religion", in Reader in Comparative Religion, pp. 76-84.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

6

The usual experiences accompanying the periodic ceremonial gatherings, when contrasted with the routine happenings of daily life, awaken in the mind of the totemite a sense of the sacred.¹¹

5. Magic.— Sir James George Frazer, in his Golden Bough, surmises that, in pre-historic times, an Age of Religion has everywhere been preceded by an Age of Magic.¹²

He inquires into the causes which have led mankind to abandon the magic by which they believed they controlled the forces of nature and to turn instead to religion with a belief in something that controlled them. He suggests that a tardy recognition of the impotence of magic set the more thoughtful part of mankind searching for a truer theory of nature. Slowly primitive man would have realized his own helplessness against the forces of nature which he could neither wield nor resist. To these mighty beings: the wind, the rain, the sunshine, the thunder, he confesses his dependence on their invisible power, beseeching them to provide for all his needs and protect him against all dangers. Frazer concludes that it is in some such way that the

¹¹ Alexander Goldenweiser, "Totemism", in V.F. Calverton (ed.), The Making of Man: An Outline of Anthropology, New York, Modern Library, 1931, pp. 363-392, reprinted in abridged form in Lessa and Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion, p. 225. In this quotation, Goldenweiser is presenting a summary of Emile Durkheim's theory presented in Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: The Totemic System in Australia.

¹² James George Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, Abridged ed., Vol. 1, London, Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1960, p. 74.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

7

great transition from magic to religion must have been made.

This theory has been refuted by several researches. Bertram Windle gives a more common sense explanation of magic.

... Man began as a suppliant — it is the natural attitude face to face with superior powers. He did not always get what he wanted and then in his disappointment and wrath he turns round and exclaims:... "I will make you give it to me" and that is magic or the intention of magic which has been said is "everywhere and at every time the black shadow of religion" and is its external enemy.¹³

In another refutation of Frazer's theory, Schmidt says: "The proof is very short and almost entirely of a psychological and evolutionist nature." This he totally rejects.

The only historical evidence he [Frazer] produces is the predominance of magic among the Australians, 'the rudest savages as to whom we possess accurate information.' ... This is wrong to begin with for the Pygmies, who practise magic but little, are ethnologically older; ...¹⁴

In his book Primitive Religion, Robert H. Lowie concurs with Schmidt's views on Frazer's opinion.

In short, Frazer's argument breaks down at every point, and even if we adopt his definitions there is no reason to ascribe greater antiquity to magic than to religion.¹⁵

¹³ Bertram C.A. Windle, Religions Past and Present: An Elementary Account of Comparative Religion, New York, The Century Co., 1927, p. 127.

¹⁴ Schmidt, The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 124.

¹⁵ Lowie, Primitive Religion, p. 147.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

8

6. Supreme Being.— The eminent Catholic anthropologist, W. Schmidt, did extensive research work on the "oldest form of religion", and speaks "of the religions of those peoples who according to the results of such investigation, are seen to be ethnologically the oldest."¹⁶ His findings point to the general belief of primitive peoples in a Supreme Being.

The following lengthy excerpt is given to show that his research was comprehensive and his conclusion scientific.

If we now review the distribution of the primitive cultures and with them that of the Supreme Beings belonging to them, it is sufficiently plain that we have no narrow or insecure basis for our discussion. First, the extent of these primitive cultures and the distribution of their Supreme Being is almost like a girdle around the south central part of, at least, the Old World; while for the New, there is at least a sort of representative in the Gez-Tapuya. All these peoples testify by their present relegation to their last refuges, whether distant islands, extreme verges of continents or inaccessible woods and wooded mountains, that they once had a thicker and more continuous distribution in this area. But besides this belt, there is so to speak a lateral extension reaching to the very ends of the earth, for the northern and southern primitive cultures everywhere occupy the most distant extremities, north, north-east and south, of their respective continents. We may therefore claim that no later culture can boast of a distribution which encircles the whole earth so completely. But if it is clear that wherever remnants of the primitive peoples are still discoverable over this huge area, they show a belief in a Supreme Being, then it is likewise manifest that such a belief is an essential property of this, the most ancient of human cultures, which must have been

¹⁶ Schmidt, "Author's Preface", in The Origin and Growth of Religion, p. vii.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

9

deeply and strongly rooted in it at the very dawn of time, before the individual groups had separated from one another.¹⁷

The modern German ethnologist Paul Schebesta, writing in 1963, cites many supporters of Schmidt's theory of one high God: Leuba, Oesterreich, Preuss, Swanton, Radin, Lowie, Heiler, Niewenhuis. These scholars offer psychological explanations of how primitive man arrived at the above conclusion.¹⁸

For himself, Schebesta admits that Schmidt may have insisted too strongly on causality and logic to the neglect of the "irrational" factor in religion; he also questions the validity of his theory on the circles of culture. He maintains the fact, nevertheless, that among the most ancient peoples known to man a true belief in one high God is found, which could be called monotheism, in its proper sense.

If, in his attacks against the evolutionary idea of a belief in one high god, W. Schmidt was too vehement against the idea that magic came first, it does not prevent his thesis of the belief in one high god from being perfectly justified. No one can blame him for having clarified this aspect of religion; and his adversaries have no right to make the accusation that his work is unscientific. It is senseless to reproach Schmidt of having wished in his Origine de l'idée de Dieu to produce arguments in favour of Christianity. Certainly the work is vibrant apologetics, but apologetics of primitive

¹⁷ Schmidt, The Origin and Growth of Religion, pp. 260-261.

¹⁸ Schebesta, Le Sens Religieux des Primitifs, pp. 302-303.

man, whom Schmidt appreciated not as an animal, but as a complete man.¹⁹

William Foxwell Albright, one of the great contemporary archaeologists, gives opinions for and against Schmidt's conclusions, but he adds:

There can no longer be any doubt that Father Schmidt has successfully disproved the simple evolutionary progression first set up by the positivist Comte, fetishism-polytheism-monotheism, or Tylor's animism-polytheism-monotheism. Nor can Marett's correction to pre-animism, (dynamism) animism-polytheism-monotheism escape radical modification. The simple fact is that religious phenomena are so complex in origin and so fluid in nature that oversimplification is more misleading in the field of religion than perhaps anywhere else.²⁰

B. Revelation.— In view of the conclusions drawn by the above-mentioned scholars it is interesting to note that the nineteenth century saw the beginning of a movement in Europe intended to insure religion against the attacks of rationalism. Its supporters held that religious truths were not a product of the intellect, but had been given to man by God in a primeval revelation. Protestants argued from the point of view of the subjective feelings of the individual. Catholics, on the other hand, appealed to the objective

¹⁹ Paul Schebesta, "Das Problem des Urmonotheismus. Kritik einer Kritik", in Anthropos, Vol. 49, 1954, pp. 689-697, trans. and quoted in his Sens Religieux des Primitifs, pp. 307-308. (The English translation from the French is mine.)

²⁰ William Foxwell Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, 2nd ed., Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1957, p. 171.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

11

force of tradition. As early as 1834 official Catholic theology rejected both views and insisted on the possibility of religious knowledge won by revelation, and on the necessity of rational proofs of the natural foundations of religion.²¹

The decree of the Vatican Council of 1870 reads as follows:

Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, principle and end of all things, could certainly become known by the natural lights of human reason, by means of created things "because invisible things of God are perceived by means of the creation of the world and are understood by the aid of created things" (Rom. 1:20). However, it has pleased the wisdom and the goodness of God to reveal Himself to us, and to reveal to us the decrees of His will by another way, which is the supernatural way...²²

The erudite Bertram Windle of the University of Toronto made this forthright statement:

If there is a God and the Theistic view is correct it is quite certain that He could make a Revelation and, if as that theory teaches, He has a care for His children, it is even a priori probable that He should make one.²³

The Missionary Bishop to Africa, Most Reverend Alexander Le Roy, Superior General of the Fathers of the

²¹ Schmidt, The Origin and Growth of Religion, pp. 33-34.

²² Décrets et canons du [Premier] Concile Oecuménique et Général du Vatican en latin et en français avec les documents qui s'y rattachent..., ed. Victor Pelletier, Paris, Victor Palmé, 1871, p. 109. (The translation is mine.)

²³ Bertram C.A. Windle, Religions Past and Present: An Elementary Account of Comparative Religion, pp. 27-28.

Holy Ghost lecturer and writer of ethnology gives this opinion:

"God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1). It is, then, in several parts, in numerous fragments, and in "divers manners" (implying articulate words, visions, dreams, inspirations, interior illumination, and natural lights fortified and directed) that the revelation or rather the revelations have been made, not only to direct ancestors of the Hebrew people, but to all the children of Adam and Eve who had a soul to save, so that all had the necessary means at least to attain their salvation; for it is certain that God wills the salvation of all men.²⁴

Bishop Le Roy readily admits that the primary gifts of religion may be acquired by man's reason but insists that it would be most difficult for him to acquire, unaided, an assemblage of truths sufficiently coherent to serve as a durable basis for the family, society, religion, morality, and everything connected therewith. He adds the following pointed remark:

If God made the first men, it seems strange that He has not come to their aid and that, having given them the religious faculty, He did not give it its proper stimulus.²⁵

C. Starting Point of Prayer.— There was much in the world about primitive man to arouse perplexity, fear and a feeling of insecurity. There

²⁴ Alexander Le Roy, The Religion of the Primitives, trans. Newton Thompson, New York, Macmillan, 1922, pp. 313-314.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 317.

were the precarious struggle for existence, the mysteries of natural phenomena and the unalterable fact of death. Friedrich Heiler explains the transition from fear to trust as the starting point of prayer, which he bases on the acceptance of primitive monotheism.

Yet it is also possible that fear and hope alternate for a long time until at length trust becomes so strong that words of petition are wrung from the lips of the distressed individual. Fear, therefore, may be described as the impelling, and hope as the releasing motive of prayer.²⁶

Necessarily there must first have been faith in the existence of supernatural, anthropomorphic beings before man can enter into relation with them through prayer.

Rudolph Otto claims that whatever the rationalization that leads primitive man (or any man) to a concept of a Supreme Being it is something unique in religious experience.

For if there be any single domain of human experience that presents us with something unmistakably specific and unique, peculiar to itself, assuredly it is that of the religious life.²⁷

That something which is "unmistakably specific and unique" he calls "something inherently wholly other."²⁸

26 Friedrich Heiler, Prayer: A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion, trans. and ed. Samuel McComb and J. Edward Park, New York, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 3.

27 Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational, trans. John W. Harvey, London, Oxford University Press, 1923, p. 4.

28 Ibid., p. 28.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

14

It inspires a feeling of "something uncanny", or "eerie", which chills and numbs, but at the same time forms the starting point for religious development. Otto holds that there is no religion in which this emotion does not exist. Otto has coined a word for this awe which is "extra" in the meaning of "holy" above and beyond the meaning of goodness. The term he uses is "numinous".²⁹

This numinous which Otto considers the starting point of religious development must by the same reasoning be also the starting point of prayer since it finds its outlet or expression in supplication to the supernatural and transcendent.

It is self evident that religion is vital only to those who pray. Faith without prayer would become stunted and lifeless. The religious development in the soul of an individual, a community or a nation, if it can be measured at all, can be measured only by the standard of their prayer.

Trevor Hughes is of the opinion that:

The conception of the God determines the quality of the prayer offered to him. If he is regarded as superior, the prayer offered will be reverent; if, as on an equality with the worshipper, then bargaining replaces reverence; if the deity is felt to depend upon man's worship, then the attitude may be one of abuse and threat.³⁰

²⁹ Otto, The Idea of the Holy, pp. 6 and 126.

³⁰ H. Trevor Hughes, Prophetic Prayer: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Prayer to the Reformation, London, The Epworth Press, 1947, pp. 5-6.

Primitive man's image of his god was more or less anthropomorphic. He believed the deity was changeable and capable of wrong-doing. One of the stronger motives for prayer was the attempt to alter unfavorable plans of the god.

D. Content of Prayer.— 1. Adoration.— Even before man's personal interests drive him to prayer he has felt awe in the presence of the "Wholly Other". The natural expression of this combination of fear and hope, dread and bliss is an involuntary cry of emotion that is akin to adoration.³¹

2. Intercession.— Heiler credits primitive man with altruism which would find expression in intercessory prayer.

We read occasionally of heartfelt prayers which members of primitive peoples offer to their gods for Europeans, alien in race and blood, who have won their confidence and goodwill. The intercessory prayer of an African chief runs thus:

"I and the white man are as near each other as if we were of the same mother." Primitive man is indeed a naïve eudaemonist, but so far as he has not under various influences lost his primitive quality, he is no rude antisocial egoist, as so many anthropologists describe him. We must therefore include altruistic sympathy among the motives of primitive prayer.³²

31 Cf. Heiler, Prayer, p. 7.

32 Ibid., p. 5.

As far as can be ascertained, however, primitive intercessory prayer usually consisted of pleas for the welfare of the individual's family.

3. General Invocations.— In seasons when all was going well primitive man's prayer was made in general terms. It wished that his god would keep things at the status quo. It was even known for them to place themselves totally in the hands of the deity. "We know not what is good or for what we ought to pray. Thou knowest. Give it to us."³³

4. Petition.— If occasion, however, presented a specific need of the moment, that need was the burden of his prayer. It sometimes presented his needs beforehand, as for instance asking for a safe journey, good hunting results and successful war raids. Most tribes used self-praise to attract the attention of the gods. The idea being that a god would be more likely to listen to a worthy petitioner. Prayers invariably appealed to the sympathy of the gods: "Pity me, O God!"

5. Acknowledgement.— Many tribes did not have a word for "thanks"; in fact the languages of many primitive tribes today still have this lack.³⁴ But they do give thanks in some way. Acknowledgement is given by words

³³ Heiler, Prayer, pp. 20-21.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

somewhat like "Thou hast done it." While the prayer of petition seemed self-sufficient, prayers of thanksgiving, on the contrary, were accompanied by an offering which, scholars agree, formed the most primitive, the very beginning of the practice of sacrifice. Prayers of confession of realized wrongdoing in act or omission were common but, because primitive man's moral consciousness was only slightly developed, he had no idea of sorrow or contrition; he was concerned simply with the avoidance of any evil consequences.³⁵

6. Expression of inner feelings.— Because he is an outstanding authority on prayer Heiler is again quoted:

The most prominent characteristic of primitive prayer is its ingenuousness. Everything that stirs in the soul of him who prays, anxiety, urgency, desire, trust, vexation, depression, is expressed freely.³⁶

E. Sacrifice.— Eventually all kinds of prayer were or could have been accompanied by sacrifice, possibly inspired either by fear or by the desire to propitiate. The god was looked upon as an egoist who craved possessions and enjoyment as well as praise and thanksgiving.

1. Gifts.— Therefore sacrifice was offered to give weight to the prayer and thus enhance the possibility of its being granted in generous measure. The gifts for the

35 Cf. Hughes, Prophetic Prayer, p. 9.

36 F. Heiler, Prayer, p. 15.

sacrifice have varied greatly consisting of whatever the devotee considered precious or vital to himself.

2. Vow.— It was, perhaps, after experiencing negative results with sacrifice that man began to economize, in a certain sense, and promised the sacrifice only after the prayer had brought results. This would constitute the beginnings of the practice of vow-making. Sacrifices of animals were most likely introduced with the idea of "a life for a life". A gift of some kind seemed necessary, man did not expect to get something for nothing.

3. Meal.— Heiler proposes an interesting theory:

The idea of presentation of gifts is not the only one which is influential in primitive and ancient sacrifice; rather is the idea of communion frequently bound up with it. Gifts are offered to the divinity not only in order to obtain its favour and to appease its resentment, but it is invited as a guest to the festive meals which the family or the tribe celebrates in its honour. By this eating and drinking with the mighty divinity the participants would absorb into themselves its mysterious power.³⁷

4. Human Sacrifice.— Many reasons have been assigned by scholars for the horrible practice of human sacrifice; perhaps as a piacular sacrifice to atone for bloodshed, perhaps as an act of substitution when a victim was

³⁷ Heiler, Prayer, p. 26. Cf. also W. Robertson Smith, "Sacrifices Among the Semites", extracted from his Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, New York, Appleton & Co., 1889, and reprinted in Lessa and Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion, pp. 47-56.

offered to save a group. "The rites attending some of these sacrifices are too gruesome for description."³⁸

F. Physical Attitudes.— Primitive prayer was almost always accompanied by bodily gestures and movements which sometimes might be called dancing or rhythmic exercise. The standing position was most frequent but there were also kneeling, squatting and sitting, interspersed with bows of all kinds, and the universal postures of the hands being joined, folded or uplifted. Kissing of cultural objects has always had widespread usage. The use of song or incantations dates back to prehistoric times.³⁹ Frequent repetition seems to have been a constant, and evidently important, factor.

E.O. James calls this mode of supplication "acted prayers".

More explicit than the words spoken are the actions performed when man is prone to dramatize his desires and make his needs known to a transcendent source of strength by mimetic rites, which are virtually acted prayers.⁴⁰

G. Communal Prayer.— Whether individual or communal prayer came first would seem to be an unanswerable question. There are examples of individuals who left the tribe to make their personal petitions to God in solitude, yet traces are found,

³⁸ Hughes, Prophetic Prayer, p. 11.

³⁹ Cf. Heiler, Prayer, pp. 40-43.

⁴⁰ E.O. James, The Beginnings of Religion; An Introductory and Scientific Study, London, Hutchinson's University Library, [n.d.], p. 108.

still more numerous, of tribes who expressed their needs to God in common assemblage. It would seem natural that the first hopeful cry would come from an individual and then be taken up quite spontaneously by a group; or, one individual would follow the example of another.

Different as have been the results of scientific anthropological research, one phenomenon has always stood out clearly — man is naturally a religious being who prays. Whether in private or in community, primitive man's concept of prayer was natural and uncomplicated — "a cry from a weak being to one who is powerful, from an unhappy man to one who can make life happy or at least tolerable."⁴¹ Whether he arrived at the knowledge of a Supreme Being by revelation or by reason alone, it was in either case by the grace of God that he received it. His retention of the idea of monotheism or his lapse into magism would depend in no small measure on his cooperation with this grace. Similar cooperation with grace is needed by sisters today. The temptation to revert to magic in "unfailing" prayers, novenas and the use of relics is not unheard of and proper measures should be taken by regional authorities to prevent such abuses.

⁴¹ Gaston Salet, The Wonders of Our Faith, trans. John Leonard, Westminster, Md., Newman Press, 1961, p. 137.

II. PRAYER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. Idea of God.— The concept of prayer held in Old Testament times changed with the progressive revelation of himself which God made to his chosen people. This revelation, made in such an extraordinary manner to the patriarchs to Moses and later to individual prophets, is responsible for the fact that the idea of monotheism was retained in its purity by faithful Jews. Their practices were singularly uncontaminated by animism, or magic. In general, the response of the Israelites consisted of prayers of praise, intercession, petition, and sometimes simply cries of joy and distress.

The Israelites were like no other race of people. Their religion, and therefore their prayer was contained within the framework of the covenant. This was the unifying influence of their social as well as religious life. Yahweh was their God alone, they only were his people.

This idea is expressed lucidly by R.W. Gleason:

Fundamental to Israel's religion is the idea of the covenant: that Yahweh has bound Himself to Israel by a free choice, forging a bond between Himself and the chosen people which marks them out for a special destiny. Israel thus belongs to Yahweh and is different from all other peoples. By a pure grace on the part of God, she has been selected for a mission which implies mutual but unequal responsibilities and obligations: she will be Yahweh's people and He will be her God.⁴²

⁴² Robert W. Gleason, S.J., Yahweh: the God of the Old Testament, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, p. 44.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

22

It is hardly surprising to note that the Hebrew, like primitive man, had anthropomorphic ideas of God. This did not detract from the awe and reverence due to his divine majesty. The invisibility of Yahweh himself and the visibility of his superhuman works was a safeguard against any idea of his being a glorified man; but the prohibition of the making of images, considered so important that it was given first place among the Commandments of God, was practical protection against this "glorified man" idea, as well as against any other form of idolatry. Nevertheless, he was not looked upon as haughty, supercilious, unloving, or icily indifferent to his creatures. The Hebrews believed that they could speak to the Living God as to a real person possessing human feelings. They believed that God could be angry, jealous and avenging at times; but that he could be merciful, forgiving and provident as well is evidenced by the following quotations.

But high as the heavens are above the earth,
 So great is his kindness toward them that revere him;
 Far as east is from west,
 So far has he removed our offences from us.
 As a father is kind to his children,
 So the Lord is kind to those who revere him.
 So he knows our frame;
 He remembers that we are but dust (Ps. 102:11-14).⁴³

⁴³ The Smith-Goodspeed version of the Holy Bible will be used throughout this thesis, unless another version is enclosed in a direct quotation.

What is man that thou shouldst think of him?
 And the son of man that thou shouldst care for him
 (Ps. 8:4)?

B. Fundamental Attitudes.— The people of God praise their Maker at all times, it is a way of paying homage and of rendering thanksgiving as well.

Typical examples are the Song of Miriam after the passage of the Red Sea (Ex. 15), the Song of Deborah (Jq.5), and the songs of David and all the Israelites with harps and with psalteries, and with timbrels, castenets and cymbal, and with dancing (1 Chr. 13:8).

Psalms of Hallel abound in the Bible. They correspond to the deepest and noblest need of all religion, the need to adore from the dust below him who is above. The psalmist wants the entire world to join in this praise; his expressions falter at the grandeur of the task, as in the following lines:

Let the rivers clap their hands,
 the mountains shout with them for joy.
 Before the Lord, for He comes,
 for He comes to rule the earth (Ps. 97:8-9).

C.S. Lewis writes with his usual contemporary freshness: "The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about."⁴⁴

44 C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms, London, Godfrey Bles, 1958, p. 95.

Another fundamental attitude of prayer is anawa. It is spiritual poverty which is arrived at after a number of experiences of distress and human failure. This "poverty" is expressed sometimes in dialogue sometimes in monologues, in apostrophes, often very freely, very severely, very bitterly, almost "blasphemously" as will be noted in the following examples.

For I am surfeited with troubles,
and my life verges on Sheol.
I am reckoned among these that go
down to the Pit (Ps. 88:3,4).

My eye wasted away with sorrow;
I have called upon thee, O Lord,
all day long;
I have spread out my hands toward thee (Ps. 88:9).

Why, O Lord, dost thou reject me?
and hide thy face from me?
I have been afflicted and at the point
of death from my youth up;
I have borne thy terrors;
I am overcome (Ps. 88:14,15).

The theme of the Book of Job is based on a similar attitude of anawa. Though Job seems almost to have lost faith in a merciful God, though he is rebellious, nevertheless he is crying for wisdom in an anguished plea for some understanding of the purpose of pain and suffering.

C. Variety in Prayer.— There is a great variety of prayer in the Old Testament as is to be expected when such a diversity of people pray, each according to his own life situation. There are the cries of distress from a long line of anawim; those

poor in earthly goods, those exiled, those in mourning, in sickness, in prison, harassed by war or other national calamity, who look upon their sufferings as a punishment from Yahweh.

The plea of the childless is often given in the Old Testament such are prayers of Abraham (Gen. 15:3); Isaac (Gen. 25:21); and the parents of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:19).

We read of prayers accompanied by tears and fasting, Judith (9:1) and Esther (14:2) are perfect examples of such. On the other hand, as was seen of primitive man also, the ancient Israelites were not averse to mentioning their own good qualities in hope of a reward. Jeremiah asks why the wicked are allowed to prosper when they do not keep the Lord in their thoughts, whereas he is in misery: "Yet thou, O Lord knowest me, Thou seest me, and testest my mind toward thee" (Jer. 12:3). Nehemiah recounts all his "good deeds" for the house of the Lord (Neh. 13:13 ff.).

To counterbalance these prayers of petition are some of thanksgiving, pilgrimage psalms, festival psalms, those expressing the experience of contemplatives, psalms composed by wise men, and ex voto psalms brought to the temple for the express purpose of being sung.

Israelitic prayer, with as much strength and spontaneity as primitive prayer, was a natural consequence of fervent faith in a concrete God, transcendent yet close,

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

26

all-powerful yet a father to man. Old Testament prayer is thus primitive prayer refined, cleansed of its imperfections: a) it does not limit itself to petitions for material wants; b) it has learned to make intercession for others; c) it is submissive to the will of God.

Create for me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit with me (Ps. 51:10).

That all who take refuge in thee may
rejoice and shout for joy forever;
And do thou protect them, that those
Who love thy name may exult in thee (Ps. 5:11).

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want (Ps. 23:1).

What was unknown to primitive man we now find poignantly expressed in the Miserere, David's act of contrition and plea for forgiveness.

For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me (Ps. 51:3).

For thou desirest not sacrifice,
And should I give burnt-offering thou
Wouldst not be pleased.
The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;
A broken and contrite heart,
O God, thou wilt not despise (Ps. 51:16-17).

The sacrifice that God demands is a sacrifice of man's self-will and self-importance; in other words, it is the surrender of man's own self to God. This elevation of the idea of sacrifice to the height of an ethical and religious spirituality is one of the most mature fruits on the Bible's tree of religious knowledge.⁴⁵

45 Artur Weiser, The Psalms: A Commentary, trans. Herbert Hartwell, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1962, p. 410.

D. Psalms.— Arthur Weiser advises a study of the Psalter to understand the Old Testament conception of prayer

However, even though the psalms preserved in the Psalter do not express the religious life of Israel in all its fulness, they have nevertheless been able, by virtue of the bond which linked them to the old Covenant regarding the revelation of God, to preserve in the prayerful devotion of the Psalter the full depth and power of a belief in God that was continually created anew as a living source of strength.⁴⁶

The biblical scholar and prolific writer, Albert Gelin, makes a strong assertion:

Biblical piety as found in the Psalter [is] its most wonderful expression. I spoke of prayer as breathing. In the Bible the collection of psalms are entitled the collection of tehilla, i.e., breathing.⁴⁷

The French biblical scholar Jean Steinmann gives his idea of the faith of the psalmists thus: "The psalmists all have this in common that they pray to Yahweh... That prayer is possible that it can educe divine intervention, such is the faith continually affirmed in the Psalms."⁴⁸ The psalms are "real prayers uttered by men of flesh and blood praying in actual situations at a definite period."⁴⁹

46 Weiser, The Psalms, p. 101.

47 Albert Gelin, S.S., "The Prayer of the Biblical Man", trans. Richard X. Redmond, S.S., in Worship, Vol. 36, February 1962, p. 151.

48 Jean Steinmann, Les Psaumes, Paris, Gabalda et Cie, 1951, p. 173. (The translation is mine.)

49 Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas, Vol. 1, Oxford, Blackwell, 1962, p. 1.

If we wish to understand them we must study them in their proper historical setting.

It would not be right to leave unnoticed the imprecatory Psalms. To avoid gross misunderstanding they must be considered from the viewpoint of their historical background. It has been suggested that the objects of these imprecations are enemies of the people of God and therefore of God himself. Moreover, those whom the psalmist execrates are guilty of cruelty and immorality.

It is to be noted that in all cases blessings as well as curses were conditional. Moreover imprecations were not expected to be infallible; the Israelite knew he could not force God.

Doubtless many modern Christians will always shrink from their use but they should realize that the moral understanding of this ancient people cannot be judged by the twentieth century standards of Christians after two thousand years of the Church's teaching.

E. Physical Attitudes.— Though, without doubt, the Israelites adhered to certain rituals while praying the Psalms, unfortunately no precise knowledge of such has come down to us. In certain Psalms, however, are found indications of the rubrics which must have accompanied the prayer, such as the following:

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

29

Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name:
Bring an offering and come into his courts (Ps. 96:8).

Come into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise (Ps. 100:4).

I wash my hands in innocence,
And march round thy altar, O Lord (Ps. 26:6).

Thy processions are seen, O God,
The processions of my God, my King,
in the sanctuary.
Singers had, at the rear, the stringed instruments;
In the middle, maidens playing timbrels (Ps. 68:24-25).

I will enter thy house with offerings,
I will fulfil to thee the vows,
Which my lips have expressed,
And my mouth has spoken when
I was in trouble.
Burnt-offerings of fatlings I will offer to thee,
Together with the savory smoke of rams;
I will prepare an ox and he-goats (Ps. 66:13-15).⁵⁰

For the Jew, standing was the normal position when engaged in prayer: "I am that woman that was standing here in your presence, engaged in prayer unto the Lord" (1 Sam. 26). Similarly, lifting up the hands was ordinary: "I lift up my hands unto thy holy shrine" (Ps. 28:2). As an example of both:

Lo, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord,
Who stand in the house of the Lord by night!
Lift up your hands toward the sanctuary, and
bless the Lord (Ps. 134:1-2).

Kneeling, however, was not unknown: "Now when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplica-

50 Cf. Pius Drijvers, O.C.S.O., Les Psaumes: genres littéraires et thèmes doctrinaux, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1958, p. 51.

tion to the Lord, he arose from kneeling on his knees before the altar of the Lord with his hands stretched out towards the heavens and stood, and blessed all the assembly of Israel..." (1 Kgs. 54-55). We learn that Elijah "went up to the top of Carmel, and crouched down upon the earth, with his face between his knees" (1 Kgs. 42).

In many cases of fear, desperation and sorrow we read of the Jews tearing their garments, prostrating to the ground, wearing sackcloth and putting ashes or dust on their heads.

Then Joshua tore his clothes, and falling on his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord he lay there until evening together with the elders of Israel; and they threw dust on their heads (Josh. 7:6).

David also: "He kept a fast and went in and lay in sackcloth upon the earth" (2 Sam. 16). Bows, of different kinds were also important. "All the people answered, "Amen, Amen" with uplifted hands as they bowed with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8-6); as well as "Thereupon the man bowed in homage to the Lord" (Gen. 24:26).

Many psalms and canticles were composed with the explicit intention of being sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument. With this cultic song and music we sometimes read of dancing. These are expressions of the soul, a rapturous abandonment in an encounter with the Holy.

F. Communal Prayer.— The Hebrews had a marked conception of race solidarity. Yahweh had made a Covenant with the whole race. Therefore if one man sinned the whole nation suffered, just as in one man, Abraham, all had been blessed. We find Moses speaking to God as the representative of this corporate personality, Israel, and so on in the case of judges, kings and prophets. The Psalms are proof of this social element in Old Testament prayer.

Of all the prayers of ancient Israel the Psalms had the most profound influence on the minds and hearts of the people, to such an extent that they are typical of all Old Testament prayer. Their spiritual and moral force pervades the New Testament and continues to be of paramount importance in the prayer of the Church today.

III. PRAYER OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

A. Prayer of Jesus.— In her book entitled Worship, Evelyn Underhill fittingly introduces the topic of prayer in the New Testament.

It is true that the Evangelists maintain great reserve when speaking of the devotional practice of Our Lord and His closest followers. We can only infer its character from His few reported acts and sayings. Yet even from these scattered references, we receive the impression of a loving filial delight in God, in Himself and for Himself, which is unique in vividness and depth.⁵¹

⁵¹ Evelyn Underhill, Worship, London, Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1962, p. 220.

B. Fundamental Truths.— To a certain extent, the Hebrews of the Old Testament possessed the image of God as a Father, but as Father of the nation — the Israelite nation. The outstanding idea however that Jesus taught was that all individuals are children of their heavenly and holy Father; he is kind to sinners; he sends his rain upon the just and the unjust. This notion of love and salvation for each individual, including the Gentiles was unacceptable to the race-conscious Jews. Wherever such ecumenical ideas appeared in the prophecies the "children of Abraham" read into them a meaning more acceptable to themselves. According to the distinguished and critical American authority, George Foot Moore, the introduction of Ezra's lawbook changed the whole character of the Jewish religion.

The outstanding figure of the preceding centuries was the prophet; after Ezra his place was taken by the scribe. The reform was anti-prophetic and anti-universalistic; inevitably the law extinguished the remnants of prophecy, and it fastened exclusiveness on the religion for all time to come.⁵²

⁵² George Foot More, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim, Vol. 1, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1950, p. 13. Cf. also Hans Urs von Balthasar, Word and Revelation; Essays in Theology I, trans. A.V. Littledale and Alexander Dru, Montreal, Palm Publishers, 1964, pp. 51 and 110.

But the fact is that in all his teachings on prayer Christ had but to develop and amplify the conceptions which had been handed down from the prophets.

Christ's doctrine on prayer was based on the fundamental truths that God is all-holy and all-powerful. God is Love; God is the Father who watches over each individual; for, to Love itself, no detail can be unimportant.

C. Kind of Prayer. — It follows from this teaching of Christ that true prayer must be humble, filial, confident and loving. This particular kind of prayer Jesus tenderly put into the words of the "Our Father". Words which are neither stilted nor sentimental but simple and strong. To have a clear concept of prayer we must understand its purpose. In the "Our Father" Jesus summarizes the things for which we should pray. True, nearly all the petitions can be paralleled in some part of the Old Testament, but Jesus has drawn them together to teach a new hierarchy of values.⁵³

D. When and What to Pray For.— Examples that Jesus gave of when to pray and what to pray for abound in the New Testament. Just a few have been chosen as a means of illustration. Luke mentions Jesus' silent prayer after

⁵³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 83, a. 9. Cf. also Hughes, *Prophetic Prayer*, pp. 39 ff.

his baptism, marking the important moment of the beginning of his public life. Jesus spends the entire night in prayer before choosing his twelve, an example of prayer for guidance before a decisive event in life. Jesus thanked God for the seven loaves and the fish before the miracle of the multiplication of food (Matt. 15:36). His confidence in his Father is so utterly complete that he can give thanks before the miracle happens. "I have prayed that your own faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32), Jesus tells Peter. In this plea he makes the apostles co-workers in his mission. Peter will strengthen his brethren because their faith relies on the prayer of the Lord.

E. Sacrifice.— As far as sacrifice is concerned, Father Congar states that from the very first Jesus prayed with the prayer of the People of God. He continues:

The Epistle to the Hebrews, then, is not wrong when, wishing to express the attitude and the outlook of Jesus in His Incarnation, it borrowed the text of a Psalm that sums up all the thrust of revelation with regard to the cult of God: "You did not desire either sacrifice or offering; but you fashioned me a body. You did not delight in holocausts or in sin-offerings. Then I said: 'Here I am... come, O God to do your will'" (Ps. 40:7-8 according to the Septuagint; Heb. 10-5-7).⁵⁴

Jesus sustains the objections to the old forms of sacrifice which had been voiced by the prophets. The bloody sacrifice of the Old Law is to give place to the unbloody

⁵⁴ Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P., "The Prayer of Christ", in *Review for Religious*, Vol. 24, March 1965, p. 231.

sacrifice of the New which will be far greater than was in the power of man to conceive. The new Sacrifice of the Mass will be a symbol of the interior spirit of the one offering.

F. Summit of Prayer.— The summit of prayer is expressed clearly and beautifully by Yves Congar.

But the supreme moment of the prayer of Jesus was the supreme moment of His ministry, that of His holy Passion by which He authored the New Covenant in His own blood and the entire efficacy of the apostolic ministry. Here three great acts are mutually involved: the Supper, the Agony, and the cross. The content of these acts is the same: it is the love and the completely filial obedience with which Jesus carries out the will of His Father even to the acceptance of death and to the offering of that death for us sinners for whom God willed to retain and to renew forever His covenant of grace. It is on the cross that everything is accomplished; but twice "on the night He was betrayed," Jesus anticipated His sacrifice as far as its spiritual substance is concerned: the first time was in order to institute the sacramental celebration with its corresponding ministry, and this took place in the upper room of the cenacle; the second time was to reveal its true content, and this was the Agony in the garden. These three acts of the one Passion were filled with prayer.⁵⁵

G. Use of Psalms.— As a boy Jesus must have joined wholeheartedly in the pilgrimage Psalms and in all the Psalms sung in the Temple service. The Psalms which expressed the feelings of the privileged remnant, the anawim,

55 Congar, "The Prayer of Christ", p. 225.

would be most in harmony with the religious attitude of the one who called himself "meek and humble of heart" (Matt. 11:29).

The noted exegete, Albert Gelin, has a comment on Christ's use of Psalm 22, while hanging on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mk. 15:34) which softens much of the awful mystery.

For a Jew to cite the beginning of a prayer, a book or a document was to evoke the total sense of this prayer, this document or this book. The psychology of the citation, perhaps, did not sufficiently arrest our attention. Jesus repeated Psalm 22 in its full sense: in His mouth it could be only the cry of the Messiah affirming His confidence in the completion of His work. In this respect modern critics do not err: "This is not the plaint of a rebel or of one in despair; it is that of a just man who suffers yet is assured of the love and protection of the most holy God even unto death... The cry is not, in the Jewish sense, an expression of despair, nor does it connote revolt but is in harmony with Old Testament piety and consequently connotes a sentiment of communion with God"... this is the true meaning.⁵⁶

When the evangelists report the prayers that Jesus said aloud they are most often Psalms or parts of Psalms, thus setting the seal of approval on them for our benefit.

H. How to Pray.— Jesus teaches us how to pray. Whatever you ask the Father for, he will give you as my followers. Hitherto you have not asked for anything as my

⁵⁶ Albert Gelin, S.S., La Prière des psaumes, Paris, Editions de l'Epi, 1961, pp. 97, 98.

followers, but now ask, and you will receive, so that your happiness may be complete (Jn. 16:23-24).

Every prayer, from now on, is made in the name of Christ, through his mediation. He is the necessary and infallible way to God. The Roman Liturgy expresses this in the conclusion to its prayers: Per Dominum nostrum Jesus Christum. It would be futile to seek another way to the Father. Jesus is the universal mediator; all prayers are borne by him to the heavenly Father.⁵⁷

I. Communal Prayer.— The fact that Jesus himself attended the synagogue, that he went to the Temple for feasts proves that he did not "come to do away with the Law" (Matt. 5:17) of Jewish community prayer. Moreover the social idea is contained in the invocation "Our Father", and in the conception of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Last Supper was a communal act and the Church which he founded would necessarily unite its members in prayer.

Appropriately enough the New Testament ends with a picture of the redeemed and glorified Church in heaven engaged in the ceaseless adoration and worship of God. As the prayers of the sanctified ascending in a paean of praise and blessing we see corporate worship at its highest and noblest.⁵⁸

Though the prayer of the New Covenant is naturally superior to that of the Old, the principles remain the same.

57 Adalbert Hamman, "The Prayer of Jesus", trans. Peter Hebblethwaite, S.J., in The Way, Vol. 3, July, 1963, p. 179.

58 Hughes, Prophetic Prayer, p. 50.

In Christian prayer the spiritual is emphasized rather than the temporal; and intercession is made for all men manifesting more clearly belief in the general fatherhood of God. The example of the prayer of Jesus stimulated his followers to "pray without ceasing" (1 Th. 5:17).

IV. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON PRAYER⁵⁹

A. Definition.— The traditional definition of prayer is that of St. John Damascene who states: "To pray is to ask becoming things of God."⁶⁰ Catholic theologians have generally accepted this as the teaching of Scripture and Tradition on the doctrine of prayer.⁶¹ However, this essential and specific definition was not meant to be used by itself.

Article.1.— St. Thomas Aquinas was among the number of those who made use of this starting point. He also quotes St. Augustine (De Verb. Dom.)⁶² as saying: "Prayer is a petition."

⁵⁹ This section is based on the Summa Theologiae, IIa-IIae, q. 83, a. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 15 and 17.

⁶⁰ John Damascene, De Fide Orthodoxa, Lib. III, PG, Vol. 94, col. 1090.

⁶¹ Cf. Joseph Clifford Fenton, The Theology of Prayer, Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Co., 1939, pp. 1-5.

⁶² This exact quotation is not found in the sermons of Augustine, but Sermo 61, n. 7-8 (PL 38, 411) contains the meaning, in other words. Both the Leonine and Ottawa editions give a cross reference: "cf. Rabanum Maurum, De Univ., Lib. V, cap. 14 (PL III, 136)."

But he does not stop there since prayer as a petition is by its nature an act which can be composed.

St. Thomas teaches that there are four of these acts or parts which enter into the composition of prayer: supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings. He gives as example of these four acts the collect of Trinity Sunday:

"Almighty eternal God" belong to the offering up of prayer to God; the words, "Who have given to Thy servants", etc. belong to thanksgiving; the words, "grant, we beseech You", belong to intercession; and the words at the end, "Through Our Lord", etc. belong to supplication.⁶³

According to A. Fonck in the Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, St. Thomas does adopt two definitions as given below:

Prayer is an act of the reason (as it is) presenting a desire of the will to Him who is not under our power but who is above us, namely, God (Sent., IV, dist. 15, q. 4, a. 1, sol. 1),

and

Prayer is a (certain) unfolding of the will to God, that He may fulfill it (Summa Theologiae, IIIa, q. 21, a. 1).⁶⁴

In another place he states: "Prayer is desire" (a. 1, obj.1).

Regarding his statement that prayer is an act of the reason

63 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, IIa-IIae, q. 83, a. 17. English trans. is from The "Summa Theologica" of Saint Thomas Aquinas, literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, London, Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1922.

64 A. Fonck, "Prière", in Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, ed. A. Vacant and E. Mangenot, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1908- , Vol. 49, col. 171. (The translation is mine.)

St. Thomas explains:

The will moves the reason to its end: wherefore nothing hinders the act of reason, under the motion of the will, from tending to an end such as charity which is union with God. Now prayer tends to God, through being moved by the will of charity, in two ways. First, on the part of the object of our petition, because when we say we ought principally to ask to be united to God, "One thing I ask from the Lord, that do I seek, That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" (Ps. 27:4). Second on the part of the petitioner, who ought to approach the person he petitions, either locally, as when he petitions a man, or mentally, as when he petitions God. Hence Dionysius says: "When we call upon God in our prayers, we unveil our mind in His presence!"⁶⁵ And in the same sense Damascene says: "Prayer is the raising up of the mind to God."⁶⁶

B. Need for Prayer.— Article 2.— St. Thomas points out that we have absolute need to pray for three reasons:

1. We need to pray to God primarily that we ourselves may be reminded of the necessity of having recourse to his help.
2. The correct motive in praying is not that we may change the Divine disposition, but that, by our prayers we may obtain what God has appointed.
3. God bestows many things on us out of his liberality, even without our asking for them: but that he wishes to bestow certain things on us at our asking, is for the sake of our good that we may acquire confidence in having recourse to God, and that we may recognize in him the Author of all our good.

65 Dionysius, De Div. Nom., cap. 3, 1, PG 3, 680.

66 Damascene, De Fide Orthodoxa, PG 94, 1090.

C. Act of Religion. — Article 3.— In the third article St. Thomas proves that prayer is an act of religion, as follows:

It belongs properly to religion to show honour to God, wherefore all those things through which reverence is shown to God, belong to religion. Now man shows reverence to God by means of prayer, in so far as he subjects himself to Him, and by praying confesses that he needs Him as the Author of his goods. Hence it is evident that prayer is properly an act of religion.

D. Definite Prayer.— Article 5.— To the question of whether we ought to ask for something definite when we pray St. Thomas answers:

Although man cannot by himself know what he ought to pray for, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness" (Rom. 8:26). He inspires us with holy desires, thus making us ask for what is right. "It pleads for God's people in accordance with His will" (Rom. 8:27). Hence our Lord said: God is spirit and his worshippers must worship him in spirit and in sincerity (Jn. 4:24). When we ask for things concerning our salvation, we conform our will to God's. "It pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to know the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). God so invites us to take good things, that we may approach them not by the steps of the body, but by pious desires and devout prayers.

E. Prayer for Temporal Favors.— Article 6.— It is lawful to pray for temporal things but they should be secondary in importance. "But you must strive to find His kingdom, and you will have these other things besides" (Luke 12:31). We may ask God that they may be granted to

us in so far as they are expedient for our salvation. Not all solicitude about temporal need is forbidden, only that which is superfluous and inordinate.

F. Prayer for Oneself.— Article 7.— It is a condition of prayer that one prays for oneself; but it is essential to love our neighbor and a duty of charity to pray for others. We ought to pray for sinners that they may be converted, and for the just that they may persevere and advance in holiness.

G. Prayer for Enemies.— Article 8.— We are bound to pray for our enemies in the same manner as we are bound to love them, that is we must love them in their nature, not their sin. In like manner it is a matter of obligation that we should not exclude our enemies from general prayers which we offer up for others; but it is a matter of perfection, and not of obligation, to pray for them individually, except in certain special cases.

H. For Efficacy.— Article 15.— St. Thomas sets four conditions for the efficacy of prayer: namely, to ask — for ourselves — things necessary for salvation — piously — perseveringly; when all these four concur, we always obtain what we ask for.

CONCEPT OF PRAYER

43

Prayer depends chiefly on faith, not for its efficacy in meriting, because for that it depends chiefly on charity, but for its efficacy in obtaining what is asked, since it is through faith that man comes to know God's omnipotence and mercy, which are the sources from which prayer is answered.

Spiritual writers of all ages have given various definitions of prayer, usually of a general nature such as "a cry for help" or "an effort to communicate with the invisible" or even "a familiar talking to God", without, however, believing we may converse with him as an equal.⁶⁷ But the act of prayer as such is essentially, following St. Thomas, a petition of fitting things from God.

CONCLUSION

We learn from ethnologists that religion, and consequently prayer, comes naturally to man. It is a response to the grace of God. At every stage of history from the primitive to our own day we have evidence of sincere and spontaneous recognition of the nothingness of man. Based on this humility are the common tendencies of human nature to worship, to praise, to petition, to thank. Since the fall, on account of the weakness of human nature, man tends to turn away from or even defile that which is good. From the true worship of one Supreme Being primitive man turned to magism, animism, totemism and such practices until the

67 Cf. Fenton, The Theology of Prayer, p. 14.

truth was almost buried under. In the Old Testament God not only revealed himself to his people, but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, taught them how to pray. Nevertheless the darkening of the intellect prevented them from grasping the idea of the brotherhood of all men; rather did they turn to curses, deprecations and the Pharisaical emphasis on externals. New Testament times witnessed the summit of perfection in the prayer of Jesus, but Christian prayer has since often degenerated into sentimentalism and even into magic. The great Eucharistic Sacrifice was instituted by Christ to be the common worship of the community but, even here, through rigidity followed by ignorance of the true meaning of the Mass, the faithful have long been turned away from willing and full participation by the barriers of a foreign tongue and an unintelligible ritual. By contrast, the prayer of the Psalms has always guided and satisfied Jewish piety. They were prayed by Jesus, his blessed Mother and the Apostles. Small wonder that the Church continues to recommend their use by all her children and even makes it a matter of obligation for most religious orders. The spirit of aggiornamento demands further study of these pillars of true spirituality by all Catholics of today.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS OF PRAYER IN RELIGIOUS ORDERS

Only by a study of the history and development of the horarium of prayer in Religious Orders will we be able to understand what exactly is our inheritance in this respect, on which we may build for the future.

I. EARLY CHRISTIAN PRAYER

In the first centuries of the Church prayer was "common" in the truest sense. There were no formal regulations and no special prayers for certain ecclesiastical ranks.

1. The Didache or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles urges Christians to pray the Our Father three times a day. This ancient work is a compilation of instructions, based on sayings of Jesus, which the Apostles gave to their converts. There has been considerable controversy over the date of its composition. Backed by all the force of his scholarly reputation, J.P. Audet, O.P., has published the latest theory. He fixes the date as between the years 50 and 70 A.D., with a possible margin of error leaning towards a slightly earlier date.¹ Thus making it antecedent to or

¹ Cf. Jean-Paul Audet, O.P., La Didachè: Instructions des apôtres, Paris, Gabalda et Cie, 1958, p. 199.

PRAYER IN RELIGIOUS ORDERS

46

contemporary with the writing of the gospels.

The translation from the Latin of this particular excerpt on the Lord's Prayer reads as follows:

And do not pray as the hypocrites do, but pray as the Lord has commanded in the Gospel: Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the power and the glory for evermore.²

The doxology omits the usual "the kingdom" of the version in present day use in most Protestant Churches. In fact the entire doxology is missing from most texts of the Gospels. According to Audet, however, its inclusion here confirms the theory that the Didache originated in a milieu and a tradition similar to that of Matthew. The first Christians certainly did not all wait to learn the Lord's prayer from the written text of Matthew's Gospel. And Audet adds that it harmonizes in the most natural manner with contemporary usages.³

The Didache continues with: "Say this prayer three times a day."⁴

² The Didache, in Ancient Christian Writers, The Works of the Fathers in Translation, Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, eds., trans. James A. Kleist, S.J., Vol. 6, Westminster, Md., The Newman Press, 1948, p. 19.

³ Audet, La Didachè, pp. 370 ff.

⁴ The Didache, in Ancient Christian Writers, p. 19.

PRAYER IN RELIGIOUS ORDERS

47

Some writers wonder why the Didacist finds it necessary to quote the Lord's Prayer in full. But where or when were pagans to learn this prayer if not in their first instructions?⁵

Tertullian, writing about the year 200, is one of the first to mention the early Christian custom of praying the "Hours", based on reference to Sacred Scripture:

Touching the time, however, the extrinsic observance of certain hours will not be unprofitable — those common hours, I mean, which mark the intervals of the day — the third, the sixth, the ninth — which we may find in the Scriptures to have been more solemn than the rest. The first infusion of the Spirit into the congregated disciples took place at "the third hour" (Acts 2:1-4, 14, 15). Peter, on the day on which he experienced the vision of Universal Community (exhibited) in that small vessel, had ascended into the more lofty parts of the house, for prayers sake "at the sixth hour" (Acts 10:9). The same (apostle) was going into the temple with John, "at the ninth hour" (Acts 3:1), when he restored the paralytic (sic) to his health. Albeit these practices stand simply without any precept for their observance, still it may both add stringency to the admonition to pray, and may, as it were by a law, tear us out from our businesses unto such a duty.⁶

2. Idea of Vowed Virginité - No specified prayer.—

The idea of young maidens consecrating their virginity to God was of apostolic origin and received the approval of St. Paul: "An unmarried woman or girl is concerned about the Lord's work, so as to be consecrated in body and spirit" (1 Cor. 7:34).

⁵ The Didache, p. 159, footnote 52.

⁶ Tertullian, in Latin Christianity: Its Founder Tertullian, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, Buffalo, Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885, pp. 689-690.

During the first three centuries it was impossible for consecrated virgins to live openly in a convent or monastery since these were times of persecution. Their devotion had to be kept hidden while they mingled in society. It occurred again and again that their refusal of marriage led to exposure of their vow and, in the end, to martyrdom. St. Agnes, St. Agatha and St. Lucy are cited in ancient works as examples of casualties under these circumstances.

Works of charity such as almsgiving, caring for the poor and sick, and catechising were undertaken by these women usually in cooperation with the local bishops. They had no specific prayers or other religious obligations.⁷

3. Hermits.— The persecutions of the first three centuries drove many holy men to leave the cities in order to lead lives of solitude in the wilderness. The honour of being the first such hermit has seemingly always belonged to St. Paul the Hermit. We have St. Jerome's word for it in the life he wrote of that solitary. In the Prologue he says:

Truly, Amathas and Macarius disciples of St. Anthony, the former of whom had buried (the body of) his master even now affirm that a child of

⁷ Cf. J.A. Campbell, "Virgins Consecrated to God in Rome during the First Centuries", in American Catholic Quarterly Review, Vol. 25, 1900, pp. 766-790.

PRAYER IN RELIGIOUS ORDERS

49

Thebes, named Paul, was the first to live such a life, without giving it a name; and this opinion is also mine.⁸

The same Egyptian desert which attracted the first hermit most certainly saw the beginnings of Christian monasticism as well. The forbidding nature of the terrain seems to have been particularly inviting to those who sought solitude with thoughts bent on a better world.

The greatest drawback in this hermitical life was the impossibility of assisting at Holy Mass and receiving the Sacraments. The practical solution was for the hermits to build their detached cells rather close together so as to be able to use a common church. Such a collection of cells, called a *laura*, marked a transitional stage from the strictly hermitical to the cenobitic or monastic form of religious life, where the monks lived in a community and held all things in common.

⁸ Eusebii Hieronymi, Prologus: Vita S. Pauli Primi Eremitae, PL, 23, cols. 17-18: "Amathas vero et Macarius, discipuli Antonii, e quibus superior magistri corpus sepelevit, etiam nunc affirmant, Paulum quemdam Thebaeum principem istius rei fuisse, non nominis; quam opinionem nos quoque probamus." Cf. "Prologue: Vie de Saint Paul, premier ermite", in Oeuvres complètes de Saint Jérôme, traduites en français et annotées par l'Abbé Bareille, renfermant le texte latin soigneusement revu et les meilleures notes des diverses éditions, Paris, Louis Vivès, 1878, Vol. 2, p. 408. (The translation is mine.)

II. BEGINNING OF MONASTIC PRAYER

1. Monasticism.— The change was first made by St. Anthony. For forty years this great saint had edified all who knew him by his austere hermit's life. But, giving in to the plea of many other hermits who wished to imitate his holiness under his direction, he gathered them together in an institute which he founded at Faium, not far from Memphis. Living together but not under one roof, they nevertheless formed the first monastery. It was a forward step, still these men had no holy rule and were not even under vows.⁹

St. Pachomius, in 325, founded a monastery on the Island of Tabennisi, on the Nile. He gave his monks a religious rule, thus constituting monasticism proper. He may for this cause be called the founder of Monastic Orders.

2. Convents.— The fact that is pertinent to this thesis is that Pachomius also founded, about 330, a convent for his sister Mary and her companions near his own monastery. These first nuns followed the same Rule of St. Pachomius as did the monks. The work of the Holy Spirit is

⁹ Cf. Athanasius, Vita Sancti Antonii, PG, Vol. 26, col. 835-978; Cf. also Johannes Quasten, "Athanasius: The Life of St. Antony" and "St. Antony", in Patrology, Westminster, Newman Press, 1960, Vol. 3, pp. 39-40 and 148-149; Cf. also T. Gilmartin, "Christian Monachism", Ch. IX of Manual of Church History, 4th ed., Maynooth, St. Patrick's College, 1926, Vol. 1, pp. 140-148.

clearly seen here: monasticism for women was a great need of that time.

Much praise and true admiration were due those virgins living in the world who emulated St. Agnes, St. Cecilia and the other holy women, and in general they were rightly held in high esteem. Nevertheless, in the third century, scandal was given by certain individuals. These were criticized, perhaps justly, for possessing great wealth for being proud, vain, hardhearted and avaricious. Some were even accused of disobedience to the bishop, improper conduct in public and violations of chastity. The founding of convents put an end to these abuses. The nuns indeed gave up the world and its ease and pleasure, even family joy, to lead lives of poverty and renunciation. The prayer and work according to a holy Rule attracted religiously minded women, and convents spread rapidly, both in the East and in the West.¹⁰

3. Hilarion.— Hilarion (371) was Palestine's first monk as evidenced in the writings of St. Jerome.

Before that there was not a monastery in Palestine, no monks were seen in Syria before the blessed Hilarion. He is the founder and model of

¹⁰ Cf. Stephanus Hilpisch, O.S.B., History of Benedictine Nuns, trans. Sister M.J. Muggli, ed. L.J. Doyle, Collegeville, St. John's Abbey Press, 1958, pp. 3 and 4, and cf. T. Gilmartin, Manual of Church History, p. 148.

that life in this province. The Lord Jesus had the holy old man Anthony in Egypt, He had the young Hilarion in Palestine.¹¹

4. St. Basil's Rule.— St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea (379) drew up a rule for the monks of his diocese. For the first time the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience were made obligatory for all who embraced the religious life. Since he possessed the necessary episcopal authority, he himself gave his institute the ecclesiastical approval. From that time the approval of the Ordinary has been a condition for the constitution of any diocesan religious order whether of men or of women.

To sustain the chronological order it suffices to mention the well-known historical data: Monasticism was introduced into Italy through the influence of St. Athanasius, then in exile, and of St. Ambrose (397). French Monasticism owes much to St. Martin of Tours (400) as Ireland's does to St. Patrick (493).¹²

¹¹ Eusebii Hieronymi, Vita Sancti Hilarionis, PL, Vol. 23, cols. 34-35: "Necdum enim tunc monasteria erant in Palaestina, nec quisquam monachum ante sanctum Hilarionem in Syria noverat. Ille fundator et eruditor hujus conversationis et studii in hac provincia fuit. Habebat Dominus Jesus in Aegypto senem Antonium; habebat in Palaestina Hilarionem juniorem." (The translation is mine.)

¹² Gilmartin, Manual of Church History, pp. 148-149.

5. St. Athanasius.— In all cases the Rule and manner of life for the nuns was similar to that of the monks.

During this period of the fourth century the practice of meditating on phases of the Passion while chanting the office was introduced. We learn more of this custom from a work entitled "De Virginitate" and ascribed to St. Athanasius.¹³

The treatise contains detailed instructions concerning the conduct and religious duties of a consecrated virgin which might be considered extreme in these days, but it did give her help and comfort in the form of beautiful prayers.

The following quotation from Athanasius gives us some notion of the prayer life of dedicated virgins in the middle ages.

Neither by night nor by day let the Word of God be taken from your mouth. Therefore, let meditation on the Sacred Scriptures be your work at all times. Use a Psalter and study the Psalms. Let the rising sun see the Book in your hands: after the third hour assemble together, because at that hour the beam of the Cross was fastened. Similarly at the sixth hour, fulfill your prayer by psalms and weeping and entreaty, because at the same hour the Son of God was suspended on the Cross. At the ninth hour again implore God with hymns and praises, confessing your sins with tears, for in the same hour the Lord, hanging on the Cross, gave up the spirit. After the assembly of the ninth hour, eat your bread giving

¹³ The lively controversy over the authorship of this book is fully treated by Johannes Quasten, "Athanasius" in *Patrology*, Vol. 3, pp. 45-49.

thanks to God at the table, in these words: "Blessed be God, who is merciful to us, and who feeds us from our youth: "The Giver of food to all flesh" (Ps. 136: 25). Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, so that always having sufficiency, we may abound in Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom with Thee, in the Holy Spirit belong glory, power, honour and adoration, forever and ever. Amen.¹⁴

Athanasius also exhorts the virgins to remember Christ's descent into hell, before they retire for the night. Ad midnight they should rise and assembling together celebrate the Resurrection by the singing of hymns.¹⁵

The Psalter used was written in Greek. Therefore these women, for whom the Greek language was the vernacular, were indeed fortunate. These Egyptian nuns recited the whole Psalter every day, and it had to be memorized. At

14 Athanasius, De passione et cruce Domini, PG, Vol. 28, col. 266A and B: "Nocte dieque ne recedat verbum Dei ex ore tuo. Sit autem opus tuum omni tempore meditatio divinarum Scripturarum. Psalterium habeto et psalmos edisce Sol oriens librum vident in manibus tuis: et post tertiam horam synaxes confice, quia ea ipsa hora compactum est lignum crucis. Sexta hora similiter tuas absolve orationes cum psalmis, fletu et obsecratione, quia ea ipsa hora Filius Dei in cruce suspensus est. Nona iterum hora in hymnis et laudibus cum lacrymis confitens peccata tua, Deum obsecra, quia ea ipsa hora Dominus pendens in cruce tradidit spiritum. Et post synaxin horae nonae, comede panem tuum gratias Deo agens in mensa tua, his verbis: Benedictus Deus, qui miseratur nos, et alit nos a juventute nostra: "qui dat escam omni carni." Imple gaudio et laetitia corda nostra, ut in omnibus omnem sufficientiam habentes, abundemus in omne opus bonum, in Christo Jesu Domino nostro, cum quo te decet gloria, imperium, honor et adoratio, cum sancto Spiritu, in saecula saeculorum, amen." (The translation is mine.)

15 Athanasius, PG, Vol. 28, col. 271A and 275C.

prayer hours each nun in turn recited a Psalm while the others listened.

The connection of the prayer of the "Hours" with the phases of Christ's passion remained a vital element in Christian prayer at least until the Middle Ages, as is seen in many writings of that time; it is even seen as late as the writings of St. Alphonsus of Liguori.

6. Roman Matrons.— In his youth Athanasius spent about five years in the desert of Thebes where he met the saintly cenobites Anthony, Pachomius and Hilarion and lived as they did. After his consecration as Bishop of Alexandria his Episcopate was one long struggle against the Arians by whose influence he was five times banished from his see. At least one of those times of exile, about 340, was spent in Rome. While there he frequently spoke of the monks and nuns of Egypt in terms of the highest praise. Among his listeners were Roman matrons who, even after hearing him, continued to lead strict religious lives in the privacy of their own homes. Others, however, widows and virgins, were taken with the idea of convent life as proposed by the saintly bishop, and several convents were founded.

The most renowned of these Roman convents was Marcella's on the Aventine Way. This foundress must have been

specially endowed with grace for her particular office for she filled it with outstanding success.

7. St. Jerome.— When St. Jerome came to Rome, about 382, these holy women desired greatly to hear him lecture. But he had no wish to be burdened with the affairs of women. Marcella, nevertheless, persisted. After many failures, she finally obtained a sympathetic hearing from Pope Damasus who prevailed upon St. Jerome to teach the nuns.¹⁶

At the news of the scriptural scholar's final acceptance of their repeated invitations, the community rejoiced "with exceeding great joy." Consecrated virgins living at home were also eager to hear him, consequently he found before him a large, enthusiastic and totally dedicated audience. Under such circumstances he could not fail to warm towards his listeners. In fact in his discourses he often rose to fiery and eloquent heights. Jerome realized that the chief occupation of the women was prayer, the liturgical prayer of the Church which drew on Sacred Scripture for its inspiration. To make this meaningful for them Jerome pointed out the necessity of study of the Scriptures especially of the Psalter. He wanted them to be critical

¹⁶ Cf. Campbell, "Virgins Consecrated to God in Rome during the First Centuries", p. 784.

and analytical of all they read that they might pray with intelligent understanding. This necessarily included an intense study of Latin as well.

From the letters of this great doctor of the Church we have a clear idea of his method of teaching.¹⁷ First he read a biblical text and commented briefly on its literal sense; this was followed by his own interpretation; then putting together the literal and allegorical meanings he drew applications useful for the everyday life of the convent — sometimes unexpected, usually very beautiful.

Jerome emphasized the study of the Psalms in their literal, spiritual and prophetic sense. He taught the nuns to chant them in alternate verses from opposite sides, as was done in the East. He introduced more frequent use of the Alleluia which, until then, the Roman Church had reserved for Easter.

Because of Jerome's reputation for irascibility and misogyny it comes as a surprise to learn of his interest and labor in furthering the studies of these holy women. No doubt his response was due, in great part, to the infectious zeal, tact and enthusiasm, as well as to the high level of intelligence of these students.

17 Cf. for example, Hieronymus, letters "To Marcella", PL, Vol. 22, col. 431, No. 27c and col. 586, No. 59g and "To Paula", col. 441, No. 30c.

Simple statements or explanations did not satisfy these fervent women; they asked for reasons and came up with new questions. In a letter to Marcella Jerome rather ruefully complains that she could not write a line to him that did not give him plenty of work and compel him to read the Bible.¹⁸

Nevertheless, with the same letter, is included the complete explanation she had demanded.

The most ardent of his pupils, more penetrating even than Marcella, was Paula. So delighted was she with this study of exegesis that she prevailed upon the saint to teach her Hebrew, that she might read the Scriptures written in that language. Jerome goes so far as to confess that in the knowledge of Hebrew, which cost him continual labor, he was quickly surpassed by Paula and her daughter Eustochium.¹⁹

Jerome emphasized spiritual reading; he urged reading from the Scriptures every day as also books of approved authors. At that time the authors would have been Origen, Ambrose, Athanasius, Tertullian, Cyprian and Hilary.

18 Cf. Hieronymus, Epis. 29g, PL, Vol. 22, col. 436.

19 Cf. "Vie de Sainte Paula", in Oeuvres de Saint Jérôme, M.L. Aimé-Martin, ed. M. Benoit de Matougues, Paris, F. Wattelier, 1867, p. 277. Cf. also Campbell, "Virgins Consecrated to God in Rome during the First Centuries", pp. 784-787.

The works of doubtful writers were strictly forbidden: "There is no need to search for gold in the mud."²⁰ In spite of this, it is evident that the piety which Jerome taught to religious was deep and enlightened. During his three years' stay in Rome he steadied and directed the movement started by Marcella and her companions to oppose the pagan degradation of the age.

8. Rule given by St. Jerome.— After St. Jerome's return to Palestine he was followed by Paula and Eustochium who founded three convents at Bethlehem, near the Grotto of the Nativity, about 389. St. Jerome prescribed the Rule of St. Pachomius and continued to give them regular conferences as he had done in Rome. The nuns of the three convents assembled in a common oratory for the Divine Office. On Sunday they all attended Holy Mass at the Church of the Manger of Our Lord. At night they rose for the Vigil (Matins) and kept the canonical Hours of Lauds, Terce, Sext and None during the day, and Vespers in the early evening. A nun was appointed to call out "Alleluia" in a loud voice to summon the other nuns at the prescribed hours. Like the Egyptian nuns, they memorized the whole Psalter which was

²⁰ Jerome, Lettre LIV "a Furia", in Oeuvres complètes de Saint Jérôme, trans. l'Abbé Bareille, Vol. 1, p. 255: "Vous n'avez nul besoin de chercher l'or dans la fange." (The translation is mine.)

sung each day. Each nun had her turn to recite while the others remained silent.²¹

Another famous Roman matron, Melanie the Elder (410), went to Egypt to visit some of the monasteries, visited St. Athanasius in Alexandria and inspired by him continued on to Palestine where she built a monastery on the Mount of Olives. There, she and her companions led a very austere life. Under her leadership and that of her grand-daughter, Melanie the Younger (439), the renown of this monastery equalled that of Paula's.²²

9. St. Basil's Foundation.— St. Basil also founded a convent, which his mother Emmelia and his sister Macrina later entered. Like Pachomius, his constitutions were similar for monks and nuns. It was desirable and practical for the monks to act as spiritual guides for the women.²³

10. Aetheria.— A Spanish nun, Aetheria Sylvia, went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land towards the end of the fourth century. Her niche in history will always be secure because of her detailed diary which has come down to us.

21 Cf. Jerome, Epis. 108, PL, Vol. 22, col. 896, and Aimé-Martin, Oeuvres de Saint Jérôme, p. 272.

22 Cf. Hilpisch, History of Benedictine Nuns, p. 5.

23 Ibid., p. 5.

Her description of the public worship of that era is vitally important in liturgical history. With the end of persecution the Church services could be performed openly and easily. Therefore a great effort was made by the clergy to assemble the people every day. Such was the case in Jerusalem when Aetheria wrote her famous record. Bishop, clergy and a large congregation assisted at the morning Hour and at Vespers each day. At the end of each such Hour prayers were read for the particular intentions of the day. In fact, after Vespers a deacon read out the names of those to be prayed for and the children present would call out "Kyrie eleison" after each name.²⁴

Aetheria also tells us that many pious people would meet at specified hours of the day and night in the Church of the Resurrection to sing hymns and psalms. The Bishop assigned two or three deacons or priests to read the prayers.²⁵ This could not be called formal liturgical prayer since these holy people did not belong to a formally constituted ecclesiastical corporation. But it definitely shows the transition period. Such "religious orders" were

24 Josef A. Jungmann, Public Worship, trans. Clifford Howell, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1957, p. 153.

25 Cf. "S. Silviae, quae fertur, peregrinatio ad loca sancta", Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Vol. 39: Itinera Hierosolymitana, pp. 71-75.

numerous up to and including the tenth century.²⁶

11. Mass in the Fourth Century.— During the fourth and fifth centuries Holy Mass was not offered as frequently as it is today. Ordinarily only one Mass was celebrated in each Church on Sundays, feast days, Ember days and perhaps daily during Lent. The entire community gathered at one Eucharistic Sacrifice represented the unity of the Church. Leo the Great, whose pontificate lasted from 440 to 461 A.D. gave a general permission to pastors to have a second Mass in churches where the parishioners were too numerous for one assembly. There must also however have been special private oratories.²⁷

12. St. Augustine.— A name which must not be omitted in a paper dealing with religious institutions for women is that of St. Augustine of Hippo (430). Nuns in a convent of which his sister had been the Superior wrote to enlist his aid on their side in a convent quarrel over the new Superior. In his answer to them he gave them some rules and regulations on which to base their religious life. By this Rule-letter he became for the West what Pachomius

26 Cf. Jungmann, Public Worship, pp. 152-158.

27 Cf. Josef A. Jungmann, The Early Liturgy, trans. F.A. Brunner, Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1959, pp. 278-279.

had been for the East. Contrary to the policy of Pachomius, however, he works on general basic principles rather than on concrete examples. On this account his Rule has greatly influenced the development of monasticism even to this day. Under the circumstances his idea of what the prayers of the convent should be like is pertinent, for example:

And when you pray, ponder in your hearts the meaning of the psalms and hymns your voices raise to God. Do not sing any portion of the Office but what is prescribed to be sung; where this direction is not given, refrain from singing.²⁸

13. Caesarius.— As has been said, until the sixth century, all nuns followed rules written for men. It is true that St. Augustine wrote for one particular convent, but he also used the customary masculine norm. Bishop Caesarius of Arles (1492) wrote the first rule intended for women. His sister was Superior of this convent at Arles. The rule is based on St. Augustine's letter but adds minute details. "The whole exposition shows great esteem for nuns and breathes a spirit of gentleness and love." Caesarius had been a monk at Lerins before his consecration. It is significant that the many changes contained in his rule did not extend to the prayer life of the nuns. They continued

²⁸ Rule, Ch. 3, No. 2. The Rule of St. Augustine, trans. J. Hand, Dublin, M.H. Gill and Son Ltd., 1956, p. 3.

to recite the Divine Office in the same manner as the monks of Lerins.²⁹

III. THE DIVINE OFFICE

1. St. Benedict.— St. Benedict wrote his own rule for the Order he founded at the beginning of the sixth century. He had models in the arrangement of the daily Office which had been in use for centuries. His preoccupation with the exact arrangement of the Divine Office is witnessed by the fact that thirteen of the seventy-three chapters of his Regula (ch. 8-20) are completely devoted to this purpose. There is no older description of the Divine Office known, but because St. Benedict had at hand while he was writing the practice of the Ecclesia Romana, it is possible to deduce fairly closely the composition of the Roman Office of that time as well.

According to ancient tradition, St. Gregory the Great (590-604) made many changes in the Roman Office, adding certain features from the Benedictine cursum and some of his own making as well. He suppressed the Alleluia and the Te Deum in the offices de tempore from Septuagesima to Easter and added antiphons and responsaries from the Scriptures. It was he who placed the invitatory psalm at the beginning of the Office and who reduced the Sunday Matins to eighteen psalms.³⁰

29 Hilpisch, History of Benedictine Nuns, p. 9.

30 William J. O'Shea, S.S., The Worship of the Church, Westminster, Newman Press, 1957, p. 468.

It was not unlike the mode of procedure of the Office today. It was truly monastic and contained the two latest Hours, Prime and Compline, which had developed as the regime of monastic life became standardized. Lauds and Vespers had become the solemn Hours for morning and evening. They were held in the Church for the benefit of all parishioners. According to the Rule of St. Benedict, Vespers were to be sung earlier, to do away with the use of candles. The night's rest was no longer interrupted at midnight; even the sixth century saw liturgical changes; Matins were sung during the last period of darkness of the previous day and Lauds would follow immediately at dawn. It was quite a natural sequence that two other Hours would be introduced into monastery life as supplementary morning prayer (Prime) and night prayer just before going to bed (Compline). Both Prime and Compline had existed in a more restricted form in the Roman Office before the Rule of Benedict was written. Prime had special prayers to beg God's blessing on the day's work. The Rule of St. Basil had prescribed a short Compline consisting mainly of Psalm 90, to be said in the dormitory before retiring. But St. Benedict rearranged both these Hours and made them obligatory for his monks.³¹

³¹ J. Jungmann, Public Worship, pp. 155-156; cf. also O'Shea, The Worship of the Church, pp. 466-468.

This Benedictine rearrangement of Hours was the only major change. The grouping of the Psalms of the Office of the Roman Church remained the same, nor was any further change made in this order until the reform of Pius X fourteen hundred years later.³²

2. Amplification of the Office.— By the tenth century clerics in major orders were expected to recite the same Office as the canons of cathedral chapters. "In the twelfth century various synods imposed this as a strict duty upon all clerics."³³ Since many priests lived by themselves the number of those who recited the Office in private increased greatly. The choral office was left almost entirely to the monasteries. Now begins the growth and amplification of the Divine Office. More and more lay brothers were doing the manual work of the monasteries which left the choir monks more time for prayer. As a result more and more was added to the Divine Office: the Little Office of Our Lady, the Office of the Dead, the Gradual and Penitential Psalms, antiphons and corresponding collects of Our Lady and so on. Such an horarium could be possible only in a monastery, and, it must be added, only in those monasteries or convents with sufficient numbers of lay brothers

32 Jungmann, The Early Liturgy, p. 282.

33 Jungmann, Public Worship, p. 158.

or lay sisters. Moreover, with this almost incredible amount of vocal prayer, meditative prayer was virtually unknown.

The ordinary choir members did not need a book as they had memorized the Psalter and for the rest of the Office need only listen. It was very different for the schola who needed an outsized Antiphonary large enough for all of the members to be able to read at the same time, a chant book and a hymn book or books. An additional small library was needed for the readings: Bible, lives of saints, homilies and sermons of the Fathers and a Martyrology.³⁴

3. Counter Reform.— It is not surprising to learn that a counter-movement began among the secular clergy and their reform began with an attempt to shorten and simplify the Office. The first work undertaken was a compilation of the various books and their adaptation in such a manner that the text of the Office needed by an individual could be contained in one book. The secular clergy found an ally in the papal Curia whose members travelled frequently. They felt a need for such a book and promptly put one together. This was the first Breviary.

4. The Franciscans.— The Franciscans, also noted travellers, adopted this Roman breviary, and through them

34 Jungmann, Public Worship, pp. 159-160.

its use was introduced into many countries. The cathedral and collegiate chapters also made the change. The Office in the composite Breviary was considerably shorter.

5. Meditation.— There had been in some old monasteries a lectio divina — spiritual reading in a slow and meditative manner. As accretions piled up on the Office, however, vocal prayer left time for scarcely anything else. But in the sixteenth century the "Brothers of Common Life" in Holland introduced the devotio moderna or practice of methodical meditation. It was soon embraced wholeheartedly by all religious orders. Its excellence and importance were readily acknowledged and the practice was given special status in the daily rule. The Dominicans were among the first to do so, at their General Chapter in 1505. The Benedictines at Montserrat adopted the custom also, and it was in this house that Ignatius of Loyola learned about meditative prayer.

It was the intention to make the ritual celebrations more spiritual, thanks to a greater interior attention. But there was a danger: by dint of recalling to mind the need to interiorize devotion, to improve personal piety, the devotees were de-emphasizing the importance of public worship and of liturgical piety.

The progress of the devotio moderna coincided with the decay of the liturgy, the impoverishment of the office and the definitive abandonment of the solemn celebration...³⁵

³⁵ Pierre Salmon, O.S.B., The Breviary through the Centuries, trans. Sister David Mary, Collegetteville, Liturgical Press, 1962, p. 120.

St. Ignatius placed great emphasis on meditation for his own order, perhaps more so even than on the Divine Office which was to be said privately by the members of the Society of Jesus.³⁶

6. Office in Private.— The famous Jesuit rule says: "but privately, not in community nor in choir."³⁷

This departure from the old and apparently fixed rule of religious orders was the source of amazement, admiration, incredulity and even indignation at the time. Its desirability and practicability, however, judging by results, caused this rule to be imitated by every religious congregation concerned with the active apostolate that has been founded since that date.

7. Reforms and Revisions.— Such important events had far-reaching results, among them another attempt at reform of the Breviary. Pope Clement VII had put this work in the hands of the Franciscan Cardinal de Quinones. He published his new Breviary in 1535. It was called

³⁶ Jungmann, Public Worship, pp. 161-162. Cf. Salmon, The Breviary through the Centuries, pp. 104-107.

³⁷ Formula Instituti Societatis Jesu Julius III, Exposcit Debitum, 21 Julii, 1550, de Constitutiones Societatis Jesu et Epitome Instituti, Romae, 1943, p. xlvi, No. 8: "Socii autem omnes cum Presbyteri esse debeant, ad dicendum Officium secundum communem Ecclesiae ritum, sed privatim, et non communiter vel in choro, teneantur..." (The translation is mine.)

Breviarium sanctae Crucis and was a decided reform. Taking into consideration the fact that now it would be used more in private than in choir, it was shortened considerably, and several exemptions were made. In Spain it was used even for Office in choir. It would seem that parishioners on the whole never care for a change in the liturgy because the people were so offended when the reformed Breviary was sung during Holy Week at the Cathedral in Saragossa that they abandoned their parish church and attended services at monasteries where the Office was unchanged.

This unsatisfactory condition could have led to further disturbances, consequently the Council of Trent petitioned for a new reform. The new Breviarium sponsored by Pius V came out in 1568. It had the character of a choral Office; apocryphal readings from the lives of the saints were reduced, and preference was given to Scriptural readings. It was shortened considerably by the fact that none of the additions dear to the monastic choirs were of obligation to those who prayed in private.

This form remained stable for centuries, except for the revision of some hymns during the reign of Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644). It is not generally concluded that this revision was an improvement.

The third reform was under Pius X who changed the arrangement of the Psalms made by St. Benedict. Matins on

Sunday was greatly shortened for the sake of the pastoral clergy.

In 1945, the Pontifical Biblical Institute under the patronage of Pius XII published a completely new and improved translation of the Psalter. In 1955 the same Pontiff issued the Decree on the Simplification of the Rubrics abolishing the silent prayers at the beginning and end of each Hour; also limiting the preces of Lauds and Vespers to certain specified days of the penitential seasons. More important, Pius gave the impression that this was only one step in an advance to give the Office the place "in the liturgical life which it has in theory and in fact, but which it has long ceased to have in practice."³⁸ The intention of Pius XII was to make the Breviary a source of spiritual strength that would not be looked upon as a daily burden.

In some dioceses in many parts of the world recitation of the Office in Latin had actually become a burden and an obstacle to deeper spirituality for many priests. Encouraged, perhaps, by the words of Pius XII "there may be advantages to the use of the vernacular,"³⁹ many bishops

³⁸ O'Shea, The Worship of the Church, p. 474. Cf. J. Jungmann, Public Worship, pp. 158-169.

³⁹ Pius XII, Encyclical Letter Mediator Dei, Nov. 20, 1947, in AAS, Vol. 39, 1947, p. 545: "In non paucis tamen ritibus vulgati sermonis usurpatio valde utilis apud populum existere potest; [...]"

sent urgent pleas to Rome for the use of the vernacular for the Breviary. The matter was given due consideration at Vatican Council II with the following happy result.

In accordance with the centuries-old tradition of the Latin rite, the Latin language is to be retained by clerics in the divine office. But in individual cases the ordinary has the power of granting the use of a vernacular translation to those clerics for whom the use of Latin constitutes a grave obstacle to their praying the office properly. The vernacular version, however, must be one that is drawn up according to the provision of Art. 36.

The competent superior has the power to grant the use of the vernacular in the celebration of the divine office, even in choir, to nuns and to members of institutes dedicated to acquiring perfection, both men who are not clerics and women. The version, however, must be one that is approved.⁴⁰

IV. PRAYER IN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF WOMEN

1. Office in convents.— Through the centuries the prayers in the religious houses of women went through the same changes and vicissitudes as those of their male counterparts. But the difficulties must have been multiplied since very few nuns understood Latin. They prayed hour after hour, day after day, not knowing what they were saying.

⁴⁰ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Second Vatican Council, Dec. 4, 1963, Ch. IV, 101:1 and 101:2. English translation St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1963, p. 3.

2. St. Francis de Sales.— In the seventeenth century the Visitandines' Rule of St. Francis de Sales moderated the horarium somewhat by prescribing only the Little Office of Our Lady. "The sisters will say as a rule the Little Office of Our Lady."⁴¹

Whether the choir Sisters understood Latin or not, it was still the liturgical and obligatory language. Those who understood a little were fortunate, the others were expected to make interior ejaculations while the other choir was chanting the alternate versicles.

Those who understand a little of what they are saying during the Office should use this talent faithfully according to God's good pleasure, who gave it to them to help them to be recollected, by means of the good affections which they derive thereby; and those who understand none of it, should simply remain attentive to God, in interior movements of love and affection while the other choir say the versicles and they are keeping the rests.⁴²

⁴¹ Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales, édition complète, d'après les autographes et les éditions originales, t. XXV, Opuscules, Vol. 4, Annecy, Monastère de la Visitation 1931, p. 139: "Les Soeurs diront à l'ordinaire le petit Office de Notre Dame." (The translation is mine.)

⁴² Ibid., p. 140: "Que celles qui entendent quelque peu ce qu'elles disent à l'Office, qu'elles employent fidèlement ce talent selon le bon plaisir de Dieu qui le leur a donné pour les ayder a se tenir recueillies par le moyen des bonnes affections qu'elles en pourront tirer; et que celles qui n'y entendent rien se tiennent simplement attentives à Dieu, faysant des esclancemens amoureux tandis que l'autre choeur dit le verset et qu'elles font les pauses." (The translation is mine.)

PRAYER IN RELIGIOUS ORDERS

74

In a letter to the Baroness de Chantal, dated August 1604, St. Francis de Sales outlines an order of the day for prayer. The same ideas are contained in other letters to religious including that to Rose Bourgeois, Abbess of Puits-d'Orbre, in October of the same year. This advice is in accordance with the Directoire spirituel.⁴³ Briefly, the instructions are as follows.

At the first waking moment the sisters should throw themselves into the arms of God saying short spontaneous prayers. While dressing they should make the Sign of the Cross and recite a specified prayer. St. Francis, following the thought of St. Ignatius, lays great stress on the importance of a half to three quarters of an hour's meditation in the morning before being caught up into the day's cares and distractions. He teaches a definite method. If possible, the sisters should meditate again in the evening. He advocates private devotions during Mass doubtless because of the language difficulty. He recommends that each day of the week be offered in honor of the sacred wounds of Christ. They should strive to remain consciously in the presence of God all day long. Among devotions to Mary and

43 "De l'Office Divin", No. 1, Commentaire du Directoire spirituel de Saint François de Sales pour ses religieuses, Montréal, Monastère de Notre Dame de Charité du Bon Pasteur, 1928.

the saints the rosary has a high place; if the sisters do not have time to say it all at one time, it may be divided by decades. They are advised to use a little book to make the Mysteries more meaningful. Litanies have a place of honor at various times of the year. Before retiring the sisters should make a careful examination of conscience. When they have retired they should imagine themselves in a tomb and prepare for death.⁴⁴

All these devotions were offered, no doubt, in compensation for the rather monotonous saying of the Office which was so rarely understood by the French sisters. Any thought of translating the Office into the vernacular that the sisters might be able to study it in that form so as to have, at least, a general idea of what they were praying in Latin, was simply unheard of.

3. St. Vincent de Paul.— The seventeenth century witnessed the innovations of St. Vincent de Paul in the founding of the Daughters of Charity. Startling as they were in his generation, they proved to be of sterling merit in succeeding generations, even to the sister social workers of today.

The last chapter (of the Rule) regulates the Order of the Day. Time of rising is at four o'clock retiring is at nine. In the interval:

⁴⁴ Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales, Vol. 26, pp. 191-193 and 204-210.

PRAYER IN RELIGIOUS ORDERS

76

two meditations, two particular and one general examination of conscience, spiritual reading; the remainder of the time is given over to the service of the neighbour or manual labour, replaced on Sunday by spiritual exercises and the care of one's own instruction; two hours of edifying conversation, during which a Sister, so-appointed, will say from time to time "Let us remember the holy presence of God."⁴⁵

This Rule is a radical change because it makes no mention whatever of Divine Office. Moreover, St. Vincent insisted again and again that the sisters should have no scruples over interrupting spiritual exercises, even the Mass, at the call of duty to perform a needed work of charity.

My daughters, you must know that when you leave meditation or Holy Mass for the service of the poor, you lose nothing, because in serving the poor you go to God; and you must see God in them.⁴⁶

45 M. l'Abbé Maynard, Saint Vincent de Paul, 3rd ed. Paris, Retaux-Bray, 1886, Vol. 3, p. 288: "Le dernier chapitre règle l'emploi de la journée. Le lever est à quatre heures, le coucher à neuf. Dans cet intervalle, deux méditations, deux examens particuliers, un examen général, une lecture spirituelle; le reste du temps employé au service du prochain ou à des travaux manuels, remplacés, le dimanche, par des exercices et le soin de sa propre instruction; deux heures d'entretien édifiant, pendant lesquelles une soeur, à ce destinée, dit de temps en temps: "Souvenons-nous de la présence de Dieu!" (The translation is mine.)

46 Vincent de Paul, Correspondance, documents: II Entretiens, ed. Pierre Coste, Paris, Gabalda, 1923, Vol. 9, p. 5: "Mes filles, sachez que, quand vous quitterez l'oraison et la sainte messe pour le service des pauvres, vous n'y perdrez rien, puisque c'est aller à Dieu que servir les pauvres; et vous devez regarder Dieu en leurs personnes." (The translation is mine.)

To some extent St. Vincent's excellent Rule was admired and imitated by subsequent founders and foundresses of religious orders for women in the active apostolate. Nevertheless, in the time of Alphonsus de Liguori (1696-1781) cloistered orders were still predominant in number, and they all kept choir.

4. St. Alphonsus de Liguori.— In his "Rule of Life for a Religious that Desires to become a Saint",⁴⁷ Alphonsus continues to write of the Divine Office in a manner similar to that of St. Athanasius in the fourth century.

Because seculars live in the midst of the distractions arising from worldly concerns, the holy Church wishes that in her name, and in the name of all Christians, ecclesiastics and religious should praise God, and pray for the whole world, by reciting the Divine Office which is nothing more than a memorial or petition composed by God himself, that He may the more readily hear our prayers, and relieve our wants. Hence, a hundred private prayers have not as much efficacy as a simple petition offered in the Divine Office.⁴⁸

These are strong words from the great Doctor of Prayer who composed so many fervent prayers for private use. Nevertheless to translate the Office into the vernacular or to alter it in any respect whatsoever to make it live for its feminine users was simply unthinkable in those days.

47 Alphonsus de Liguori, The True Spouse of Jesus Christ, Vol. 2, in Ascetical Works, Vol. 11, ed. Eugene Grimm, Benziger Brothers, 1888, p. 190.

48 Ibid., p. 190.

For them it remained more of a penitential practice than an encounter with God.

Precisely because a language understood by the people was insisted upon so much by the reformers, the Catholics reacted against the use of the vernacular in the liturgy to the point of making the use of Latin seem synonymous with orthodoxy.⁴⁹

St. Alphonsus falls back on the old method of St. Athanasius which was to disregard the meaning of the Office prayers entirely, and rather meditate while the Latin was being sung.

His compassion and fatherliness shines through his urging of the nuns to learn of and to make use of all the exemptions granted to religious by Clement VII and Innocent IV.⁵⁰

As a means to provide spiritual food for the nuns, as for all Catholics, St. Alphonsus uses the vernacular to promote the use of the many prayers and devotions which he originated. He extols the practice of mental prayer and suggests a particular method; under the category of devotions fall the Visits which he composed to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the rosary, novenas and so on. He advocates prayer at all times, not just in the usual specified places of chapel, refectory and

49 O'Shea, The Worship of the Church, p. 64.

50 Alphonsus de Liguori, The True Spouse of Jesus Christ, pp. 192-195.

dormitory but while laboring in the house or out of it, or when walking out on business. He urges frequent attendance at Mass and reception of the sacraments. He thus follows somewhat the path of St. Francis de Sales and St. Ignatius.⁵¹

5. Father George Daly.— When in the twentieth century a son of St. Alphonsus, Father George Daly, C.Ss.R., founded the congregation of the Sisters of Service of Canada, it was only natural that he should borrow largely from the writings of the great Doctor when organizing the Community Prayers. Appropriate prayers composed and loved by St. Alphonsus,⁵² indulgenced prayers of the Church and prayers specially composed for the new congregation made up the Community Prayer Book which was eminently suitable for the young community of 1922. The only Latin contained therein (Angelus, Regina Coeli, Magnificat, Anima Christi, De Profundis, Veni Sancte, Pater, Ave and Gloria) was given also in English translation.⁵³ No Office was prescribed, presumably because the Founder, following the thought of

⁵¹ Alphonsus de Liguori, The True Spouse of Jesus Christ, pp. 457-482.

⁵² At the time used also by the members of the Congregation of the most Holy Redeemer.

⁵³ Community Prayers, Toronto, Sisters of Service, 1961, 71 p.; Community Prayers, Redemptorist Fathers and Brothers of Toronto Province, Toronto, Canadian Offset Co., 1964; cf. also letters from archivists of both congregations Thomas O'Brien, C.Ss.R., and Florence MacNeil, S.O.S., Toronto, re Prayers of Rule circa 1922.

St. Vincent de Paul, realized that there would not be time to chant the complete Divine Office in an order as active in apostolic works as the one he envisioned. Such an obligation would be a burden indeed if superimposed on the English prayers. By this time community prayers in the vernacular for sisters was the normal procedure. To adopt any part of the Office in translation was not considered even then.

Within the past decade several versions of the Officium Divinum have been published in the vernacular, and have been gratefully received in many parts of the world. Some of these are in shortened form which has won approval in the Sacred Constitution on the Liturgy.⁵⁴

Members of any institute dedicated to acquiring perfection who, according to their constitutions, are to recite any parts of the divine office are thereby performing the public prayer of the Church.

They too perform the public prayer of the Church who, in virtue of their constitutions, recite any short office, provided this is drawn up after the pattern of the divine office and is duly approved.

Some Orders of women are saying the Day Hours of the Roman Breviary in their entirety in English; and various private prayers. Many other religious institutes have welcomed this Short Breviary in the vernacular and are using it to replace the Little Office of Our Lady.

⁵⁴ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Ch. IV, 98.

By such steps are sisters, as well as the laity, being led back to appreciation and practice of the communal prayer of the Church to which they have been strangers too long.

CONCLUSION

This brief synopsis reveals that the history of prayer in religious communities proved to be in reality the history of the divine office. Begun by pious lay people praying together in their own tongue, it continued thus for some time, well adapted to their needs. By slow degrees the multiplicity of modifications and additions rendered the singing of divine office impracticable even for the secular clergy, and the duty of full choir was entrusted almost exclusively to monks and nuns in their monasteries.

When the divine office became the official prayer of the Church it was inevitable that it would be identified with the official language of the Church. This conformity perdured so many centuries that it is understandable that the belief grew that it was actually unchangeable. In fact, when for eminently practical reasons the entire office was judged to be unsuitable for the horarium of sisters in the active apostolate, rather than shorten the Hours and make use of the vernacular, the divine office was dropped entirely.

PRAYER IN RELIGIOUS ORDERS

82

The spirit of aggiornamento of the twentieth century with its clarifications and adaptations has caused the pendulum to swing backwards again. With the implementation of the decrees of the Constitution of the Liturgy, the riches of the Church's official prayer will once more be shared in generous measure with the pastoral clergy, the sisters in active Orders, and the laity who were indeed responsible for the first impetus which set the pendulum swinging.

CHAPTER III

THE LITURGY

After the backward glance at prayer in general and that of sisters in particular, it might be well to look at present day liturgy. The source of this study will be the Constitution of the Liturgy in so far as it is of particular concern to sisters.

a) Reasons for Reform.— For the past three decades or more Catholic liturgists have been advocating reforms and, on the whole, have received sympathetic hearings from the reigning Pontiffs. The restoration of the Easter vigil and the modification of the eucharistic fast are examples of such reforms in practice. It was left for Vatican Council II to study past forms of worship and strike an even balance between the riches of our traditional heritage and the further needs of Catholics in the cross currents of modern living.

The Church carries on the work for which Christ became incarnate — to give glory to God and to procure the salvation of mankind. These duties the Church fulfils chiefly through the liturgy hence its paramount importance in Conciliar sessions and decisions. This is emphatically stated in the introductory paragraph which is quoted in full, clearly showing two pastoral and two ecumenical

aims.¹

This sacred Council has several aims in view: it desires to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church. The Council therefore sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.²

The second article of the Constitution specifies these "cogent reasons":

For the liturgy, "through which the work of our redemption is accomplished"³ most of all in the divine sacrifice of the eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery⁴ of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.

b) Example - In their own Lives.— The Council foresees the people of God joined in community through love of Christ who is present in their midst. Like the first Christians their example of fraternal charity and divine worship will be an inspiration to all the world.

1 Cf. F.R. McManus, "The Constitution on the Liturgy Commentary, Part I", in Worship, May 1964, p. 317.

2 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Second Vatican Council, Dec. 4, 1963, Art. 1, Eng. translation St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1963, p. 3.

3 Secret of the ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

4 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, p. 3.

The Church, through words of the last three Popes, has evidenced the fact that there are sacred elements in the liturgy, such as those received directly from Christ, which are immutable, but that others are transitory or variable and that for these reform is due. It will not always be welcome; it may even be painful to some people. "The sometimes stuffy cosiness of our worship will have to go, the oddities of our ways in church will have to be modified."⁵

There has been inaugurated an "official liturgical movement within the Church which must involve the whole Church, bishops, priests and lay people, and at every level, diocese, parish and the houses of religious orders."⁶

b) Example - Manifest to Others.— The mercy of God and the workings of the Holy Spirit which surpass all understanding make it possible for those who are in a state of invincible ignorance to attain to salvation. In the order of Divine Providence the Liturgy is not the only way, but one of the best, the command of Christ still holds: "Go and make disciples of all the heathen..." and "Go... and teach". (Matt. 28:19,20). Men are called first to faith and conversion, then only do they come to the practice of the liturgy, which is the "summit towards which the activity of

5 J.D. Crichton, The Church's Worship, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1964, p. 7.

6 Ibid., p. 7.

the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all her power flows.⁷

The liturgy, in which the word of God is announced, the sacraments celebrated, and man therefore introduced to the participation of the Paschal Mystery and the worship "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23) of the Father, constitutes the main mission of the apostolic ministry.⁸

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A. The Paschal Mystery.— At the beginning of the Constitution an explanation of the Paschal Mystery is given to shed light on the nature of the sacred liturgy and proclaim its importance in the life of the Church.

It is therefore essential that all Catholics, and therefore sisters in particular, should have a clear idea of what is meant by this Paschal Mystery. Since it is a mystery, we remember from the old catechism definition that it has been revealed by God, we must believe, but we cannot fully understand.

For the early Christians "mystery" meant God's intervention in human history — salvation history, in other words. Today's Christians must realize that "salvation history" is not Jewish history, is not something that

7 Constitution, Art. 10.

8 Louis Bouyer, The Liturgy Revived, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1964, p. 52.

is over and done with, nor, as far as we are concerned, is it only the eschatological judgment of the future; it is God's intervention in our human affairs in which we are involved right here and now.

The Constitution explains the Paschal Mystery thus:

[Jesus] achieved His task principally by the paschal mystery of his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension, whereby dying, he destroyed our death and, rising, he restored our life. (Easter Preface of the Roman Missal) For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth 'the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church'. (Prayer before the second lesson for Holy Saturday, as it was in the Roman Missal before the restoration of Holy Week.)⁹

By his passion, death, resurrection and ascension Christ, in a way inscrutable to men, redeemed us and gained for us a right to the heavenly Kingdom — this is the Paschal Mystery. But, the Apostles were bidden by Jesus Christ not only to proclaim the "Good News" to all men, they were also by their actions, to give men a true, real, living share in this Mystery and its effects, by the sacramentality of the Church, especially by the Eucharist; which is actually the living liturgy. Therefore by the liturgy we are involved in and we live our part of the Paschal Mystery.

We are initiated into this liturgical life through baptism:

⁹ Constitution, Art. 5.

Thus by baptism men are plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with him, are buried with him, they receive the spirit of adoption, as sons in which we cry: "Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15).¹⁰

We are then initiated into active participation in the Mass and become a member of the "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5). From now on the Mass is the center of our lives.¹¹

From that time onwards the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading those things "which were in all the scriptures concerning him" (Lk. 24:27), celebrating the eucharist in which "the victory and triumph of his death are again made present" (Council of Trent, Session XIII, Decree on Holy Eucharist, c. 5), and at the same time giving thanks "to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15) in Christ Jesus, "in praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:12), through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹²

Pius XII explains the spiritual progression thus:

By the waters of Baptism, as by common right, Christians are made members of the Mystical Body of Christ the Priest, and by the "character" which is imprinted on their souls, they are appointed to give worship to God. Thus they participate, according to their condition, in the priesthood of Christ.¹³

B. Christ is Always Present.— The Constitution is most explicit and detailed in the reiteration that "Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her litur-

10 Constitution, Art. 6.

11 Cf. Louis Bouyer, Life and Liturgy, London, Sheed and Ward, Stagbook edition, 1962, pp. 165-168.

12 Constitution, Art. 6.

13 Mediator Dei, St. Paul Editions, No. 88.

gical celebrations"; he is present in the person of the priest, but "especially under the eucharistic species"; he is present by his power in the sacraments; he is present in his word when the Holy Scriptures are read; and he is present when the Church prays and sings: "For wherever two or three are gathered as my followers, I am there among them" (Matt. 18:20).

In commenting on the modes of Christ's presence in his Church Louis Bouyer says succinctly: "In Christianity, the whole encounter of man with God, or rather of God with man, is perpetuated in the liturgy."¹⁴

The superiority of the sacred liturgy is emphatically restated in Art. 7 of the Constitution:

Every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of his body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.

C. Renewal has become Necessary.— The first Christians lived the Paschal Mystery — with a living Faith — through the liturgy. It was so well understood it was their way of life. This sense of commitment tended to become blurred through the centuries. Though the Holy Spirit at all times raised up men who asserted this doctrine though the liturgical renewal was not a sudden step in the

14 Bouyer, The Liturgy Revived, p. 40.

faith of many such scholars, nevertheless for the general public, including most sisters, for many centuries the liturgy has been only partly understood. There are many reasons to account for this, among them the fact that Latin continued to be used as the official language of the Church when it was no longer understood by the people; the cleavage between sanctuary and nave, the priest praying in a low voice unintelligible to the congregation even to the few who might know Latin, and other customs which left the people to their own devices which resulted in some dubious private devotions. The liturgy which had suited Christians of an earlier era no longer inspired or stimulated their modern counterparts, therefore renewal and adaptations became a necessity.

D. Proper Dispositions.— Though addressed to the faithful in general, Art. 11 is of particular importance to sisters. "... Something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration;" all sisters have the duty to "take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects." What are these additional "proper dispositions" which the Constitution demands? They are the dispositions of heart and mind with which religious should welcome this movement of the Holy Spirit within the Church evidenced in the renewal of the liturgy.

It means an openness and willingness to acquire a right understanding of what is taking place. The words of the Constitution are so crystal clear that no one can be left in doubt about the stated wishes of the Church if only they will give time and thought to its study. Sisters in particular should be cognizant and appreciative of the fact that the liturgical reform is primarily for the good of the people, therefore for their good and that of their religious congregation. Sisters should realize that a fruitful participation in the liturgy means a closer union with Christ as victim and priest since their religious profession is an extension of their baptismal initiation into the Paschal Mystery.

The words of the second paragraph of the Introduction to the Constitution are ably summarized by William F. Hogan:

Through a greater realization of the meaning of the liturgy, religious are able to take the material and human elements of their lives and order them to the divine and supernatural so that the spiritual will permeate the natural elements.¹⁵

When a whole lifetime has been spent in an attitude of love and reverence for a certain way of praying publicly, it is unrealistic to think that a change can be brought

¹⁵ William F. Hogan, "The Role of the Liturgy in Religious Life", in Sponsa Regis, Vol. 36, May 1965, p. 278.

about without some confusion and sacrifice and even pain. It has long been accepted by the faithful in general that the priest was their representative and that he prayed in words and manner fixed and unalterable — or so it was thought. The people of God had no part nor obligation beyond their attendance at certain ceremonies. This method had grown familiar and comfortable. The Catholics of today, and sisters especially, in this time of renewal, must understand that this physical presence is not enough. Such a change of attitude calls for firm confidence that the will of God has been truly expressed by his earthly representative, Paul VI, when he said:

To understand this religious development and to profit by its expected fruits, we must all modify our usual attitude towards sacred ceremonies and religious practice, especially if we believe that ceremony consists in the simple performance of external rites, demanding nothing more from us than our passive and inattentive presence. We must understand that the Council has introduced a new pedagogy. This is its great innovation, and we should not hesitate to become the first disciples and then promoters of this new school of prayer. It could be the reforms will interfere with cherished and time-honored habits which cannot be changed without unpleasant efforts, but we must comply with confidence.¹⁶

Words written by Bishop Emmett Carter in his preface to the Liturgical Renewal form a fitting commentary on this papal allocution:

¹⁶ Allocution of Pope Paul VI, General audience Jan. 13, 1965, in L'Osservatore Romano, Edition hebdomadaire en langue française, Jan. 22, 1965. (The translation is mine.)

It will be the measure of our true love of the Church and our true submission to her will, apart entirely from the challenge to our personality, to be able to accept what is good even though it is not exactly what is old, and to see with conviction the Spirit moving in the Church and bringing us to a new and higher form of prayer and life.¹⁷

E. Instruction of Religious.— The Constitution places great stress on the liturgical formation of clerics and religious.¹⁸ "By such a formation we come to appreciate the mystery of Christ and the religious' role in the people of God."¹⁹

The Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, and the Sacred Congregation of Rites have been quick to point out that

What has been said in the preceding articles concerning the liturgical formation of the spiritual life of clerics must be applied also to the members, both men and women, of institutes dedicated to acquiring perfection, with the necessary adaptations.²⁰

An effective liturgical formation at the level of the students' spiritual life to promote "full and active participation by all the people"²¹ is essential if the

17 Canadian Catholic Conference, Liturgical Renewal, [Ottawa, Canadian Catholic Conference, 1964].

18 Constitution, Art. 14-19.

19 Hogan, Sponsa Regis, p. 278.

20 Instruction for the Proper Implementation of the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, Sept. 1964, IV, 18.

21 Constitution, Art. 14.

principal aim of the restoration of the sacred liturgy is to be attained. The norms will be taken exclusively from the Constitution. The responsibility for the proper implementation rests with the major superiors.

It might be well to note here the words of Art. 19: "... taking into account their age and condition, their way of life, and standard of religious culture." From this it could be implied that elderly sisters should not be harassed into drastic changes in their prayer life.

The advantages to be accrued from a practical liturgical formation are summarized with enthusiasm by the eminent English liturgist J.D. Crichton:

The liturgy, then, is to become the centre of the student's spiritual life too and it should be observed that this will in effect mean the working out in the terms of prayer and moral effort of all the implications of the paschal mystery. This is in fact all-inclusive, demanding not only the practice of self-denial of a very searching sort (dying with Christ), but also an attempt to share in the triumph of Christ, which is hardly less difficult. At any rate, in future it will be possible for students to see the whole of Christian life, worship, apostolate, personal religion, all as aspects of the one reality, and this will make sense to them and give them a measure of peace and tranquility they have often needed in the past.²²

F. Reform of Liturgy.— The articles of the Constitution commented upon so far are not concerned directly with the reform of the Roman liturgy. Implementation does

22 Crichton, The Church's Worship, p. 71.

not wait upon the publishing of the forthcoming revision of liturgical books. On the contrary it is the wish of Pope Paul VI "that the prescriptions concerning the knowledge and spread of the liturgical laws should take place immediately."²³

With Article 21 the Constitution turns to questions of reform as denoted in the Introduction: "to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change." General norms are established for the guidance of the reform committee, which serve also as indications to the clergy of the direction of future changes, because changes will be made. Only a few of these articles are of present concern to sisters, although they should be alert to the liturgical climate and be ready to conform to future decrees.

It is spiritually stimulating to realize how repeatedly the Constitution returns to the same objective — the restoration is for the sake of the better understanding of the people.

The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear and unencumbered by any useless repetitions; they should be within the people's powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation.²⁴

²³ Paul VI, Motu Proprio Sacram Liturgiam, Jan. 25, 1964. Trans. Canadian Catholic Conference.

²⁴ Constitution, Art. 34.

In a shrewd comment Dom Vagaggini remarked after the first session of the Council:

This is the principle of principles of liturgical reform. The criterion of intelligibility of the liturgy is not to be the recondite information of liturgical scholars, nor the fuller knowledge of the rites that might be expected of the clergy, but precisely the 'powers of comprehension' of the people. If this principle is really carried through in the whole range of liturgical reform, then we may look for a liturgy that will indeed make its proper impact upon the people and draw them into taking their full part in it.²⁵

Article 24 is of special interest to sisters. It says in part:

Thus to achieve the restoration, progress and adaptation of the sacred liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for scripture to which the venerable tradition of both eastern and western rites gives testimony.

This short excerpt indicates the close connection between the biblical and liturgical revivals. In all convents serious thought should be given to ways and means of enkindling this "warm and living love for scripture." Each sister should be involved in this movement whether by private study, by community study groups or by attending university courses.

In Articles 28 and 29 lay people are specifically marked out as having "an office to perform" and "a genuine liturgical function."

²⁵ Dom Vagaggini, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Dec. 8, 1962, trans. J.D. Crichton, in *The Church's Worship*, p. 90.

This certainly includes sisters who will frequently be called upon to exercise such a right in their private chapels. They should pay particular attention to the second paragraph of Article 29.

Consequently they must all be deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, each in his own measure, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner.

Again the emphasis on training; it is obviously necessary in order that sisters may carry out their functions in the relaxed manner conducive to inner piety.

Here might be inserted a warning against over-enthusiastic participation. It must never be forgotten that public and collective prayer do not exclude private and personal prayer. Standing up, sitting down, kneeling, praying aloud and singing ever so eagerly do not by themselves foster devotion, nor constitute rightful participation.

If the people do not pray in the liturgy because an unceasing turmoil prevents them from doing it, then the liturgy, however noisy and agitated has become interiorly dead.²⁶

Father Bouyer continues with a reminder of the importance of the moments of silence during the Mass.

Silence, thus, is an integral part of it. We must understand this not only with respect to the silent attention paid by the faithful to the prayers of the priest, especially in the Canon,

26 Bouyer, The Liturgy Revived, p. 73.

but also of moments of silence when everyone must develop for himself, in his own way, the themes evoked by the liturgical text.

G. Mother Tongue.— While retaining some Latin in the Roman rite, it would seem that the use of the mother tongue is to be greatly extended when such is deemed to be advantageous.

All things considered, the Constitution envisages that a great part of the liturgy will eventually be in the language of the people.²⁷

The decision rests with territorial ecclesiastical authority. "In some places and circumstances, however, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed."²⁸ Missionary sisters in foreign countries will, no doubt, gratefully welcome this new ruling.

Conclusion.— A fitting conclusion to these comments on the general principles of the Constitution, as affecting sisters, are the words of our reigning Pontiff, Paul VI:

The new liturgical Constitution evolves a religious and spiritual design that is startling, in the depth and authenticity of its doctrine, in the coherence of its Christian reasoning, in its liturgical purity and artistic richness, corresponding to the needs of modern man. Once it is the authority of the Church which teaches and guarantees

27 Crichton, The Church's Worship, p. 119.

28 Constitution, Art. 40.

the worth of the reform, in a pastoral effort to strengthen in souls the faith and love of Christ, and the sense of religion in the world at large.²⁹

II. THE MASS

A. Definition of the Eucharist.— The definition of the Eucharist which opens the second chapter of the Constitution is a masterpiece of concentrated theology. It is a re-statement in different words of the nature of the Christian mystery. It is borrowed, in part, from the text of the Council of Trent³⁰ but the trend of reform may be noted in the change of title from "Doctrine" to "Mystery" of the Holy Eucharist.

While losing nothing of the Tridentine doctrine, the Conciliar definition of the Eucharist is presented in an excellent biblical and liturgical style.³¹

The text of the Constitution is as follows:

At the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of his body and blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection:

²⁹ Paul VI, Allocution, Jan. 13, 1965, in L'Osservatore Romano, Jan. 22, 1965. (The translation is mine.)

³⁰ Denzinger, 938.

³¹ A.M. Roguet, "Nature de l'Eucharistie", in La Maison-Dieu, 77, 1^{er} trimestre 1964, p. 115. (The translation is mine.)

a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity,³² a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.³³

B. Desire of Church.— The earnest desire of the Church that the faithful should not be silent spectators at Holy Mass must find an answering echo in the heart of every sister. We cannot help but be deeply impressed by the Church's concern to insure our thorough understanding of "the rites and prayers", and our "participation" with devotion and full collaboration. Consequently we should show our eagerness to cooperate as completely as is in our power.

C. Reiterated Wish.— This expressed wish is no modern innovation. It was one very dear to the heart of Pius X and stated formally in his Motu Proprio De musica sacra of Nov. 22, 1903:

Our Christian people gather to acquire the Christian spirit from its first and indispensable source which is active participation in the most sacred mysteries as well as in the public and solemn prayer of the Church.³⁴

32 Cf. Augustine, Tractatus in Joannem, VI, n. 13, and Roman Breviary, feast of Corpus Christi, Second Vespers, Antiphon to the Magnificat.

33 Constitution, Art. 47.

34 Pius X, Motu Proprio De musica sacra, in ASS, Vol. 36, 1903, p. 388: "Ubi Christicolae congregantur ut hoc virtutis spiritu ex priore fonte fruuntur, quae est participatio divinatorum mysteriorum atque Ecclesiae communium et solemnium precum." (The translation is mine.)

It was reiterated by Pius XI in 1928:

For that purpose the faithful come to Church in order to draw piety as from its chief source, by taking an active part in the mysteries to be celebrated and in the solemn and public prayers of the Church.³⁵

Again we turn to Mediator Dei to learn the will of Pius XII:

It is therefore desirable, Venerable Brethren, that all the faithful should be aware that to participate in the Eucharistic Sacrifice is their chief duty and supreme dignity, and that not in an inert and negligent fashion, giving way to distractions and day dreaming, but with such earnestness and concentration that they may be united as closely as possible with the High Priest...³⁶

These words of Pius XII have sometimes been interpreted as referring simply to interior recollection. The Constitution, however, leaves no doubt of the precise meaning of "active participation".

³⁵ Pius XI, *Constitutio Apostolica de liturgia deque cantu Gregoriano et musica sacra cotidie magis provehendis*, in AAS, Vol. 21, 1928, p. 35: "Etenim ob eam causam ad aedes sacras fideles conveniunt ut pietatem inde, tamquam ex praecipuo fonte, hauriant, veneranda Ecclesiae mysteria ac publicas sollemnesque preces actuose participando." (The translation is mine.)

³⁶ Pius XII, Mediator Dei, in AAS, Vol. 39, 1947, p. 552: "Expedit igitur, Venerabiles Fratres, christifideles omnes animadvertant summo sibi officio esse summaeque dignitate Eucharisticum participare Sacrificium; idque non quiescenti negligentique animo et ad alia excurrenti atque vaganti, sed tam impense tamque actuose ut cum Summo Sacerdote arctissime coniugentur."

D. Action.— Sisters, therefore, are expected to give more than mental advertence, action is demanded of them in the rites and prayers. That can no longer be doubted. The Constitution even enumerates the requisite actions:

- a) They should be instructed by God's word (the learning process is not a passive one)
- b) and be nourished at the table of the Lord's body;
- c) they should give thanks to God;
- d) by offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves.³⁷

The aim and result of such participation is the accomplishment of the life purpose of every consecrated religious:

Through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all.³⁸

E. Directives.— The Constitution continues, in Articles 50 and 51, with directives to facilitate the achievement of these requirements.

1. Treasures of the Bible.— The rites of the Mass are to be carefully revised and special attention is to be paid to instruction in the Bible.

God speaks to his people through the gospel and the people respond in their way by prayer and hymns.

³⁷ Constitution, Art. 48.

³⁸ Constitution, Art. 48.

These readings are to be proclaimed. It is not enough that each participant read the text with his eyes on his missal. ... All are to listen to the readings rather than read them.³⁹

The emphasis laid on the connection and purpose of the different parts of the Mass⁴⁰ explains the reason for the first part, the "celebration of the Word", being performed at the ambo, a different place from the altar on which the "celebration of the Eucharist" is offered.

At the ambo the priest is in a better position to lead the prayers and speak directly to his congregation. With the priest at the altar facing the people, it is now possible for everyone to "take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing."⁴¹

By thus having two distinct places for the celebration the original structure of the two parts of the Mass is restored, while at the same time the presence of the priest at the altar evidences the greater importance of the liturgy of the Eucharist in the two roles.

2. Two Tables.— It is interesting to note the use of the word "table" for both the table of God's word and the table of the Lord's body.⁴² Commenting on this

³⁹ A.G. Martimort, The Signs of the New Covenant, Colledgeville, Liturgical Press, 1963, p. 157.

⁴⁰ Constitution, Art. 50.

⁴¹ Constitution, Art. 48.

⁴² Cf. La Maison-Dieu, 76, pp. 84 and 85. Constitution, Art. 51.

Crichton says:

It is thus in an official document of the Church that we have restored a balance that has long been wanting and by implication the purpose of the ministry of the word is seen to be the opening of the mind and heart of the participants so that they may fruitfully feed on Christ's Body in Holy Communion.⁴³

3. Thanksgiving.— There are still too many people who act on the assumption that one goes to Mass to beg favors from God. The Constitution draws our attention to the teaching of the Prefaces and Sanctus, which is frequently overlooked; through thanksgiving we give appropriate praise to God. The Mass itself is the only perfect thanksgiving.⁴⁴

For years "the Mass tended to become an act of adoration to Christ rather than a co-offering with him as priest of his redeeming sacrifice."⁴⁵

The Constitution changes this mistaken idea in no uncertain terms.

4. Offertory.— The people are to offer the Sacred Victim not only through mediation of the priest but in union with him. It is to be an interior offering of

43 Crichton, The Church's Worship, pp. 135-136.

44 Cf. Ibid., p. 136.

45 J.D. Crichton, "An Historical Sketch of the Roman Liturgy", in True Worship: the Fifth Downside Symposium, ed. Lancelot Sheppard, Baltimore, Helicon Press, 1963, p. 60.

themselves — work, joys and sorrows — but also manifested by exterior acts, such as the responses made to the prayers of the priest, singing, offertory, processions, sometimes the offering of alms and so on. Sisters, in their semi-private chapels have a greater opportunity for carrying out these prescriptions with loving forethought for variety, dignity and piety than do the congregations of large churches.

5. Homily.— "The homily is to be highly esteemed as part of the liturgy itself."⁴⁶ The sisters should pay serious attention to the words of the speaker explaining some aspect of the day's liturgy. Even when the manner of expression is not particularly pleasing, it is still possible to grasp the idea and carry out the lesson. Our day to day life should be an extension and radiation of every part of the divine liturgy.

6. Prayer of the faithful.— The importance of the prayer of the faithful, which the Council Fathers deemed worthy of special mention, is attested by long liturgical tradition. A semblance of it remains in the Paters and Aves "for the sick and dead of the parish" which frequently precede or used to precede the Sunday's pulpit announcements. The only formal retention in the Roman rite is the series

46 Constitution, Art. 52.

of solemn prayers for the needs of the Church recited on Good Friday. The precise form which these prayers will have in future has been left to the decision of the commission for the revision of the Roman Missal.

A period of experimentation seems called for and has the approval of most diocesan authorities. The Constitution is explicit only in the purpose of the prayer:

By this prayer, in which the people are to take part, intercession will be made for Holy Church, for the civil authorities, for those oppressed by various needs, for all mankind, and for the salvation of the entire world.⁴⁷

The prayer of the faithful will take place after the gospel and homily. It is situated, therefore, at the juncture of the two parts of the Mass. An example of this intercessory prayer is given in the St. Andrew Bible Missal, and it has found favor in several countries.

The petition may be announced by the celebrant, deacon or a layman; it could be spoken though it is usually sung. He concludes each invocation with the invitation "Let us pray to the Lord." All answer "Lord, have mercy", or words to that effect. It is an appealing kind of prayer, the response is easily learned, and consequently it has become most popular.⁴⁸ It is expected that, whatever

47 This is the thought in 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

48 Cf. Crichton, The Church's Worship, pp. 141-143.

formulas are decided upon by the commission, they will be varied, and permission will be given to the celebrant, and to the people present to formulate their own petitions for their own needs. Such liberty used in a convent will give scope to the sisters' charity as well as to their musical ability.

Frederick R. McManus, consultor on the post-conciliar liturgical commission is strongly in favor of the restoration of this prayer. The following are his reasons:

There are many reasons indeed for the restoration of the prayer of the faithful to the Mass. Certainly there is a pastoral purpose, that the faithful who have been called together to hear God's word and who have listened to the message of his love should speak their pleas and petitions as they come close to the celebration of the eucharistic liturgy. If the expression of these petitions or intercessions is made extremely concrete and well related to the given community, it can have the greatest practical significance for the faithful. Since, moreover, the practice is common to almost all rites but the Roman — and the Roman rite knew the usage regularly until the fifth century — the restoration may serve as a bond of unity, especially with the Oriental rites, but also with Protestant liturgies which preserve the "bidding prayers".⁴⁹

7. Vernacular.— It was noted in Articles 36:2 and 40 that the use of the mother tongue is to be extended. Article 54 now specifies how it is to be used in the celebration of the Mass.

49 McManus, Worship, p. 465.

"In Masses which are celebrated with the people, a suitable place may be allotted to their mother tongue."

Therefore even one or two people would suffice to warrant use of the vernacular, but Latin is still to be used in Masses celebrated by a priest with a single server. Whatever the wishes or needs of the clergy, the Constitution makes very clear that the introduction of the mother tongue is primarily for the sake of the people.

"This is to apply in the first place to the readings and 'the common prayer'", or the prayer of the faithful.

"As local conditions may warrant" these parts "which pertain to the people, according to the norm of Art. 36." Just how much this applies to convents remains to be seen in the future. The foreign missions will, perhaps, be affected sooner than the home missions. But many liturgists are of the opinion that the day is not far distant when this latitude of interpretation will be equally valid all over the world.

8. Latin.— The expressed desire of the Church that "steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them"⁵⁰ can be

⁵⁰ Constitution, Art. 54.

carried out without difficulty as far as sisters are concerned.

According to Father McManus:

The purpose of this requirement was explained to the bishops in the name of the Conciliar Commission. Since Latin is the principal language of the Roman rite, the faithful of that rite should be able to employ it on the occasions when they come together from different countries in places of pilgrimage or during international congresses. If the faithful do know how to recite and sing the ordinary chants of the Mass in their own tongue, it should not be difficult on the occasion of international gatherings for them to employ the Latin; they will already know its meaning.⁵¹

This retention will also prove useful in bilingual countries whenever sisters of various Orders are gathered together. It imposes a grave obligation on class teachers and music teachers; for, if the faithful are to be taught to say and sing the Latin, where else will this be than in Catholic schools? And all this effort will be useless unless opportunity is given occasionally to say and to sing Latin in chapel and church.

There can be no doubt that, in the case of sisters, faith and charity will dictate loyalty and obedience to authority whenever there is question of the use of a language other than their own — especially the use of Latin.⁵²

51 McManus, Worship, p. 474.

52 Cf. Crichton, The Church's Worship, pp. 143-148.

9. More Perfect Form of Participation.— The strong recommendation of the Constitution that the faithful "receive the Lord's body from the same sacrifice, after the priest's communion", as being "that more perfect form of participation", can quite easily be carried out in convent chapels. An alert sacristan can judge the correct number of altar breads to set out, or sisters may put in their own. This custom is prevalent even now, and reception of Holy Communion at each Mass has long been considered normal among sisters.

In making this recommendation, the Constitution repeats the teaching of the Council of Trent (Session XXII, c. 6), Benedict XIV (Certiores Effecti) and Pius XII (Mediator Dei).

The following quotation from Mediator Dei proves that this "more perfect form of participation" has long been the desire of successive Pontiffs.

Moreover, our Predecessor of immortal memory, Benedict XIV, wishing to emphasize and throw fuller light upon the truth that the faithful by receiving the Holy Eucharist become partakers of the divine Sacrifice itself, praises the devotion of those who, when attending Mass, not only elicit a desire to receive Holy Communion but also want to be nourished by Hosts consecrated during the Mass, even though, as he himself states they really and truly take part in the Sacrifice should they receive a Host which has been duly consecrated at a previous Mass.⁵³

⁵³ Pius XII, Mediator Dei, in AAS, Vol. 39, 1947, p. 564; the translation is St. Paul Editions, Vatican Library Translation, No. 118.

In the same encyclical we learn the thought of Pius XII on the paschal meal:

The Church of Jesus Christ needs no other bread than this to satisfy fully our souls' wants and desires, and to unite us in the most intimate union with Jesus Christ, to make us "one body" (1 Cor. 10:17), to get us to live together as brothers who, breaking the same bread, sit down to the same Heavenly Table to partake of the elixir of immortality.⁵⁴

The Constitution is but emphasizing the significance of the holy meal as Scripture teaches it.

10. The Cup.— The custom of receiving Holy Communion under both species seems to be something of an innovation. Nevertheless, at the Last Supper Our Lord gave this method to his disciples and to his Church. All are invited to receive his Body and drink of his Cup, and Holy Communion under both species was the practice in the early Church. The Eastern Church has always retained this rite, and even in the West it was the custom until about the thirteenth century.⁵⁵ After this long lapse of time the practice is to be reestablished to a limited degree.

Communion under both kinds may be granted when the bishops think fit, not only to clerics and religious, but also to the laity, in cases to be determined by the Apostolic See.⁵⁶

54 Mediator Dei, St. Paul Editions, No. 120.

55 Cf. P.M. Gy, "Communion sous les deux espèces", in Maison-Dieu, 77, 1964, p. 126.

56 Constitution, Art. 55.

Three examples are given, one for each class: to the newly ordained at their Mass of ordination, to the newly professed in the Mass of their profession and to the newly baptized (presumably adults) in the Mass that follows their baptism.

It may be presumed that many bishops will see fit to grant permission to the whole community of sisters to join in this perfect and joyful Meal as they welcome the young professed into their midst. This participation at the same sacrificial meal by all members of the community will constitute a sacrament of unity which will be far more significant than the present rather widespread custom of having everyone else communicate at an early Mass and only the newly professed receive at the Mass of profession.

Father Crichton holds that this concession to the Cup was made out of pastoral concern for the authenticity of the sacramental sign. "The sign is intended not only to secure validity but to express the total meaning of the sacrament." The Eucharist was instituted under the double sign: "Take and eat" and "Take and drink", each one is a memorial of Christ's redeeming death.

If, by proper instruction, the people of God appreciate this fact they will be able to "enter more deeply into the inner reality of the sacrament." The reception of Holy Communion will become of far greater moment in

their spiritual lives.

Even the limited practice of "the Cup" is sufficient to prove that communion under one species has been only a disciplinary regulation and that there is no principle involved. It is actually an ecumenical gesture.⁵⁷

It is the duty of the Post-Conciliar Commission to establish the ritual, endeavoring to retain the traditional rule of a single chalice, so rich in ecclesial significance, and at the same time take into consideration the requirements of hygiene. The Maison-Dieu commentary on the Constitution mentions an enquiry made by the Swedish Lutheran Church, whose members drink from the same chalice, to study the risks of contagion involved in such a practice. The findings of the bacteriologists showed that these risks were no greater than those one takes when riding on buses or railway cars.⁵⁸

Conclusion.— From the chapter on "Other Sacraments and Sacramentals" since they do not come under the heading Horarium, we take note of Article 80 only. It is self-explanatory.

Moreover, a rite of religious profession and renewal of vows shall be drawn up in order to achieve greater

57 Cf. Crichton, The Church's Worship, pp. 150 and 151.

58 Gy, Maison-Dieu, 77, p. 127.

unity, sobriety, and dignity. Apart from exceptions in particular law, this rite should be adopted by those who make profession or renewal of vows within the Mass.

Religious profession should preferably be made within the Mass.

Even a cursory study of the Constitution of the Liturgy reveals that the unchanging aim of the Church is to promote the better understanding combined with the active participation of the faithful in the sacred liturgy. Sisters who discover this for themselves are filled with grateful amazement at the "wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11) in our generation. The sense of belonging to the people of God which is the result of a new understanding and a new application of the sacrament of love, overflows from the communal act and pervades their whole religious life increasing love of the Holy Trinity, love of all the sisters in the community, love of all God's world.

III. DIVINE OFFICE

This section will touch upon the divine office as affecting sisters only, in so far as it is contained in the Constitution on the Liturgy. Other aspects of the Office which concern the prayer life of sisters will be treated in more detail in a subsequent chapter.

A. Importance of the Office in Context of Salvation History. — The Divine Office, as indeed all the liturgy, can be understood only if taken in the context of salvation history, and if referred to the priesthood of Christ. Article 83 of Chapter IV of the Constitution recalls this doctrine briefly, it has already been developed in Chapter I.

The disclosure of this heavenly prayer to men was made possible by the Incarnation of Christ and by His priesthood. While awaiting the Parousia, the priesthood of Christ continues to be exercised by the Church. It is exercised in the Eucharist and in the administration of the sacraments but the exercise of the priesthood of Christ is greater than the sacraments: it extends especially to the divine office which is, according to Article 90 "the public prayer of the Church". The office, consequently, provides a fitting climate for the whole celebration of the liturgy.⁵⁹

B. Sequence of Hours.— The paragraph of the Constitution which follows reminds us that the office consecrates and sanctifies the whole course of the day; it has been hallowed by Tradition; it is, in truth, "the very prayer

⁵⁹ Cf. P.M. Gy, "Théologie de l'office divin", in Maison-Dieu, 77, 1964, pp. 160-161.

which Christ himself, together with his body, addresses to the Father."⁶⁰

The same thought continues in Article 88 which directs the restoration of the traditional sequence of hours. Pastoral care for today's flock adds that it will be necessary "to take into account the modern conditions in which daily life has to be lived, especially by those who are called to labor in apostolic works." Because of this provision for adaptation the way seems open for the adoption of at least part of the divine office by communities of women engaged in active works. There are many communities in which the divine office is not of rule.

C. Norms.— Norms to be observed when the office is revised follow upon the above provision. It would seem that three of them are of immediate concern to sisters who wish to bring their horarium into line with the life of the Church.

"By venerable tradition of the universal Church, Lauds as morning prayer and Vespers as evening prayer are the two hinges on which the daily office turns; hence they are to be considered as the chief hours and are to be celebrated as such."

⁶⁰ Constitution, Art. 84.

"Compline is to be drawn up so that it will be a suitable prayer for the end of the day."

"Outside choir it will be lawful to select any one of these three (Terce, Sext, None), according to the respective time of the day."⁶¹

These three norms will be of the utmost importance when setting up a new horarium, as will be suggested in the last chapter of this paper.

D. Nourishment for Personal Prayer.— The exhortation contained in Article 90 reminds "priests and all others" that the office is a source of piety and nourishment for personal prayer and should be regarded and used as such. To so conform presupposes a workable understanding of the Bible, especially of the psalms.

E. Challenge.— This is the challenge to modern sisters. The need is not for just a knowledge of chapter and verse, nor yet of the historical background (though these are necessary also), but an understanding that comes from the heart coupled with a taste for biblical prayer, particularly the prayer of the psalms. "Only he who appreciates the Bible can find joy in the Breviary."⁶²

⁶¹ Constitution, Art. 89.

⁶² Gy, Maison-Dieu, 77, p. 167: "Seul celui qui a le goût de la Bible pourra trouver sa joie dans le Bréviaire." (The translation is mine.)

F. Reform of Roman Breviary.— The Council Fathers have placed squarely before the readers of the office their strict duty to improve their understanding of the liturgy and of the Bible.⁶³ They now refer to their intention of reforming the Roman office. This is indeed a venerable treasure and, by means of it, many priests have fittingly praised God through the passage of centuries. But the spirit of prayer is of greater importance than any consideration of tradition or history, and the reform will see to it that this treasure will be wide open to the hearts of those who pray today.

G. At Time Intended.— A noteworthy directive is the purpose of Article 94.

That the day may be truly sanctified, and that the hours themselves may be recited with spiritual advantage, it is best that each of them be prayed at a time which most closely corresponds with its true canonical time.

Following upon the provisions for adaptation of Article 89, this directive is possible of accomplishment. There will be need, however, of forethought and careful planning in the drawing up of a convent horarium.

H. Incentive.— We come now to the great incentive to sisters to adopt the divine office for their community prayer.

⁶³ Constitution, Art. 90.

Members of any institute dedicated to acquiring perfection who, according to their Constitutions, are to recite any parts of the divine office are thereby performing the public prayer of the Church.⁶⁴

These words have the strongest appeal to every sister. It is the laudable ambition of all to pray with the Church. And there does not seem to be any obstacle preventing the most active community from reciting at least "parts of the divine office."

The "short office" receives the seal of approval "provided this is drawn up after the pattern of the divine office and is duly approved."⁶⁵

I. Vernacular.— The one thing needed to raise still higher the acceptability of the use of the divine office for sisters is provided for by Article 101:2. The competent superior now has power to grant the use of vernacular to the members of her institute. An approved version is obligatory.

Conclusion.— Conclusive evidence that the reasonable desire of the modern sister so to pray is founded on valid reason is contained in the words of the Constitution itself:

64 Constitution, Art. 98.

65 Ibid.

THE LITURGY

120

Hence all who render this service are not only fulfilling a duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the greatest honor of Christ's spouse, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church their Mother.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Constitution, Art. 85.

CHAPTER IV

PARA-LITURGICAL PRAYER

I. PRIVATE PRAYER

Private prayer has a vital role to play in the life of every sincere Christian, consequently in the life of every sister.

There is a distinction between "private personal prayers" and community prayers said in private. The former are prayers of the individual sister, freely chosen by her and prayed whenever the occasion offers. The latter mean prayers of Rule of a designated type or content sometimes required to be said at a designated time, sometimes simply recommended, always recited privately. For the sake of convenience, the prayers of Rule or recommendation recited privately will be referred to by the general term of "private prayer". By "para-liturgical" as used in the title is understood that which is associated with the liturgy in a subsidiary or accessory capacity.

The necessity for non-liturgical prayer stems from the fact that each soul has been created by God, with its special needs resulting from its unique personality. Only by private prayer can a soul recognize its own weaknesses, check its propensities to evil and develop its own spiritual life.

Even liturgical prayer is real prayer only when the individual Christians make common prayer their own. This cannot be done without serious thought about and preparation for public prayer in the silence of meditation. In this manner, private prayer provides stimuli for an alert and meaningful participation in liturgical worship.

Since the liturgy, however, is built up of dogma and Scripture correct training is needed before a sister is able to vitalize her public prayer by her own personal prayer.¹

A. Private Prayer Of Rule.— Of the prayers of Rule, the first in order of time is the rising prayer.

1. Rising Prayer.— Every good Christian honestly wishes to give his first thought to God and tries to do so even though by nothing more than a quick ejaculation. Novitiate training emphasizes the excellence of this practice and insists further on the worth of offering one's actions totally to God.

The bride of Christ must be free to word her morning greeting in her own way. Nevertheless, let her be instructed in the meaning of the morning offering of the Apostleship of Prayer. If she understands, she will doubtless see the merit of reciting this prayer while dressing.

¹ See Chapter III, p. 93 above.

One must not underestimate the power of the united prayer of millions of Catholics for intentions which have received the approval and blessing of the Holy Father.

2. Mental Prayer.— Mental prayer, the silent lifting up of mind and heart to God, is generally considered the most important private prayer. It is talking to God as to a father, confiding in him utterly, and listening to him with the intention of learning to do his holy will.

Perhaps the best, as well as the best known definition is that of St. Teresa of Avila: "Mental prayer, in my view, is nothing but friendly intercourse, and frequently solitary converse with Him Who we know loves us."²

Since each sister is an individual person, the creativeness and originality of her response to the God of love must be uniquely her own. But certain ideals and principles must ever be kept in mind; we cannot forget that we are a part of the Body of Christ on earth.

This duty is clearly stated by Emeric A. Lawrence, O.S.B.

The philosophers tell us that action follows the nature of a being; and so does prayer. Our response to God must necessarily be conditioned by what we are, not only as human beings composed of body and spirit, but as Christians, members of Jesus Christ, members of His Church, and His brides.

² Teresa of Avila, Life, in The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers, Vol. 1, London, Sheed and Ward, 1944, p. 50.

Private prayer is indeed a very personal activity, but having been baptized into Christ and His Church, we should want to be guided by the ideals and principles of Christ and His Church.³

According to classical tradition, there are three degrees of mental prayer: meditation which is attributed to the beginning stage or the purgative way; affective prayer which belongs to the second stage or the illuminative way; contemplation which is proper to the highest stage of perfection or the unitive way.

These stages or degrees, however, should not be understood as being strictly rigid; they admit of overlapping and interchanging one of the other, at any time.

The above arrangement and the explanation ensuing are those of Germain Lesage⁴ whose writing is based on the authority of Louis de Grenade, St. Peter of Alcantara and St. Teresa of Avila.

Because of this unpredictable interchange, it might be better to describe the different kinds of mental prayer by their techniques:

meditation — reflections on a chosen subject
 affective prayer — expressions of love
 contemplation — reception of divine light.

³ Emeric A. Lawrence, "Private Prayer in Relation to Spiritual Growth", in Proceedings of the 1956 Sisters' Institute of Spirituality, ed. A. Leonard Collins, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, May 1957, p. 274.

⁴ Germain Lesage, O.M.I., Le Défi de notre foi, Montreal, Rayonnement, 1964, pp. 121-124.

It would be impossible even to enumerate the different methods of making a meditation, but they are all discursive in one way or another. Ordinarily a spiritual book is used to help in making the reflections or considerations, which may lead to discovery or admiration of truth, and is expected to arrive at a fruitful conviction or resolution. The exercise usually ends with a prayer of praise and petition.

The characteristics of meditation are distinctive. It is a study rather than simply a friendly converse. Some order or arrangement of thought is requisite; there should be a stated time (twenty minutes or so) to attain a desired result, and obviously, the intellectual effort requires a modicum of peace and quiet. Meditation is rather a monologue than a dialogue. The soul is active and leaves little to the initiative of actual grace. In fine, meditation is a mingling of ideas rather than contact with the person of God. Even these characteristics, however, can alternate. There will be instances when affective prayer or dialogue will intervene.

The special effect of meditation, in so far as it is prayer of an intellectual rather than a volitional order, is a well-regulated life founded on sound doctrine.

This discursive meditation, once so highly esteemed does not seem to commend itself so favorably to the modern

generation of postulants and novices. Because psychologically they are more intuitive than discursive, more avid for living, and their spiritual progress may be paced more rapidly, the "new breed", by and large, prefers a more simple method of mental prayer.

Affective prayer (sometimes called the prayer of recollection) is the technique ordinarily recommended by Louis de Grenade, St. Peter of Alcantara and St. Teresa of Avila.

To practise this degree of mental prayer one must be recollected and by an act of the imagination, general and indefinite, place oneself in the presence of God. The soul remains in this intimacy and speaks to God in a succession of reflections and interior silences. In order to hold the attention one could, at the outset, do a simple and slow reading of a canticle or a hymn, one could recall some thought from the Gospel, or other thoughts which have been memorized which direct the mind to Jesus, to the Father, to the Trinity or to Mary.

This affective prayer is derived from the will rather than from the reason. It is the result of love rather than doctrinal knowledge. It is a dialogue in which the soul, listening peacefully, is easily attuned to divine inspiration. It is a contact between two persons, God and the faithful soul, who are conscious of each other, who

speak and who understand.

The great advantage of this prayer is that it need not stop at the required time for mental prayer, it adapts itself very readily to any situation: for example, while travelling in a bus, while doing housework, while walking along halls or streets. It is the spontaneous expression of the soul's distinctive personality by which it gives itself wholly to God.

Affective prayer produces rapid and sure effects in all who actively seek God. It permeates the whole life of the one who so prays in a colloquy, so to speak, at once serene and loving, which could last for days. It is frequently a way of solving spiritual problems, and is conducive to mental equilibrium. It paves the way for supernatural contemplation by a quieting of the faculties analogous to that of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the words of St. Teresa it is laying "a good foundation, so that, if the Lord desires to raise you up to achieve great things, He will find you ready, because you will be close to Himself."⁵ It is the highest degree of prayer that man may attain here below by his own efforts.

⁵ Teresa of Avila, Way of Perfection, in The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers, Vol. 2, London, Sheed and Ward, 1946, p. 123.

The summit of mental prayer is mystical contemplation or infused prayer.

This contemplation comes at the beginning of the illuminative way, when the soul is submissive to the designs of God, when it desires high sanctity, leads a generous, well ordered and careful life; and is devoted to affective prayer. Except at the zenith of union, contemplation is intermittent. In the unitive way, it becomes more frequent, stronger, more luminous because of a more penetrating gift of intelligence, and more gentle because of a more captivating gift of wisdom. Through the purifications of passive nights it grows into a transforming union, while awaiting the change, with death, into the beatific vision.⁶

God is the master and he gives his favors to whom he wishes. Contemplation is in effect a monologue of God to an attentive soul who listens in admiration, almost in ecstasy. No man may attain to this degree by his own efforts.

The effect of mystical contemplation is a perception of God which, in the highest stages, admits of quasi-experimental certitude. It arouses great fervor, enkindles enlightened and indefatigable zeal, and induces a serenity, more and more unshakable even under the severest trials and sufferings.

In concluding this review of the techniques of prayer it may be fitting to repeat that we can pray only according to what we are. "But for prayer existence alone

⁶ Lesage, Le Défi de notre foi, p. 124.

does not suffice. The entire psychism must awaken to God."⁷

God has given each sister a place in creation and she is irreplaceable. Each one must continually seek the mode of prayer by which she personally is called to glorify God. Training must be given to help them to become original and sure of themselves. They must not lose sight of the reality that personal prayer is a duty; otherwise it will become undisciplined and sterile.

The form which this duty takes depends on the individual make-up and circumstances of the pious person, and its particular virtue lies in the fact that this person, in his irreplaceable uniqueness, should perform it.⁸

Obviously, a sister's mental prayer depends on the degree of consciousness she has of the fact that she was especially loved and chosen by God to be his bride. Her power of growing in love and of becoming a channel of his love into the lives of others is in ratio to her awareness and acceptance of the responsibility with which she has been entrusted by her Spouse.

⁷ Fr. Plé, O.P. (ed.), La Prière, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1959, p. 230 (Problèmes de la religieuse d'aujourd'hui). (The translation is mine.)

⁸ Romano Guardini, Prayer in Practice, trans. Leopold of Loewenstein-Wertheim, Garden City, N.Y., Image Books, Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1963, p. 150.

If the Sister is the Bride of Christ, then her relationship of prayer must be that of bride to bridegroom, of spouse to beloved. This implies the development of a living presence — a personal sense of being-with Christ — that must be the concern of all her spiritual activity.⁹

3. Spiritual Reading.— The sister's religious life is based on faith. But, no matter how docile she may be she cannot live on empty or meaningless faith. Revelation and doctrine must first be presented to her in such a way that she can understand before she can make a true act of faith. Intellectual knowledge precedes both faith and love; this is axiomatic.

Our Christian religion is based entirely on what God has chosen to reveal to man at precise moments in salvation history. In childhood and youth it is quite possible that the Christian may learn the tenets of his faith mostly through hearing and, in some measure, this actual hearing will continue throughout life. It is obvious, however, that in the ordinary course of events, the modern sister will add to her store of knowledge of spiritual things principally by means of the printed page. That is why spiritual reading is so important and why it must be kept up from day to day, without any long interruptions.

⁹ Lawrence, "Private Prayer in Relation to Spiritual Growth", p. 277.

James Carmody expresses this same view very pointedly and meaningfully when he writes about spiritual reading.

In one sense it is the first and most important of spiritual duties. God's word, his call, precedes man's response. And the hearing or learning of that word on man's part precedes prayer, as does prayer action and action examen.¹⁰

In the Constitution which St. Teresa of Avila gave to her spiritual daughters, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, we read: "Let the prioress see to it that there are good books ... for sustenance like this is in its way as necessary for the soul as food is for the body."¹¹ She could hardly have been more emphatic.

Should the same emphasis be placed on spiritual reading today as was the situation in the time of St. Teresa? Has the practice withstood the test of time? A backward glance into history should endorse its worth.

We learn from Acts 13:14 that the early Christians continued to frequent the synagogues. They went as was the custom in order to listen to the readings from the Law and the prophets, even to take their turns at reading. We recall the famous pithy exhortation of St. Paul to Timothy:

¹⁰ James Carmody, "Spiritual Reading: History and Practice", in Sponsa Regis, Vol. 33, Oct. 1961, p. 32.

¹¹ Teresa of Avila, Book of the Foundations, in The Complete Works of St. Teresa of Jesus, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers, Vol. III, pp. 220-221.

"Attend to reading" (1 Tim. 4:13).¹² Or as in the Goodspeed version: "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture." This practice of public reading was then carried over to their own gatherings for worship; the early Christians made scriptural reading part of the ritual of the Eucharist.

The Fathers of the desert considered spiritual reading, especially Bible reading, a necessary part of daily religious life. St. Athanasius and St. Jerome held it in the greatest esteem.¹³

In one of his celebrated homilies, in the fourth century, St. John Chrysostom said:

Always, yes, always, I will exhort you, not only to listen attentively to and reflect upon my words, but also to read the Scriptures assiduously in your homes.¹⁴

St. Benedict, in the fifth century, wrote his celebrated Rule for cenobites. He prescribes spiritual reading (lectio divina) for a considerable part of his monks' day. He regarded it as the foundation of both theology and spirituality.¹⁵

12 Douai Version.

13 See Chapter II, pp. 53-54 and 57-60 above for texts and references.

14 John Chrysostom, De Lazaro Concio Tertio, PG, Vol. 48, cols. 991-992.

15 Cf. Gerard Sitwell, O.S.B., Medieval Spiritual Writers, London, Burns and Oates, 1961, pp. 20-21 (Faith and Fact Books 40).

His Rule was sufficiently broad to allow up to five or more hours for reading, depending on the given tasks of the religious and the season of the year.

Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore should the brethren be occupied at stated times in manual labour, and at other fixed hours in sacred reading.¹⁶

Every available opportunity was to be seized, moreover one who read aloud should be prepared,

When the brethren are taking their meals there should always be reading. Yet no one shall presume at haphazard to take the book and read; but let him who is to read throughout the week enter on his office on Sunday.¹⁷

The books that St. Benedict suggested are equally profitable for sisters today.

For what page or word is there in the divinely inspired books of the Old and New Testaments, that is not a most accurate rule for human life? Or what book of the holy Catholic Fathers does not loudly proclaim how we may by a straight course reach our Creator?¹⁸

This "straight course to our Creator" was envisioned by St. Benedict as a series of steps of which lectio divina was the first.

¹⁶ Paul Delatte, O.S.B., The Rule of St. Benedict: A Commentary, trans. J. McCann, London, Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., 1921, p. 304.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 265.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 492-493.

The name lectio is only the first moment of an ascending series: lectio, cogitatio, studium, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio; but St. Benedict knew that the remaining degrees would soon come if the soul were loyal and courageous. So it is to contemplation and union with God that the monastic lectio divina tends.¹⁹

In the later Middle Ages there was a demand for books of simple devotion. Presumably because the study of the philosophy of Aristotle had tended to divorce theology and devotion. At this time many books were written on the life of Christ with the intent of leading the readers to meditation and prayer.²⁰

The horaria of most modern religious orders dedicated to the active ministry excluded the chanting of the Divine Office. This called for considerable rearrangement of traditional spiritual exercises, nevertheless there was always time allotted for spiritual reading. Compared to the time given for reading to cloistered sisters of the Middle Ages it was considerably shortened and systematized, but never omitted.²¹

At the beginning of this century most sisters had a fair idea of the Old Testament from having studied Bible History. Their knowledge of the New Testament was gained

19 Delatte, The Rule of St. Benedict, p. 306.

20 Cf. Carmody, Sponsa Regis, p. 35.

21 Cf. ibid., p. 35.

from Sunday sermons and spiritual reading, especially the "Life of Jesus Christ". Several versions of these were available. As a result of the liturgical movement, the use of daily missals became ordinary procedure in convents. Following the exhortation of "Divino Afflante Spiritu",²² the encyclical of Pius XII in 1943, there has been a resurgence of biblical study by religious women. That it is not simply commendable, but actually necessary is now admitted by all.

There must be serious study of the Bible in every novitiate and house of study.

It is a pretty fair generalization that whenever or wherever in the Church superstition or superficiality or sentimentality are rampant, whether among the faithful or in the religious orders, it is because close contact with the Word of God has been weakened.²³

It is not easy to adapt to the Bible if this book was practically unknown while reading habits were being formed, but it must be done. Proper steps must be taken to lead to a sufficient understanding and from thence to meditation and on to more perfect love of God. The above words of James Carmody warn of the results to be expected when study of the Bible is ignored.

22 Pius XII, Encyclical Letter Divino Afflante Spiritu, in AAS, Vol. 35, 1943, pp. 297-325.

23 Carmody, Sponsa Regis, pp. 36-37.

Godfrey Diekmann speaks of this duty of all Christians to work for an ever better understanding of Sacred Scripture in strong and moving terms:

With all due reverence we may say that as the Word was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary and grew in her, so should the Word of God "be conceived" in our hearts by the same Spirit through our reading of Scripture, in order that Christ be formed in us. It is hardly an accident that the last five popes — and they were great popes — each urgently recalled all Catholics to the prayerful reading of the Bible.²⁴

Many modern works of "Introduction to the Bible", "Commentaries", and books for background as well as plans for teaching Scripture in novitiates are now easily available. Such books can be found to suit every intellectual level. And, mindful of the words of St. Teresa, religious Superiors must see to it that they are made available to all sisters.

There are many other spiritual books on the market today treating of a variety of topics especially suited for sisters and every convent should have a truly good library. In this respect the responsibility of superiors is great indeed. Sisters should not be afraid to search for the wisdom contained in the Fathers, in the lives of great men and women of the Church and in the great classics of

24 Godfrey Diekmann, "Living with the Church in Prayer and Reading", in Religious Life in the Modern World, (Selections from the Notre Dame Institutes of Spirituality, Vol. 4, Prayer and Sacrifice), Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1962, pp. 110-111.

spiritual life. Every classic will not prove helpful, depending on the individual reader, but it is good policy at least to try as many as come to hand.

The choice of reading must be inspired by this fundamental truth, namely, that all spiritual knowledge is contained in Christ and has been revealed to us in Him. Spiritual books can only and must only make Christ explicit to us and lead us to Him. A reading is profitable for us in the measure in which it gives us knowledge of Christ. Such is the practical principle that determines for each one the value of books and must guide us in the choice of reading.²⁵

The works of St. John of the Cross following all that is authoritative and orthodox in tradition and stamped with the mystical signature of his unique personality fill a felt need in the lives of many older religious. His writings may have appeared too lofty for them in their youth but a fresh attempt to read John of the Cross in the years of maturity may well prove surprisingly felicitous.²⁶

Reading is not the only means by which God draws man close to him in love. In his Providence he is pleased to use persons, events and places which differ for each individual. But good reading has ever been and will continue to be a most efficacious way by which man can help himself to a greater knowledge and consequently a deeper

25 Marie-Eugene, O.C.D., I Want to See God: A Practical Synthesis of Carmelite Spirituality, Vol. 1, trans. Sister M. Verda Clare, Notre Dame, Fides Publishers, Inc., 1963, p. 224.

26 Ibid., pp. 38 and 39.

love of Love itself.

Before spiritual reading a sister should breathe a prayer to the Holy Spirit asking him to speak to her through the words of the spiritual writer. After the time of reading she should thank God for having had the opportunity of learning more about him, and ask for the grace necessary to put into practice the good which she has learned.

4. Examination of Conscience.— Particular examen is a religious exercise that has long been held in high esteem, particularly so since the time of St. Ignatius. Briefly, it is a thorough-going, spiritual, subjective check-up on one particular fault, with the intention of finding the initial cause or causes thereof. Such light on the subject would inspire the fight against frequent repetition of the same fault, probably even, in time, cause its eradication.

It is a daily exercise and several methods have been suggested by masters of the spiritual life. The Ignatian method of five points, and the Sulpician method of three, are the best known.

Judging by the conversations and answered questionnaires of sisters, the particular examen seems to be losing favor. There are several reasons to account for this.

a) Striving to eradicate a predominant fault over a period of years tends to make the religious too

introspective, too individualistic; it would further charity to think more of others.

b) The classical methods were of a negative nature; more thought was given to faults than to the opposite virtues. The modern sister demands the positive.

c) Practically, noon examen is an impossibility most of the time for the modern sister engaged in the active apostolate. According to sisters' accounts, either one rushed through the exercise distractedly and felt guilty about such laxity; or one took sufficient time and felt guilty about neglecting work. For instance a nurse might try to make a good examen but both eyes and ears would be alert for some sign from a patient in sight, or she would be worried about a patient out of sight. A teacher might take the required time in privacy and quiet, but feel that she should be supervising her pupils, or even that she should not be shortening the necessary time for eating lunch properly. There never seems to be sufficient staff for sisters to be actually replaced during the noon hour.

For these reasons, it is suggested that the noon hour particular examen be deleted from the horarium. If some older sisters have been leaning on this exercise, and consider it to be still necessary, there can be no objection to their continuing it as a private devotion.

There is a designated time for examination of conscience during Compline. It is highly recommended that at this time there be made a spiritual exercise that is a combination of general examination and particular examen of conscience. With this difference — the particular study would be entirely positive.

For this exercise, one usually begins with a prayer of thanksgiving. When the soul reflects on what God has done for her, she will see that what she has done for God is small indeed. The general examination of conscience would come first; this does not take very long. Go back over the day thinking positively. The idea is not to look for failures only but to question how a certain duty could be done in a spirit of greater love. It will be easy to remember any deliberate fault — it has probably been weighing on the mind ever since. When some specific thought, deed or omission has come to mind as susceptible of improvement, the examination should stop there and the will and affections should be centered on arousing sincere contrition for this fault or omission noted. Some moments should be given over to expressions of regret and for forming a practicable resolution of doing better the following day. Experience seems to witness that it is more fruitful for the soul to work on the first thing that comes to mind as a result of the examination. Be hopeful that

the morrow will show improvement. Even for contrition this examination has nothing to do with sins of the past life. The soul occupies herself with the conduct of that day and with plans for the next.

After the general examination one moves on to the particular. Serious thought should be given to the subject of this particular examination. Each monthly retreat is a good time to decide whether the same subject is to be kept or whether a change should be made. It is of vital importance to choose something so concrete that successes or failures can be counted. It could be some special point one wishes to improve; either because it is a weakness which needs strengthening, or because it is a strong point which, in conscience, should be developed further. Some examples could be: treating some particularly difficult person with respect; searching diligently for the will of God in the practice of obedience; scrutinizing the manner of saying vocal prayers, etc.

Some sisters find it helpful to mark down the results; this is very good but not necessary. No improvement can be expected unless the resolution is definite and concrete. The area itself of self-improvement is not so important as the willing abandonment to the Holy Spirit in whatever direction he may lead, in the specific approach

he may use.²⁷

It is of the greatest help to call to mind this on-going struggle early in the morning; while dressing is a good time. It is well to fortify oneself by prayer, even if only by one short ejaculation. If a failure is recalled an ejaculation of regret and a resolve to be more alert during that day should be made. Above all, one should think positively.

Writing of necessary adaptations, Cardinal Suenens reviews this matter of examination and proposes:

The examination of conscience and the chapter of faults should be reviewed in the spirit of the times and perhaps benefit from current practice in certain movements where they have a "review of life". One should aim at more candour and openness between nuns, more mutual sincerity, more real sharing, at constructive self-criticism in common, with a view towards closer co-operation in the accomplishment of their great mission. This means that religious usages as well must move in the missionary dimension, that one should question oneself before God, together and singly, about the response that has been made to His invitation to each individual to share in the salvation of the world.²⁸

The Cardinal, writing in French, used the words révision de vie which were translated "review of life".

27 Leonard J. Fischer, S.J., Lecture given Dec. 4, 1965 at Novice Mistresses' Institute, Maison de la Providence, Orleans, Ontario, Nov. 29-Dec. 8, 1965. (Typewritten)

28 Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, The Nun in the World, trans. Geoffrey Stevens, Montreal, Palm Publishers, 1963, p. 122.

Since the word "review" means simply "to examine again" or "look back on", while the word "revise" means "to look at or over again in order to correct or improve",²⁹ the latter more correctly expresses the meaning.

A description of a revision of life in skeletal form is here given. The task is undertaken with the intention of searching for the work of God in profane events. Groups should consist of three to ten persons. There are two types of groups: those formed of members who share the same interests in work, ex. Legionaries of Mary; or those who live a common life, ex. sisters in a convent. It could happen that there would be a combination of both in some groups. The revision of life supposes a continual climate of prayer because divine grace alone can make efficacious the tools "See-Judge-Act". Great humility and abnegation are necessary before correction of faults in a common situation becomes workable.³⁰

Using group dynamics methods, the sisters would form a group of persons united in a common cause. Conscientiously each member of the group would make some contribution towards forming a resultant new idea, or some

29 Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

30 Cf. J. Bonduelle, "Deux dossiers sur la révision de vie", in La Vie spirituelle, Supplément, Vol. 66, Sept. 1963, pp. 407-452.

new aspect of the same idea. The process leads one to a better knowledge of oneself through one's own thoughtful revision as well as providing the opportunity of learning one's faults with the help of others.

Meetings would ordinarily take place every week or every two weeks. For the sake of efficiency there should be a permanent chairman or secretary to make the necessary arrangements for time and place; but the sisters, including the Superior, would take turns in acting as leader, on a voluntary basis.

There are various kinds of revision of life. Four methods will be considered here: 1. revision of an event; 2. revision of an activity; 3. community examen. 4. fraternal correction. The vocabulary used to describe them is still in a fluctuating state.

The first might be called "Revision of an Event". The following agenda is merely suggestive as the strength of the exercise lies in its adaptability to suit all persons and circumstances.

It is the duty of the leader to seek out some event that happened in the intervening time that would affect, or at least have interest for all the sisters concerned.

The meeting would begin with the recitation of the Our Father and a carefully chosen Bible reading which would show some bearing on the event. The event could be for

example:

a national disaster
a small accident in the house
the coming of a guest
a practical decision.

Each aspect is discussed as it affects a sister; not necessarily pointing out faults, on the contrary qualities could be recognized at times. The point of the discussion need not be strictly the right or the wrong, it could be the better.

Approximately half an hour would be allocated for this discussion. The group would then disperse for ten minutes of thoughtful silence. They would come together the second time for a period of from five to twenty minutes in order to draw some common conclusion and suggest resolutions, one of which each sister would make privately.

The meeting could close with spontaneous prayer, either by the leader alone, or by anyone who wishes so to express herself. It is a very difficult thing for most sisters to express any personal relationship with God in public, therefore everyone should be left free. This revision of life would complement, not replace, the examination of conscience at Compline. It would seem to meet the requirements of modern professed sisters.

R. Voillaume, Superior General of the Petits Frères is a fervent advocate of this exercise. He writes:

It could be for each one an irreplaceable aid to insure clear self-knowledge and sustain the continuance of generous effort. This common focussing of attention will be a measure of the worth of your fraternal life, of which it is but an exterior expression.³¹

In Revision of Activity the group assembles to consider the improvement of their work. It could be more flexible than the former since the matter for discussion might be, not one event, but rather an accumulation of acts which might extend from common problems of the apostolate to preparation of the Sunday gospel. Another difference consists in the fact that in order to help one another there is a certain amount of "prevision" as well. The group decides at the previous meeting the topic which the leader will prepare to discuss with a certain plan and order, but on which all will reflect during the week with the view of contributing something meaningful towards the true needs of the other members and through them to the people with and for whom they work. This type is more suitable for novices and young sisters who could aid mutual construction by pooling mutual knowledge. Since it concerns primarily activity rather than interior life, it obviates

³¹ R. Voillaume, Au coeur des masses, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1962, p. 287: "Il peut être, pour chacun, une aide irremplaçable, pour maintenir la clarté de la connaissance de soi-même et soutenir la générosité de l'effort. Cette mise au point en commun sera ce que vaudra votre vie fraternelle, dont elle n'est, en somme, que l'expression extérieure." (The translation is mine.)

the danger of tensions and inhibitions which revision of life might produce in the inexperienced.

The third class might be called a Community Examen. As the name implies it involves the whole community. The theme for discussion would be chosen by the Superior. A conference given by the Superior or an invited lecturer would insist on the communal spirituality of the case. Each member is asked to express his opinion freely. When deficiencies are pointed out, it is expected that those concerned will privately make good resolutions.

This manner of examen might replace the Chapter of Faults; it differs in the fact that the discussion centers on a theme and that the concrete remedy is not imposed but is decided upon by the group. This type has also been used to good effect at the time of annual retreat.

The fourth and most difficult method is fraternal correction. It needs a group composed of members who are congenial and on very familiar terms. A climate of charity and exceptional good will is essential. It is actually group therapy. The good points and faults of each member are frankly discussed by the team. In actuality the people involved are trying to live, within the team, the charismatic spirit of the early Christians. This kind is recommended only for a chosen few.³²

³² Cf. O.M.I., "Essai de classification", in Au Rythme de l'Eglise, Vol. 9, 12 mars 1966, p. 79.

5. Visit to the Holy Sacrament.³³— Every sister makes visits to Our Lord in the Holy Sacrament each day. The number of visits and their duration depends on opportunity; a sister who leaves the convent early in the morning and does not return until evening usually has fewer occasions to go to the chapel than a sister who remains at home all day. In the final analysis it greatly depends upon each sister's personal devotion to Our Lord in the Holy Sacrament; and this is right, she should be left free. The number of visits and their duration could differ from day to day; above all the prayers said should be the sister's own, not those of some bygone saint whose life and problems were very unlike any of the twentieth century religious.

The worship of the eucharistic presence should always be encouraged. That it is not a misplaced devotion but one founded on solid doctrine is emphatically stated by Paul VI in his encyclical Mysterium Fidei. He exhorts us to "Tirelessly promote the cult of the Eucharist, the focus where all other forms of piety must ultimately emerge." He states his wishes regarding visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

³³ This section is based on Jean Galot, "The Theology of the Eucharistic Presence", in Review for Religious, Vol. 22, 1963, pp. 407-429.

In the course of the day the faithful should not omit to visit the Blessed Sacrament, which according to the liturgical laws must be kept in the churches with great reverence in a most honorable location. Such visits are a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, an acknowledgment of the Lord's presence.³⁴

There is no question of competing with the Mass and Holy Communion; the worship of the eucharistic presence is a continuation of the Mass. The Holy Sacrament is the incarnation and manifestation of Christ's incessant presence in the Mystical Body.

In the tabernacle Christ resides as the center of a particular Christian community.

Let us remark that the cult of the eucharistic presence has its own characteristic features, even while being a complement of Mass and Communion. In the Mass the accent is placed on personal offering which unites us to that of Christ; in Communion the dominant aspect is that of the transformation of our lives into that of the Savior; but the sacramental presence requires above all adoration and contemplation.³⁵

This cult is a continuation of that of the presence of God in the Old Testament. The shekina, the presence of

34 Paul VI, Encyclical Mysterium Fidei, Sept. 3, 1965, in AAS, Vol. 57, 1965, p. 771: "Insuper visitationem sanctissimi Sacramenti, in nobilissimo loco et quam honorificentissime in ecclesiis secundum leges liturgicas ad-servandi, interdum facere ne omittant, utpote quae erga Christum Dominum, in eodem praesentem, sit et grati animi argumentum et amoris pignus et debitae adorationis officium." English translation, National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service, Washington, D.C.

35 Galot, "The Theology of the Eucharistic Presence", p. 422.

God in the cloud, in the desert, the presence of Yahweh in the Temple was the center of Israelitic cult.

The visit to the Blessed Sacrament is man's response to the visit of God in the Old Testament as foreshadowed by the visit to Abraham which was the beginning of salvation history. In prophecy "visit" denoted an intervention of God in the history of Israel. The expression was used by Joseph (Gn. 50:24), Jeremiah (Jer. 29:10), and in the Psalms (Ps. 106:4-5). In the New Testament Zechariah blesses "the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and delivered his people" (Lk. 1:68), and again in Luke 7:16 as an expression of the people. After the Incarnation Mary's instinctive reaction was a visit, "And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 1:42).

6. Rosary.— The proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, in 1854, greatly increased popular devotion to Mary at this time, but the honor paid to Mary was probably at its zenith when the dogma of the Assumption was proclaimed in 1950, during the reign of Pius XII. With the aggiornamento of John XXIII and Vatican Council II, Marian devotion has been placed on a solid theological and Scriptural basis.

Hilda Graef closes her estimable work Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion with these discerning words:

Mariology follows the trend of theology as a whole, which today turns increasingly to its biblical and patristic sources in a movement of renewal and adaptation. In this the Mother of God, too, will play her part, as she has done from the beginning of Christianity, when the angel first greeted her as the new Daughter of Sion.³⁶

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy makes mention of the fact that "Holy Church honors with especial love the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, who is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son."³⁷

The recitation of the rosary is a time-honored custom in all religious houses. Mgr. Romano Guardini states forcefully:

Such and such a person may affirm that it [rosary] means nothing to him; that is his affair. But no one has the right to say that this prayer is senseless or that it is not Christian, because that would simply prove that he knows nothing of the matter.³⁸

Cardinal Suenens reminds us that we are not expected to love the rosary for its own sake, because it comforts us, or because it appeals to us but because this prayer pleases our heavenly Mother.³⁹

36 Hilda Graef, Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion: From the Reformation to the Present Day, London, Sheed and Ward, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 153.

37 Constitution, Art. 103.

38 Romano Guardini, Le Rosaire de Notre-Dame, trans. Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, Paris, Bloud et Gay, 1950, p. 22. (The translation is mine.)

39 Cf. L.J. Suenens, The Theology of the Apostolate, Cork, Mercier Press, 1954, pp. 102 ff.

For those who object that the monotony of the many repetitions in the rosary necessarily leads to routine, R. Garrigou-Lagrange has this answer:

This objection is valid only if the Rosary is said badly. If well said, it familiarizes us with the different mysteries of salvation and recalls what these mysteries should produce in our joys, our sorrows, and our hopes. Any prayer can become a matter of routine — even the Ordinary of the Mass. The reason is not that the prayers are imperfect, but that we do not say them as we should — with faith, confidence and love.⁴⁰

The devotion of the rosary, more perhaps than any other, moves the soul to childlike faith — making those who pray true children of the "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk. 1:38). Emil Neubert writes with conviction:

The recitation of the rosary above all, with the meditation upon the mysteries or even the simple mention of them, maintains true Catholics in a thoroughly supernatural atmosphere.⁴¹

Maisie Ward writes beautifully that we all seek with heart and mind to find Christ who is "the Way". "In the rosary we rejoice, sorrow and triumph with Our Lady as she walks the same path we have to walk."⁴²

From the works of the contemporary theologian, Karl Rahner, these concluding words are taken:

40 R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., The Mother of the Saviour, trans. B.J. Kelly, C.Ss.P., Dublin, Standard House (Golden Eagle Books Ltd.), 1948, p. 254.

41 Emil Neubert, Life of Union with Mary, trans. S.P. Juergens, Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing Co., 1959, p.148.

42 Maisie Ward, The Splendor of the Rosary, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1945, p. 55.

Real and authentic honouring of Mary by confident prayer to her can be a measure of our success in moving beyond a general abstract belief in God and in actually achieving the concrete reality that Christian faith signifies. Such veneration of Mary fulfils the words of Scripture: "All generations shall call me blessed."⁴³

7. Prayer for Vocation.— The Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life contains these words so significant in this time of vocation crisis.

Priests and Christian educators should make serious efforts to foster religious vocations, thereby increasing the strength of the Church, corresponding to its needs.⁴⁴

Of these "serious efforts" undoubtedly the first and foremost should be that of serious prayer. It could be set down in the Rule in a general way. Each sister should consider it a sacred duty to pray for suitable vocations to her order both privately and in willing cooperation with others in public services.

B. Personal Prayer.— A sister somehow finds time for extra prayers not of Rule. These are most informal. They are said while walking from place to place, while waiting, while doing certain kinds of work, during visits

43 Karl Rahner, Mary, Mother of the Lord, Montreal, Palm Publishers, 1963, pp. 19-20.

44 Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, proclaimed by Paul VI on Oct. 28, 1965. English translation relayed from Vatican City to the National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington.

to the Blessed Sacrament, and at all times of stress. Two personal devotions in high favor are the Way of the Cross and prayers to St. Joseph.

1. Way of the Cross.— One of the most beautiful and most ancient of all popular devotions is that of the Way of the Cross. A very plausible legend has it that the early Christians used to go over the very route taken by Jesus from the praetorium to Calvary. It became a penitential devotion so to do. The custom never died out completely even after the destruction of Jerusalem. Pilgrimages were made to the Holy Land with that express purpose, and many indulgences were granted for its performance.⁴⁵ Realizing that comparatively few persons could visit the holy places personally, Innocent XI, in 1686, granted to the Franciscans the right to erect stations in all their churches. In 1742, Benedict XIV exhorted all priests "to enrich their churches with so great a treasure."⁴⁶

It seems, nevertheless, to be losing favor these days among a certain category of modern Catholics,

⁴⁵ The earliest evidence of this is a Bull of Pius IV, July 17, 1561, confirming all previous indulgences. Herbert Thurston, Etude historique sur le chemin de la Croix, trans. A. Boudinhon, Paris, Letouzet et Ané, 1907, p. 255.

⁴⁶ G. Cyprian Alston, in The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 15, eds. Charles G. Herbermann et al., New York, Robert Appleton Co., 1912, p. 571.

particularly those who decry all prayer that is not strictly liturgical and founded on Scripture.

Most religious still consider it a suitable personal prayer for the penitential seasons and make the necessary adaptations to accord with their devotion. The intention in making the Stations is to meditate with love upon the sufferings of our Savior. They see how Jesus faces his unsurpassed trials and sufferings through his love for his Father and they try to bring something similar to pass in their own lot in life. They turn to God in sorrow and pray for the grace of true contrition.

To make the Way of the Cross correctly it suffices to make a general meditation on the Passion. It is not necessary to think of each station in turn. Therefore, those who disapprove of the stations which, though plausible, are not mentioned in the Bible, and who have an aversion for certain pictures may simply pass them by and concentrate on the stations which arouse their love and compassion.

The Way of the Cross is truly a psychological help to meditation by putting the senses to use, particularly the sight, and hence the imagination. Or, when the pictures are such that one does not care to look at them, the walking from station to station alerts the mind to the prayerful situation, providing a fresh start again and again when

attention wavers. One of the theologians of our day is eloquent in his praise:

The praying soul never fails to find something new in the Way of the Cross. Now this station speaks more persuasively, now that. Many a picture remains dumb for a long time. Awakened by some spiritual experience it suddenly begins to speak to the soul. Others with their radiant secret accompany it unaltered through the course of many years. And, more especially, anyone who accustoms himself to take his personal experiences, worrying questions and perplexities with him into the Way of the Cross, often receives undreamt-of light and unhelped-for consolation.⁴⁷

Certainly religious should reflect long and seriously before casting aside this ancient devotion.

2. Devotion to St. Joseph.— Personal prayers of sisters will no doubt include the well loved devotion to St. Joseph. In every book of "Community Prayers" are found prayers to the Guardian of virgins. With the introduction of the breviary into a community, most of these special community prayers will necessarily be dropped, nevertheless every religious will find time for personal prayers to St. Joseph even though they may be only ejaculations.

The opinion that St. Joseph is the greatest of the saints after Our Lady has been held and taught for centuries.

47 Romano Guardini, The Way of the Cross, London, Sheed and Ward, 1944, pp. 4 and 5.

Among his devotees may be counted St. Bernardine of Sienna, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Francis de Sales, St. Alphonsus Liguori and many others.

This preeminence is explained by R. Garrigou-Lagrange.

Men often choose incompetent officials for the highest posts. But those whom God Himself chooses directly and immediately to be His exceptional ministers in the work of redemption receive from Him grace proportionate to their vocation. This was the case with St. Joseph. He must have received a relative fulness of grace proportionate to his mission since he was chosen not by men nor by any creature but by God Himself and by God alone to fulfil a mission unique in the world.⁴⁸

Pope Leo XIII ascribes the transcendence of the sanctity of St. Joseph over the universality of angels and saints to his threefold mission:

- a) his sacred vocation as head of the Holy Family and later, by extension, as patron of the universal Church;
 - b) his title as husband of Mary;
 - c) his role as earthly father of the Son of God;
- the eminent reason of his distinction.⁴⁹

The founders and foundresses of religious orders have invariably shown great confidence in the intercession of St. Joseph and their spiritual daughters will wish to do

⁴⁸ Garrigou-Lagrange, The Mother of the Saviour, p. 280.

⁴⁹ Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Quamquam pluries, Aug. 15, 1889, in ASS, Vol. 22, 1889, pp. 65-69.

likewise. One can always find the time and the inclination to pray, at will, to the holy founders and foundresses as well.

Conclusion.— Personal prayer is precious to each soul, many find solace in their personal devotion to the angels and saints and this is good; but it must not be forgotten that the Church never can be by-passed. In fact, this personal relationship with Christ, this awareness of Christ-within-us enlivens our faith in Christ-with-the-Church until the end of time. At this point the words of Jean Daniélou are extremely pertinent: "A Christian spirituality that is not fundamentally oriented towards the building up of the total Mystical Body is not a Catholic spirituality."⁵⁰

II. PRAYER IN COMMON

A. Vocal Prayer in General.— Vocal prayer is expressed in words, by complete sentences, read or memorized, and recited in the presence of God; it may be individual or private, communal or public.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Jean Daniélou, The Salvation of the Nations, trans. Angeline Bouchard, London, Sheed and Ward, 1949, p. 1.

⁵¹ Lesage, Le Défi de notre foi, p. 120. (The translation is mine.)

Morning and night prayers, rosary and litanies have been the most common vocal prayers in convents. For generations these exercises have been conducive to piety and were well beloved; but now to modern youth most of them appear strange and stilted.

Today's cult of personality, the frequent urgings to be original and to develop special talents, turns many away from vocal prayer, or, at least, from prayer aloud in common. This form is found to be at times too systematic, at times too sentimental.⁵²

On this subject Bernard Häring writes:

Under no circumstances may prayer deteriorate into formalism. Christ has taught us the "Our Father" as the perfect description of our union with God. He has given us in this prayer the great themes of our dialogue with God and, at the same time, a formula for community prayer. But it was not Christ's primary intention to give us a definite prayer formula but, rather, general directions regarding the manner and content of our dialogue with God. If the primary aim of Christ's teaching on prayer had been the inflexible formula, the Holy Spirit would have prevented the evangelists from recording the "Our Father" in different words while yet retaining the same meaning (Cf. Matt. 6:9ff and Luke 11:2ff).⁵³

St. Teresa commends the use of vocal prayer as good food for the prayer of recollection: "If one prays in

52 Cf. Lesage, Le Défi de notre foi, pp. 120-121.

53 Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R., Christian Renewal in a Changing World, New York, Desclee Co., Inc., 1965, p. 290.

this way, the prayer may be only vocal, but the mind will be recollected much sooner; and this is a prayer which brings with it many blessings."⁵⁴

Franz M. Moschner has some trenchant statements regarding the necessity of vocal prayer.

It is grossly foolish to assume that vocal prayer will gradually become entirely superfluous and that essentially it is but a lesser and inferior form of prayer. As if Christ, in the Our Father, had meant to teach us something that was second-rate, not to mention His own formulated prayers. No doubt in the beginning, vocal prayer will for the most part be rather flat and uninspired, something as yet imperfect. How could it be otherwise? It is precisely through the later forms that it attains to the fulness of its own development. And it is certain that some people — possibly quite a few will, through the practice of vocal prayer, attain these later forms as well when, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, the manner of their vocal prayer is imperceptibly changed so that in this one form they gradually acquire facility in the others, until eventually all merge in exquisite harmony.⁵⁵

The value of any prayer rests in the vitality of the soul's encounter with God. The length of the prayer is irrelevant. The sincerity of St. Francis' "My God and my All" outweighs pages of sentimental outpourings. Likewise with our ejaculations. "They establish and make manifest

54 St. Teresa, Way of Perfection, p. 115.

55 Franz M. Moschner, Christian Prayer, trans. Elizabeth Plettenberg, St. Louis, Mo., Herder Book Co., 3rd ed., 1962, pp. 107-108.

a relationship between the soul and God which is never wholly interrupted."⁵⁶

B. Angelus.— The well-known words of the Angelus are fraught with meaning for those who utter them thoughtfully. According to the renowned scholar of Marian theology, René Laurentin:

The crucial moment of Mary's destiny, the goal of all that went before and the foundation of all that followed, was the moment of the Annunciation: the greatness she then acquired was of an entirely new order. She became the mother of God.⁵⁷

The recitation of the Angelus is a reminder that God became man not primarily for Mary's sake but for ours, "for us men, and for our salvation."⁵⁸

We recall at the same time that as Mary is the mother of the physical body of her Son, so is she the mother of his mystical body; therefore we as members of the Church on earth, the mystical body, are also children of Mary. At the words, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word", Mary consented to become mother of God and also of man.⁵⁹

56 Moschner, Christian Prayer, p. 123.

57 René Laurentin, Queen of Heaven, trans. Gordon Smith, London, Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1956, p. 87.

58 Nicene Creed.

59 Cf. The Spiritual Life and Prayer, trans. from the French by the Benedictines of Stanbrook, London and Leamington, Art and Book Co., 1900, pp. 371-372.

C. Meal Prayers.— In many religious houses the sisters come and go at different times for breakfast and sometimes for lunch at noon, therefore the prayers before and after those meals are entirely private.

The grace said in common should be short and in the vernacular. The laudable custom of adding the prayers for benefactors and for the Holy Souls, taken from the Preces in the breviary, could be continued quite appropriately.⁶⁰

D. Founders' Prayers.— There should be a place on the horarium for prayers especially composed by the founder for his institute. If need be, these prayers should be updated into the language of today. It might well be that such prayers are now being said weekly, monthly or yearly and it would constitute no great burden to continue so doing. Such prayers keep alive in a community the spirit of the founder.

E. Bible Services.— The Bible Services which are recommended by the Constitution on the Liturgy⁶¹ have already become a welcome and familiar feature of convent life. This practice most likely owes its success to the

60 The wording of the prayers that are taken from the breviary will change to conform with the revision of the breviary.

61 Cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Second Vatican Council, Dec. 4, 1963, Art. 35:4. English translation St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, p. 23.

vernacular psalm-singing which has such great appeal for all sisters. This is just one more reason to feel gratitude to God for the restoration of the vernacular in liturgical services, because this makes them understandable to the people who thereby cultivate a taste for them; and these para-liturgical services follow as a consequence of familiarity with the liturgy proper.

CONCLUSION

The strongest argument for private prayer is the command of our Savior: "But when you pray, go into your own room, and shut the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen, and your Father who sees what is secret will reward you" (Matt. 6:6). In a convent it may not always be possible to be in a private room with a closed door, but as long as freedom of movement is allowed, some measure of privacy can be achieved. Even when members of the community are assembled in chapel, it is possible for each sister to pray privately, provided both the matter and the manner of her prayer are left to her own decision.

The non-liturgical prayers in common have been reduced to a workable minimum so that their presence on a daily horarium, or for special occasions as the case may be, needs no defence.

PARA-LITURGICAL PRAYER

164

These words of Bishop Emmett Carter form a fitting conclusion: "Although non-liturgical piety can never take the place of the liturgy, it is still a forceful and necessary element in the life of every Christian."⁶²

⁶² Bishop Emmett Carter, "Preface", in Liturgical Renewal, [Ottawa, Canadian Catholic Conference, 1964], p. [3].

CHAPTER V

MODERN TRENDS IN SISTERS' PRAYERS

The matter of horarium was discussed with members of twelve different orders and the following information was garnered from the horaria sent in.

On all of them without exception we find the exercises which are essential to true spiritual life. Long experience has proven decisively that in these six particulars adaptations need to be made but deletion — never:

Holy Mass
Mental Prayer
Vocal Prayer
Spiritual Reading
Examination of Conscience
Visit to the Holy Sacrament
Rosary (5 decades).

In eight of these congregations the Divine Office, in part, has recently been introduced or will be in the near future. The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary is recited in two of the communities consulted. Various extra prayers, litanies and novenas are found on all the horaria.

In handling the Community Prayer Books it is immediately evident that the new editions are considerably smaller than the old ones. The long extra prayers, many litanies, set visits to the Holy Sacrament composed by saints of other years, and novenas have been suppressed.

Other prayers that formerly were said in common are now being said in private. The vernacular has replaced most of the Latin that was used.

In four of the Orders more freedom of choice is allowed in the time for the exercises.

OPINIONS OF INDIVIDUAL SISTERS

Communication with approximately two hundred members of twenty-eight different religious Orders by correspondence or conversation marks out clearly the direction of actual trends in the prayer of modern sisters.

The answers to the question "Which three of the spiritual exercises you now perform do you consider the most important?" proclaimed the supremacy of the Holy Sacrifice unanimously. The great majority of sisters placed mental prayer and spiritual reading in second and third places. Those who already have the Divine Office on their horarium placed it second in importance — a continuation of the Mass.

Approximately 25% put examination of conscience, general or particular, in third place. About 10% mentioned morning and night prayers. The rosary also has about the same number of supporters. A few mentioned the following private prayers: adoration, monthly retreat day, the Sacrament of Penance, Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, private

prayers, recreations, meals, morning offering, renewal of vows, and Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart.

The second question: "Are there any of your present spiritual exercises which you think should be deleted?" brought forth a variety of answers. As regards the sisters' ideas of welcome deletions the emphasis was laid prominently on litanies, novenas and numerous short prayers added to the regular ones. Actual complaints were made about Visits to the Blessed Sacrament written by someone else. Noon prayers would seem to be impracticable for the majority of sisters. There is a distinct trend in favor of deleting the morning and night prayers now being said and reciting instead the Divine Office, twice a day in common; the Minor Hours and all other prayers would be said in private. The taking of the discipline and the chapter of faults are generally considered to have outlived their usefulness. No sister now advocates public spiritual reading.

As seen in the light of personal experience, conversations with sisters, answers to questionnaires, and the works of modern authors, the trend today is toward great changes and adaptations in religious life. To the question "What changes, if any, would you favor in your daily prayers?", less than 20% answered "None". Of these more than 50% stated that it was because changes had already been made, some were undecided and a few did not make any

statement.

It would seem that the sisters are overwhelmingly in favor of having the Divine Office in the vernacular. Those who have been saying the Office for a year or more are extremely well pleased with it, those who do not have it are desirous of its adoption as soon as possible. Those who still have parts of it in Latin are anxious to have it all in English; one only wrote in favor of Latin. Every sister who wrote from a convent where the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary is still being chanted, expressed the wish that it be suppressed and the Divine Office introduced. These sisters have been greatly motivated by their increasing familiarity with the Bible, particularly with the Psalms. We must also take into account the psychological need for variety — in prayer as in all else.

The modern tendency would seem to lead away from a multiplicity of vocal prayers said in common towards personal prayer, even community prayers, said in private.

There is a great cry for freedom of time and place for exercises. The reiterated wish is that Superiors should see to it that a sister has sufficient time for her prayer, then each one should be left responsible for her own.

Everyone recognizes the essential value of mental prayer and there is a strong demand that the time given to

it be not shortened. Sufficient thought must be given to the not unsurmountable problem that Lauds will probably take more time than the former morning prayers.

Many request that Mass be offered at a later hour. Sister students, especially, have become accustomed to afternoon Mass and quite easily and satisfactorily come to center their day upon it thus.

There is a growing popular demand that the time for spiritual reading be gauged by the week rather than by the day.

Nearly everyone speaks of the rosary but only one expressed a wish to continue saying it as a public, common prayer. The consensus of opinion is that it should not be said in common, that the time and place be the choice of each sister. That it be of recommendation rather than of obligation is also called for by some.

Those who did mention meal prayers have three requests: that the prayers be shortened, that they be varied according to the season, and that the vernacular be used exclusively.

Comparatively few have requested Revision of Life; it could be that many have never heard of it. Those who do recommend it highly have spent a good deal of time studying the matter at some depth.

In those congregations where a "free day" has been introduced, the sisters are enthusiastic in their approval. This means that on the free day the only prayer in common is the sacrifice of the Mass.

There is a definite leaning toward liturgical prayers and Bible celebrations; since the time of prayer is now sufficiently lengthy, the curtailment of present devotions would necessarily follow in consequence of following the biblical trend.

The indubitable conclusion is that modern sisters would prefer to have Holy Mass, Lauds and Vespers (or Compline) in common and all other prayers in private.

1. Holy Mass.— Since the beginning of convent life, we have proof from the biographies of various nuns that they have always desired liturgical participation in the Mass, the center of all liturgical life. No proof is forthcoming that any of them found active participation objectionable. Again we may take St. Teresa as an example. R.P. Marie-Eugene de l'Enfant Jésus, first Definitor in the General Council of Discalced Carmelites in Rome and a foremost authority on Teresian spirituality, assures us that "She desired for her daughters that their participation in the Holy Sacrifice be as active as possible."¹

¹ P. Marie-Eugene, I Want to See God: A Practical Synthesis of Carmelite Spirituality, Vol. 1, trans. Sr. M. Verda Clare, Notre Dame, Fides Publishers, 1963, p. 191.

To stress his point, M. Eugene quotes the words of the Venerable Ana de Jesus:

She [Saint Teresa] wanted us to participate always in the celebration of the Mass and sought out ways by which we could do this every day, even if it were in the same tone in which we recited the Hours. And if now and then this was impossible, for lack of a suitable chaplain, or because we were so few (for we were not more than thirteen), she used to say that it grieved her that we were deprived of that good.²

The modern sister carries on the noble tradition. Without exception every sister contacted expressed in decisive terms her realization that the Sacrifice of the Mass is the focal point of her day. Moreover, like Saint Teresa, all expressed willingness, even eagerness, to participate as fully as possible in its liturgical celebration, according to the mind of the Church.

2. Mental Prayer.— It is significant that of the 163 sisters who placed mental prayer as one of their three most important spiritual exercises only 14 called it "mental prayer", or in French "oraison", only two said "contemplation", while the remainder, in either language, named it "meditation". It would seem that training in prayer usually stops at the first stage. Without doubt

² P. Marie-Eugene, I Want to See God, quoted from Ribera, Vida de Santa Teresa de Jesus, Barcelona, 1908, p. 633.

many sisters advance to higher stages but, somehow, are averse to using any other word than "meditation".

One sister is quite explicit on this point:

Private mental prayer, as is our meditation period, helps to keep my personal contact with my Spouse in mind. I mention this in particular because I resent (at least find unpalatable) those ideas of constant communal liturgies as though worship is not made up of individual contribution...

The ideas of many are embodied in the words of the following quotation: "Mental prayer fosters that intimacy with Christ which gives meaning to all we do. It is indispensable."

One view point is that the active life is vivified by contemplation which continues in the work of the day. Another expression used was "foundation of our day — our life."

One young sister holds that only contemplation "can form us in the spirit of the Gospel which we profess to practise." She believes that favorable conditions of time and place are necessary for any successful outcome of this prayer.

Other terms used to illustrate contemplation were "orientation of the day with Christ, in Christ and for Christ", "vital to every religious soul who means to radiate Christ in the apostolate"; "personal encounter — spiritual union" and "sort of a clearing house in the spiritual life of a sister." "In the directing of our

lives towards our goal and in regard to our apostolate it might be considered the steering wheel."

A sister writes "Mental prayer is our confrontation with God, our personal meeting with Him as only we can meet Him, individually." Then she asks thoughtfully: "Without the I-Thou relationship how can there be any spirituality?"

A teacher of Religion puts it this way:

Contemplation is an exchange of love with the Blessed Trinity; it is one of the most necessary means to realize our union with God here on earth.

Another teacher explains her thoughts on mental prayer thus:

The separation between mental and liturgical prayer is only apparent. The soul of a religious grows in power to love and to give herself through the liturgy and through her apostolate by means of mental prayer. It is through mental prayer that a religious learns to "pray without ceasing", i.e., to live a life of prayer in the midst of activity.

Of the larger number who wrote of meditation only a few can be quoted here but they are representative of the whole.

Meditation cannot be forced. Individuals should receive a thorough grounding in the different forms of meditation and meditative reading in the novitiate and this prayer should continue to be encouraged throughout their lives.

The following is a sample of the many who consider dialogue, study and examination of conscience to be steps of a method for meditation.

During meditation you have the opportunity to dialogue with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to learn all you can of the life of Our Blessed Lord, what He is asking of and expecting of you, as a religious, and how you are measuring up to these expectations.

A large proportion of the sisters assumed that meditation would always be in the morning before Mass, such as:

It is at that time that the soul is in communion with God. It is here one receives the graces to go forward to one's duties with confidence and courage knowing that it is God and not ourselves who is doing the work. The meditation is an excellent preparation for the Mass and the Eucharist. Through reading, reflection, aspirations, and thanksgiving, one's soul is better prepared to receive the graces God has for it.

One, however, is preparing for eternity: "Meditation whereby gradually we learn to prepare our soul eventually to be able to attain the Beatific Vision."

As regards the subject matter for meditation several sisters expressed preference for a point taken from the gospel of the day or something at least connected with the Mass.

The following quotation reiterates the idea of "Pray always".

Mental Prayer I consider to be of first importance. But I would like to qualify this by saying that Mental Prayer cannot be restricted or limited to one-half or an hour period in the morning. There must be a "spirit of prayer" or still better, the interpersonal relationship between the individual and his God, which dominates the thoughts of the day.

The following quotation is typical of the majority.

Without meditation our prayer life would fall apart as it must form the basis of our spiritual life. In this conversation with God in the quiet and peace of one's own soul, all activities, aspirations, difficulties and facilities are brought together and put in focus which brings a unity and integration to our life.

It is possible that the sister-cook who wrote the following lines is enjoying contemplation.

It seems to me we cannot live without meditation. We are otherwise so busy about many things but during meditation we can at least sit down for a while and just simply love and remember that we are being loved. It is also a time to recall what we are here for, how we ought to live as good religious.

The trend toward freedom in the choice of time and place for spiritual exercises is very evident from remarks added to the words on meditation. The first quotation to be given regards the length of time as well: "Let us have mental prayer when and where we wish; forty-five minutes instead of the hour we now have."

Some rebel against routine, for example:

I believe that Meditation would be more fruitful if made in the outdoors, sometimes; or other places than in the chapel, (same place, same station, same neighbours) in the same uncomfortable pew.

The chief objections, often repeated, are to meditation made in the early morning, before breakfast and with a group. On the other hand a few ask for the retention, or in some cases, the adoption of two periods of meditation —

morning and evening.

On the whole the desire is for a time or times convenient for the individual, depending on the work she is doing and the house she lives in. A few sisters are in favor of written meditation, at least once a week.

3. Vocal Prayer.— The opinions of sisters about the Divine Office, the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Rising Prayer, the Angelus, Meal Prayers, Hour Prayers, Renewal of Vows and prayer for vocations will be examined in this section.

They are all vocal prayers because they are "expressed in words, by complete sentences, read or memorized, and recited in the presence of God."³ Some of the above exercises are "individual or private", some are "communal or public".⁴

One sister itemizes the vocal prayers she would wish her community to say. Her requests are indicative of the general trend.

I think we should say Lauds and Vespers in common; Compline in private; a grace before and after meals, weekly Act of Consecration to Blessed Virgin, and prayer to St. Joseph, monthly renewal of vows, and Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart, all in common after Vespers on the day prescribed. Any other prayers should be in private and at the option of the individual Sister as far as time is concerned...

³ Lesage, Le Défi de notre foi, p. 120.

⁴ Ibid.

The most striking note is sounded by the widespread demand for the adoption of the Divine Office, at least in part. This conclusion is substantiated to a certain degree by the following quotations:

I would like to go with the Church and pray the Office: Lauds for morning prayer, Vespers and Compline for evening prayer.

Another sister specifies:

That Vespers be said as Night Prayers in common, and Compline, in private, on retiring.

One sister cherishes the traditional morning and night prayers:

Our morning prayers are the beautiful, simple prayers, — the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, Angelus, Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity, Veni Creator, and Psalm 129 for our deceased Sisters. This starting the day with prayer in common gives us a good "community" sense which gives added meaning to the prayer and work of the day.

The reason given for the adoption of the Divine Office is: "I would like to see our daily prayers based on the pattern of the official prayers of the Church."

The Short Breviary has its supporters as witness:

I would like the Divine Office. Even though said in its "short" form, this is the prayer of the Church and as such is a liturgical act, performed in union with all the brothers of Christ, the praying Church.

It is evident that study of the Old Testament, especially of the Psalms is responsible for this trend.

Let us adopt the Divine Office. By it the mind and the soul learn what God has done for his people.

Praying the Psalms seems to me to be the best way of asking for God's mercy.

Some references were made to chanting, this quotation contains the substance of them all.

We now chant the Office. We use the Little Hours of Our Lady. I would prefer to chant the Divine Office in English. It could be modified by some form of notation and thus be adapted to fit our shorter periods of Office, while at the same time we would enjoy the variety and richness of liturgical emphasis.

Several congregations are weighing the value of changing from the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin to the Roman Breviary, since the former is "unrelated to the central focus of our spirituality."

We are contemplating a change from the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin to three Hours of the Divine Office in English. Most of us feel that this change will unite us more closely with the public prayer of the Church.

It seems that action is to be expected soon in some places: "These points have already been given consideration by our General Council, and they have already made a move toward change."

The change is evidently linked up with the permissive use of the vernacular as in each case the use of English is specifically stated. One sister puts it succinctly: "The use of the Divine Office adapted to our active life; the use of English exclusively."

Another sister would dispense with Latin entirely: "I would favour the few prayers now being said in Latin, to

be said in English."

In conversation also, sisters freely admit that their interest in the Divine Office stems from the fact that the vernacular is now permitted. The general insistence is expressed in the words of one middle-aged sister: "English, as soon as the books are available."

In fact the desire for English exclusively is reiterated nearly every time any Breviary or Book of Hours is mentioned, whether the demand is for the use of the complete breviary or for a shortened form, possibly better suited to the active life.

In this period of transition the following Office Books are being used experimentally:

1) A Short Breviary⁵ contains:

- a) The Psalter. The Hours contained in this book are simplified by abbreviation but close harmony is held with the essential organic structure of the Roman Breviary.
- b) Common of Feasts.
- c) Proper of the Season.
- d) Proper of Saints with the first class feasts and some of the more important second class feasts.
- e) Chant melodies for the psalms and melodies for the hymns.

⁵ St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 3rd ed., 1962.

Those sisters who use it, in whole or in part, are extremely well pleased with it.

2) Lauds, Vespers, Compline. This is excerpted from The Hours of the Divine Office in English and Latin.⁶

It has the appeal of being, for those three Hours, the authentical "prayer of the Church". For those communities who wish to recite only three Hours it is a complete and manageable book.

3) The Book of Hours.⁷ The Preface points out that "this is not the Breviary, and is not meant to substitute for it." It is shorter and simpler than the Breviary, but has everything that is essential to the liturgical prayer as demanded in the Constitution on the Liturgy.

The one Order, among the ten consulted, using this book expresses complete satisfaction with it.

4) The Roman Breviary, an approved English translation in one volume, from the official text, authorized by the Holy See.⁸

Private Prayer.— The two quotations below are typical of many answers on "Private Prayer".

6 Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1965.

7 Benedictine Monks of Encalcat Abbey (Latin-English), Editions d'Encalcat, Douragne-Tarn, France, 1956.

8 New York, Benziger Brothers, 1964.

I consider of great importance our own private prayers, not those from books or pamphlets, but those from our hearts.

And

Private prayer - meditation - I feel is the means by which one fulfils one's religious vocation which essentially is contact with God through prayer. Work may be prayer as those who consider private prayer of secondary importance contend, but there is no substitute for private prayer in the life of a religious based on faith. "The drift of pinions does beat at our clay shuttered door" but we harken to it only in the solitude of our prayer.

Angelus.— Few sisters mentioned the Angelus in their written answers but the question was purposely and frequently put orally. The responses were ever similar in content and in warmth of expression. The following written comment seems to echo the feelings of all.

Of course I would not want the deletion of the Angelus, or at Easter time of the Regina Coeli, This traditional triple reminder of Our Mother's part in our salvation fills a felt need in our day. The recollection, even momentary, of her virtues, and the trust in her care for us, results in a feeling of peace.

Even those sisters who justifiably claim that noon prayers are a burden will accept as reasonable and will even welcome the recitation of the Angelus, in private if need be.

Rosary.— The rosary is well loved. Perhaps because it is a link with the earliest happy memories of childish piety. The first quotation uses a keyword which

was frequently repeated, "comfort".

There is comfort in saying the Rosary. I always feel that Our Blessed Mother cares for those who honor her through the Rosary.

Similar sentiments in different words:

The rosary keeps me close to Mary, and together with her Son I feel able to face the ups and downs of each day.

Others give reasons for their devotion which can be summed up as in the following:

Needless to say, if we truly love Our Spouse to whom we've given all, we shall likewise love His Mother — Our Mother to whom, in most cases, we owe our vocation — at least, without whose help none of us would have persevered; nor shall any of us persevere until the end without her. The Rosary, being Our Mother's preferred prayer, should indeed prove an honor and a duty for each religious.

The recitation of fifteen decades daily, however, is felt to be too long.

We recite the complete Rosary — I must say that this recitation of three rosaries every day is one of great routine and distraction. One rosary a day and well said (if possible) would be enough.

Objections have been made, not to the rosary itself, but to the manner in which it is now said.

I feel I would benefit greatly from recitation of the Rosary if I were free to perform this exercise alone, when I have the proper dispositions. As we have it now, it has become a mechanical operation, and due mainly to the manner in which it is recited (very slowly), it becomes more a burden than a means of sanctification.

The "comfort" of the rosary is evidently not obtained when it is recited in common.

I would like to have the Rosary said in private. In community many times the rosary is said in such a way that it is a real crucifixion. Whereas, I know we should accept these crosses and "offer them up", I do not think that this is ideal.

Meal Prayers.— Few sisters mentioned meal prayers beyond including them in the vocal prayers to be said in common once or twice a day. The same two reforms were called for in every case: "The prayers said before and after meals would be more meaningful if said in English"; and "Grace before and after meals could be simplified."

Hour Prayer.— Nearly every Order has its own particular Hour Prayer. The only objection made was that it is difficult if not impossible, to remember to say it unless one hears a striking clock. No one suggested deletion here, but a very short prayer seems called for.

Renewal of Vows.— The pious and time-honored custom of renewing one's perpetual vows seems to be prevalent in most Orders today. Members of twenty-one different Orders were questioned on this point and only two answered negatively.

When St. Ignatius of Loyola and his six companions pronounced their perpetual vows at the Mount of the Martyrs, it was understood that, while they remained in Paris, they would renew their vows of 1534 every year on

August fifteenth.⁹ This was done and was conducive to such spiritual benefit that later Ignatius prescribed this custom in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus.

For increasing devotion, and for stirring the memory of the obligation by which they committed themselves to God, and for a greater strengthening of the students in their vocation, twice each year, namely on the feasts of the Resurrection and the Nativity, it would be most fitting to renew those simple vows [...].¹⁰

The Jesuits do not publicly renew their vows after final profession as do most Orders but the reasons why it is well to do so, as given, by St. Ignatius are still valid today and this explains the wish of many sisters to continue the practice, at least once a year, even after perpetual vows.

The sister, quoted below, would like to renew vows more frequently than is usually done.

The renewal of vows could be made on great feasts such as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, as well as on one day (possibly the 25th) of each month. These renewals should be in common when possible.

⁹ Paul Dudon, Saint Ignace de Loyola, 3rd., Paris, Gabriel Beauchesne, 1934, p. 211.

¹⁰ From the Constitutiones Societatis Jesu, Pars IV, Caput IV, De Scholasticis Admissis Conservandis: "Ad devotionis augmentum, et ad excitandum qua Deo obstricti sunt obligationis memoriam, et ad moriorem studentium in sua vocatione confirmationem, bis annis singulis, in festis videlicet Resurrectionis ac Nativitatis, simplicia vota, quae iuxta formulam in quinta Parte, Capite quarto, dicendam, emiserunt, congruum erit renovare. Et, qui ea non emisisset, exacto biennio probationis, ut in Examine proponitur, emittet." (The translation is mine.)

The alarming decrease in the number of vocations to the religious life calls forth requests such as: "Something more specific in our Community prayers for vocations."

This is in keeping with the Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life; though neither private nor common prayer is specified there.¹¹

This area of vocal prayer called forth more comments than any other, especially as regards deletion.

The following quote would seem to discard the Community Prayer Book entirely:

Our community prayers lack depth, are monotonous and express sentiments often not my own, therefore I am speaking untruths. They are poorly composed lacking unity and emphasizing what we will get. They contain too many intentions, too many wearisome novenas. Let us make the Eucharistic Sacrifice THE PRAYER of the day, with the Office and Spiritual Reading to increase our love of it. For those attached to the prayer book there should be some consideration; let it be optional, but used in private prayer only.

Several sisters complain of monotony. A sample of such follows:

Delete much of the vocal prayer said morning, noon, and night. The Rosary in common, Visit to the Blessed Sacrament as we have it. Monotony! The Office would bring fresh inspiration each day — each season.

¹¹ Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, Art. 25. See above Chapter IV, p. 153.

Petitions for the deletions named below were often repeated.

- 1) The litanies of Our Blessed Mother at evening prayers, and a too numerous series of invocations and novenas.
- 2) The Seven Dolours Beads, because this type of prayer originated as a substitute for the office, but since we now recite the Office, these substitutes seem unnecessary.
- 3) All litanies, because these ancient forms of repetitious prayers, familiar to Eastern peoples, are meaningless for the Western mind.
- 4) Our "Visits to Blessed Sacrament" could be deleted and replaced by private ones — the language is obsolete and they quickly become very routine. The Steps of the Passion and the Holy Childhood could also be deleted.

There is a feeling of impatience with regard to the prayers to numerous patron saints, as expressed here:

I do not hesitate to ask for the deletion of devotional prayers to various saints; these repetitious prayers prolong and multiply religious exercises and most of the time do not coincide with the aspirations of the group. I believe, too, that the community should change now with the Church, even before the next General Chapter.

Others call multiplication of prayers, especially the ones said in common, a meaningless routine.

The Rosary, litanies to St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, Psalm 129 fifteen times a week, and extra Our Father's and Hail Mary's for various intentions could all be deleted as a multiplication of "prayers" which it is impossible to pray. This multiplication strengthens the habit of going through the motions without personal attention.

The routine idea is stressed by mention of the bells.

I still think we have far too many prayers in common. Once each day should be sufficient. We are still running with bells.

Others again choose to delete some but keep some, such as:

No obligatory Novenas for Patrons of the Institute... keep Novenas in preparation for Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, possibly in preparation for the Feast of the special Patroness of Our Institute.

Substitution rather than deletion is asked for in this suggestion:

Rising prayers would, perhaps, be more fervent if you said your own instead of set ones.

The practice of public thanksgiving after Mass is being revised. The sister who wrote: "No obligatory thanksgiving after Mass and never a public one" is probably taking literally the words of the priest "Go, the Mass is ended". Though the traditional fifteen minutes might be pleasant and comforting indeed, they would not be obligatory. It is usually the case in the early morning that other duties are pressing. The above also contains another indication of the trend from public to private prayer.

There is a strong plea from teachers that the sisters at summer school should have their spiritual exercises reduced to the minimum. A suggestion is for "Meditation, Mass, examen, night visit."

There are sisters who, with good reason, take objection to the wording of some prayers:

Anything that starts out with "Sweet Jesus" bothers me. Even the renewal of vows loses its meaning because it is preceded, in our community, by the sentimental Act of Consecration to the Infant Jesus. There is hardly room in the Community Prayer Book of a Missionary Order for such words as "sweet".

Many will agree with the sister of the joyful spirit who protests against overly mournful prayers.

Possibly it is my temperament that revolts at so very much mention of crosses, sacrifices and penance as compared with practically no mention of joys, delights, genuine gratitude for the beautiful and humanly appreciable gifts of a loving God. I find it very irksome and unfair that most stock prayers and books picture our loving God as a God of vengeance by having Him demand retributions and a slavish service instead of the happily grateful and dependent love of children.

4. Spiritual Reading.— Faith needs to be nourished by the knowledge of revealed truth in order to be strong and sound. Moreover, love of God increases as revealed truth is clarified. Evidently, therefore, mental prayer needs spiritual reading at all stages; it needs the growth in knowledge and the continuing clarification of revelation which comes from reading solid and inspiring spiritual books and authorized commentaries.

Some typical remarks show that sisters do indeed see the value of spiritual reading, for instance: "Spiritual reading helps me to know God better."

Scripture reading is emphasized:

Scripture has everything, inspiration and exhortation — it speaks to you, asks a response. It feeds the soul. It is God's Word in history.

And "In fact, in reading Scripture, especially the Psalms, prayer and reading become one."

A young sister of twenty years writes:

Spiritual reading is of great importance to me, especially if it is done meditatively. This is an irreplaceable way for me to get in truly close touch with Christ; to get to know him and myself, and my relation with him and my neighbour. This is the way to personal holiness.

Many sisters claim spiritual reading to be the outstanding means of closer union with Christ. The following excerpt is one of many such.

Spiritual reading is often a form of meditation. It helps to keep my soul alive and active in its desire for closer union with Christ.

In the quotation below, the sister considers her reading from every facet, and her words are characteristic of the majority of comments.

Spiritual reading is food for mental prayer, which in turn, prepares one to offer the Mass. Many times spiritual reading becomes mental prayer when one mulls over insights received. I do not consider the quantity of reading important. The object of this exercise is union with God.

Spiritual reading in common is certainly in disfavor. Not a word was said or written in its defence, while all comments were of the pattern of the following:

I feel that spiritual reading in common could be deleted but not spiritual reading. This, I feel, is almost as necessary as the Mass. When reading is done in common, it is almost necessary to finish a book once it has been begun even if it is not worth while. If done in private, each one could do reading suitable to her needs and her taste.

One sister was quite emphatic.

Public Spiritual Reading is obsolete, it was introduced into communities when lay Brothers and lay Sisters couldn't read.

The last quotation in this class is indicative of a growing trend.

Spiritual Reading (20 minutes daily obligatory at present) could be deleted from daily prayers, and some stipulation made as to an approximate amount a week.

5. Examination of Conscience.— During the time assigned for general examination of conscience one casts a backward glance over the past twenty-four hours and reviews the thoughts, words, actions and omissions of the day in the light of the vows and promises made in religious life. With the help of the Holy Spirit one hopes to see one's shortcomings and, with the help of divine grace, take measures to overcome them. This exercise is of such practical value that no sister doubts its necessity.

The particular examen which scrutinizes one particular fault or the practice of one particular virtue still has supporters as the following quotation, from a sister aged twenty-two, proves.

I think Particular Examen is important because we can really learn to know ourselves and take steps to overcome our weaknesses and to direct our good qualities in the best manner for the love of God and not for self glorification.

A sister who is sixty years of age and has spent more than thirty years in the convent has a different idea of the use of examen: "I would cite examen of conscience as important because at that time we think again of our morning meditation resolution."

Invariably, the thread of thought running through the writing of the younger sisters is "correct a fault or practise a virtue"; for the older sisters it is "How have I kept my morning resolution?"

One sister expresses it rather well as: "... a personal, private effort to advance in perfection." She believes that she should be quite free in the doing, that is, a moment's recollection several times a day or a few minutes in succession, or just weekly, as she chooses; she should mark examen or not as it is more helpful.

Nevertheless, in the answers to the question on deletions, that of particular examen at noon is more often advocated than its retention. The reasons given might be reduced to these two. "Noon prayers are too onerous; they must be "sandwiched in" between classes or other duties."

Noon prayers are a burden to sisters engaged in an active apostolate. I think particular examen could be made at the time of the general examen during Compline.

The second reason rejects examen on principle.

Not that I am attempting to minimize the concept of sin, but I think we could delete the Particular Examen. If we got rid of our legalistic, sin-conscious conscience and replaced it with an interpersonal-relationship approach to God, then the moral virtues would automatically develop because our relationship to God would be rightly ordered.

6. Visit to the Holy Sacrament.— Some of the Orders consulted have half an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, others have more informal visits of approximately ten to fifteen minutes; hence the two names adoration or visit, for the same spiritual exercise. In the cases quoted the prayer meant is of a private nature.

Adoration — The goal, the highest perfection of religion consists in persevering in prayer and in so far as human nature will allow, in preserving peace of soul and purity of heart. Towards so precious a goal as this all our bodily energies and spiritual desires should tend, for the relationship of prayer to perfection is extremely close and necessary. Every edifice of virtue is built only for the attainment of the perfection of prayer and unless it reaches that unity by which all its parts are interrelated, it will have no solidity or endurance. Without the virtues, the acquisition of peaceful and continual prayer is impossible; without prayer, the virtues will never attain to their perfection. — All this will be attained if sought before Jesus at prayer during Adoration.

Many will agree with the sister who calls a visit to the Blessed Sacrament "the pause that refreshes our spiritual thirst."

The time of private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament affords an opportunity to pray after the experience of the day, to ask God to compensate those whom we have injured in any way during the day and to enlighten us how to serve Him better the following day.

The universal attitude would seem to be that, excluding the Mass, this personal contact with Christ present in the Holy Eucharist can do more good than any other exercise. There is, however, an urgent request for freedom at this given time for personal prayer.

The fact is that some work time-tables do not leave sufficient time for prayer. In the following complaint it is possible that the fault lies elsewhere than with the prayer horarium.

We have one half hour daily Adoration. Sometimes it is almost impossible to get this in during the day. When evening comes one is so tired one gets nothing out of this period.

7. Other Exercises.— Sisters, on the whole, acknowledge that the reception of the Sacrament of Penance, well prepared and well made, is a powerful means of perfection. There is, at the same time, some disagreement about the necessity of weekly Confession. As for example:

I don't think we should have to go to Confession every week, even if it is only to receive the priest's blessing.

But, the wording of the pertinent canon of the Code of Canon Law is:

It is the obligation of the superiors to see to it that all subjects have the opportunity to go to Confession at least once a week.¹²

Some sisters would favor a change which would, however, still be in accordance with canons 592¹³ and 125, 1^o.¹⁴ The former is to the effect that religious women should be guided by the same rule as clerics. The personal obligation of Confession in c. 125, 1^o is described as frequenter, that is frequently. This has obviously and necessarily a relative implication.

A generally acceptable commentary puts it thus: "Frequent confession is prescribed without any exact determination of the interval."¹⁵

The bi-monthly spiritual conference when given by a well-qualified priest is highly regarded. The obligation for such is expressed by canon 509, § 2 of the Code of Canon Law.

12 Codex Juris Canonici, 595: "Curent superiores ut omnes religiosi: [...] 3^o Ad poenitentiae sacramentum semel saltem in hebdomada accidant."

13 Ibid., 592: "Obligationibus communibus clericorum, de quibus in can. 124-142, etiam religiosi omnes tenentur, nisi ex contextu sermonis vel ex rei natura aliud constet."

14 Ibid., 125, 1^o: "Ut clerici omnes poenitentiae sacramento frequenter conscientiae maculas eluant."

15 T.L. Bouscaren and A.C. Ellis, Canon Law: A Text and Commentary, 3rd revised ed., Milwaukee, Bruce Publishing Co., 1957, p. 105.

At least twice a month, the local superior shall see to it that a pious exhortation be given to all the religious of the house [...].¹⁶

The Code does not specify whether the superior herself, another qualified sister, or a priest, should impart this pious exhortation. Experience has proved that, under certain circumstances, any of the three may be effective. Nevertheless, it is obvious that, at least once a month, a speaker from outside the convent would be preferable.

The monthly day of recollection in complete silence still has strong approbation, though a few voices are raised in favor of some discussion period.

Apparently the traditional annual retreat is in need of revision. The suggestions received are similar to these two:

1. The annual eight to ten day retreat could be replaced by triduums of recollection; with two or three of these each year.
2. Let us forget the traditional style retreat and organize spiritual discussion groups under the direction of an experienced priest. These would be readily applicable to our lives.

Bible Services are being very well accepted and suggestions have come in that they be held regularly on the eves of certain feasts. As was to be expected, the feasts mentioned differed from Order to Order.

¹⁶ Canon 509: "Curent Superiores locales: [...]
§ 2. Ut saltem bis in mense... pia ad omnes de familia exhortatio." (Translation L. Fanfani and K. O'Rourke, in *Canon Law for Religious Women*, Dubuque, Priory, 1961, p.64-65.)

The following comment introduces the idea of substitution:

Bible Vigils sometimes replace regular spiritual reading and I find this a help in preparing for special feasts.

The taking of the discipline was mentioned repeatedly with the one purpose only — to recommend very bluntly its disuse.

The reason below was the only one given.

The discipline is a penance but those sent by God, such as misunderstandings, loss of friends, bad weather, etc. are a greater penance.

That the chapter of faults also be dispensed with was advised by many.

The sister who wrote the following had no doubts and her certainty is a reflection of the general opinion. "I can see no good at all in the way we conduct the Chapter of Faults."

One sister suggested rather that there were different ways of improving the manner of holding the chapter of faults.

The Chapter of Faults could be held in two or three ways; the variation would prevent routine. a) It could be in the form of a "Penitential Celebration". b) It could be according to the manner of "Revision of Life" but in a way adapted to a greater number than that demanded by the Revision of Life — because I do not believe that it is for the good of the unity of a Community to divide the religious into groups according, for example, to the kind of apostolic work they are doing. The beauty of unity is its diversity.

8. Options.— With the answers concerning deletions some sisters added timely remarks on freedom and responsibility. They feel that non-liturgical prayers intended to be said going through the house, on rising and retiring, litanies, Stations, novenas and specific adoration prayers before and after meals should be optional instead of obligatory in order to give more freedom to individuals. It is generally held that, given more responsibility, sisters will become more mature.

One sister thus states her conviction:

I believe that by deleting the endless "private prayers said in a group" we will emphasize the importance of prayers designed for community performance. I truly believe that it would give me an intensified realization that perfection is a personal responsibility; and I, like most human beings, thrive on being entrusted — really entrusted — with such a challenge.

As if in answer to the above, another sister has written from experience:

By the horarium in our community is meant the different Hours of Divine Office. If any of these Hours were deleted I do feel that my spiritual life would be adversely affected, especially since our Office is a continuation of living our Mass.

We have deleted such daily prayers in common in the past year as: community rosary, Benediction, litany to St. Joseph, and prayers for vocations. A new freedom is experienced by all since these were dropped.

In this day of radio and television, of multiple meetings and reunions, the cry for a flexible time-table gets louder, as witness:

Our horarium has already been notably changed. I wish, though, that it could be made more flexible. For instance, instead of having to make exercises in private to allow time later for a reunion of some sort, or for a particular program on radio or television, and thus find oneself apart from the community, let the hour of the exercises be adapted to the events of the day — as much as possible.

Warding off drowsiness is a problem which calls forth several solutions, according to varying personalities, and sisters think that they should be allowed some choice in the matter of time and place, in which they are most alert mentally and physically, for spiritual exercises.

Some say that coffee before meditation would be sufficient to keep them awake; others feel that after breakfast is a better time to meditate; still others would prefer meditation deferred until afternoon. There is strong objection to placing the time of spiritual reading almost directly after a meal for the same physical reason that it is difficult to fight against drowsiness.

An older sister declares her wishes in this manner:

The older I get, the more I rebel against that constant herding of one and all for spiritual exercises. We must, by all means, have some community prayer, but must rosary, spiritual reading, yes, even all the Hours of the Divine Office be said in common? I believe also that I would receive more merit if they were not, because then I would choose, I would be responsible for them; I am not a sheep herded to pasture.

No one asked that the time for prayers be lengthened but the following is a sample of the wish expressed by a

few:

I would feel very disappointed if the time spent on common spiritual exercises were lengthened. If the time could be shortened, I think it would be helpful.

The general feeling is that some vocal non-liturgical prayers could be incorporated into the Mass, while others are already in the Divine Office; for example, the prayers for superiors, families, for benefactors and for the holy souls. They need not be repeated.

A last comment sounds a warning which deserves attention.

I sometimes wonder if the effort to make spiritual exercises "satisfying" can lead to another error of thinking only of what we get out of them instead of what we give to God. I think the mind tends to be nurtured more by modern spirituality, as I know it, and this is good, but the fact that prayer must be at moments, and even for long stretches of time, a sheer act of the will, and as such most meritorious, cannot be lost sight of.

9. Against the Trend.— The following three quotations are the only ones of their kind. They represent, in each case, a minority of one against the large majority. Their uniqueness demonstrates clearly that they are against the modern trend.

- 1) Less private praying and more prayer in common.
- 2) We have changed from Latin to the vernacular in saying Office but personally the change does not appeal to me as I feel much more united to the prayer of the universal Church when using Latin.

3) I do not like the current talk of having Mass late in the day, meditation later.

10. Spirit of Prayer.— It was to be expected that many sisters would be more solicitous for the spirit of prayer than for the horarium itself. The quotation below is an excellent summary of their views:

To resume, stress the quality of the spiritual exercises rather than the quantity; and give preference to liturgical prayer over private prayer and devotions.

CONCLUSION

There would seem to be no better way of concluding these quotations than by summarizing briefly the comments sent in by sisters from convents where changes have already been made.

In each case where there was a change-over to the Divine Office, the result is entirely satisfactory. Even those who admit to reluctance at the beginning now acknowledge that the change was beneficial. Approval is similarly evidenced in those convents where the sisters have been made personally responsible for meditation, spiritual reading and rosary.

The remarks of sisters, however varied they may be, give conclusive evidence that the teachings of Pope Pius XII, of Pope John XXIII and our present Holy Father are now being taken seriously. It can be said with certitude that

the religious involved are conscientiously following the Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, especially taking to heart the words:

Members of Religious Communities should resolutely cultivate both the spirit and practice of prayer. In the first place they should have recourse daily to the Holy Scriptures in order that by reading and meditating on Holy Writ, they may learn "the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8).¹⁷

¹⁷ Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, Art. 6.

CHAPTER VI

SUGGESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY PRAYERS

Research work on the prayer of modern sisters has led to definite convictions about what constitutes an appropriate horarium of prayers for sisters in the active apostolate. On this horarium the time devoted to prayer daily, including the Holy Sacrifice, would approximate two hours and a quarter to two hours and a half.

The spiritual exercises would comprise:

I. Of Rule:

1. The Eucharistic Sacrifice
2. The Divine Office
3. Mental Prayer
4. Vocal Prayer
5. Spiritual Reading
6. Examination of Conscience

II. Popular Devotions:

1. Way of the Cross
2. Bible Services
3. General

I. EXERCISES OF RULE

1. The Eucharistic Sacrifice.— Indubitably the Sacrifice of the Mass has ever been the hub in the wheel of religious life. One of the aims of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is "to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful". It is becoming evident that this aim is being gradually accomplished in houses of

religious through the reform of the liturgy, especially of the liturgy of the Mass. The adaptation to the needs of our times has resulted in a deeper understanding of the Holy Sacrifice which inspires a greater love of the Creator and through him — of all his creatures.

Evidence of this result is found in the more than token modifications of the manner of offering the Holy Sacrifice in many convent chapels. Full and varied participation decreases the sense of routine and the Mass becomes the truly throbbing heart of the apostolic day.

The needs of a great number of sisters would be filled in far greater measure if the hour of daily Mass could be changeable and suited to their convenience. It would be more conducive to the demands of daily work as well as to the prior necessity of peace of mind.

2. The Divine Office.— Christ, in his human body prayed through the flesh, and the Church continues to do likewise through her human members. What Christ did as one body, we continue to do, through the Church, as a group. This doctrine has been firmly grasped by sisters in particular. Only such a hopeful credence could possibly explain the quiet joy with which the breviary has been accepted by sisters young and old, although it has often meant changing the prayer habits of a long life-time. Even the Office of the Dead, in spite of its strangeness, seems to bring

stronger comfort.

It would be in conformity with the Articles of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy¹ and in agreement with the wishes of many sisters to have Lauds as morning prayer and Vespers as evening prayer, in common; to select any one of Terce, Sext or None that will be most convenient for private prayer on any given day, to be said at a time which most closely corresponds with its true canonical time; to have Compline in private at the end of the day; to use the vernacular in the celebration of the Divine Office.

There are many decisions yet to be made by major superiors since some Orders are still praying the Breviary experimentally for an interim period. They will have to decide on which Hours are to be said; which book to be used, at what time, which in common, which in private. Whatever the outcome of these particular evaluations, the praying of the Breviary in some manner is a foregone conclusion.

3. Mental Prayer.— a) General Term.— We advisedly use the term "Mental Prayer" on the prayer horarium of the day. The majority of the congregations which were consulted in the process of fact-gathering for this paper, use the word "meditation" but this is actually a misnomer. It is

¹ Art. 89, a,b,e; 94, 98, 99, 101:2.

considered, by competent authorities² to be one stage of mental prayer — the beginning stage. Therefore to eliminate any doubt as to the freedom of sisters to practise the prayer of their chosen degree the general term "mental prayer" is used.

For most English speaking religious this may seem to be splitting hairs but in some parts of the world, even in the 1960's, such freedom is still unknown.

We cannot be accused of painting a black picture. We know of many communities, where, during half an hour each morning, the monotonous reading of a pre-fabricated meditation is inflicted on all the religious, thereby forcing each of them along the same spiritual path.³

b) Personal.— Mental prayer is personal prayer. Even when many sisters are gathered together in chapel for this express purpose, it is still the solitary converse with God of each individual soul.

Men do not stand before God in droves, but each one is present before Him as though he were the only one. The perfect formulation of this relationship is contained in the wonderful sentence in the Apocalypse (2:17): "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit said to the churches: to him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna; and will give him a white counter, and in the counter a new name written, which no man knoweth, but he that receiveth it."⁴

2 See above, Chapter IV, pp. 124-126.

3 Gérard Huyghe, Equilibre et adaptation, Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1960, p. 113 (Problèmes de la Religieuse d'aujourd'hui). (The translation is mine.)

4 Romano Guardini, Prayer in Practice, trans. Leopold of Loewenstein-Wertheim, Garden City, N.Y., Image Books, 1963, pp. 149-150.

c) Psychological Root.— Let us go back to the motive or common psychological root of all prayer to find out why mental prayer is an invariable on every horarium. "Prayer is the expression of a primitive impulsion to a higher, richer, intenser life... The effort to fortify, to reinforce, to enhance one's life is the motive of all prayer."⁵

This same motive urged the sister to enter religious life and even when engaged in the active apostolate she yet has absolute need of some moments of peace and quiet daily in which to work out her own spiritual advancement, or in other words, to strive to take definite steps toward this higher life.

d) Freedom.— According to P. Marie-Eugene,⁶ the definition itself of mental prayer which St. Teresa of Avila gave her daughters, "only a friendly intercourse",⁷ takes care to respect the sovereign liberty of God and also that of the praying soul. This is

... a care over and over again evinced by Saint Teresa. Such liberty seems to her necessary for the growth of the soul and its perfect submission to the action of God. And so she defends it

5 Friedrich Heiler, Prayer, trans. and ed. Samuel McComb and J. Edward Park, New York, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 255.

6 P. Marie-Eugene, I Want to See God, Vol. I, trans. Sr. M. Verda Clare, Notre Dame, Ind., Fides, 1963, pp. 57-58.

7 St. Teresa, Life, Peers, Vol. I, p. 50.

against all tyranny, should this come from methods that are too rigorous or from direction that would suppress it. If one finds in a soul signs of the action of God, namely, humility and progress in virtue, one must not disturb it in its modes of prayer; it has a right to its liberty, and all have a duty to respect this.⁸

With the weight of such authority behind freedom in mental prayer in the sixteenth century, an even stronger case can be made for it in the twentieth, taking into consideration the profound depth of the concept of liberty today and the great improvement of the status of women in general.

The emancipated young woman who enters the convent today takes for granted a fair amount of independence. She considers it her due as an intelligent human being, and, considering the caliber of the usual postulant, indeed it is. Any curtailment of her right to think things out for herself, and state her case before any important decision which involves her directly is made, is foredoomed to failure. In the same way pressures brought to bear upon her prayer life cannot but stunt the normal development of young people who have been brought up to love personal, individual liberty.

⁸ Cf. St. Teresa, Life, Peers, Vol. I, pp. 69, 71, 74, 79, 80. Cf. also Way, Peers, Vol. II, pp. 27 and 122.

Saint Teresa was quoted concerning methods and direction which would extend the censure consequently to any coercion as regards reading material for mental prayer. Her advice was never more timely than today. In the necessary training of young religious methods would be explained, spiritual authors would be studied, encouragement would be given lavishly, suggestions and advice would be offered, but in the final analysis freedom of choice in the subject for prayer must be respected.

Nor does the question of freedom end here. According to temperament, age and occupation, sisters' needs will vary greatly as to time and place for mental prayer. The speed and tensions of modern living even in convents aggravate this need. For this reason a suggested horarium would require mental prayer but make no fixed regulation for time or place. Again freedom of choice is to be respected. The problem of time and place would be decided by the individual sister after discussion with the Superior and with her permission. When most of the sisters in a house are doing the same kind of work, it will often happen that the same time is convenient for all; the place will differ when privacy is desired. St. Francis of Sales thought that mental prayer should be made in the early morning before the sisters were caught up into the varied activities of the day's work. Today, quite often, there is hurry at that

time, but a sister might find a peaceful hour later on in the day.

This insistence on freedom of the individual is not a concession to modern sisters, nor for that matter, to any Christian. It is the result of deep study on the means of achieving union with God. Everyone will concede that love that is not free is worthless. Therefore it is useless to attempt to force the attainment of love of God by means of rules and regulations. The compelling words of Romano Guardini on the paradox of love illumine this conclusion:

By directing His love toward man, God enables man to become what he essentially was meant to be — a free person. The more actually a man is led by God's love, the more fully he realizes his true self; the more immediately a man's acts spring from love, the more completely they become his own.⁹

e) Responsibility.— Permitting freedom does not automatically solve all problems in mental prayer. Proper training in using that freedom is needed that young sisters may mature and learn to take responsibility. An horarium that leaves some decisions to the individual will allow scope for the practice of personal judgment and responsibility from the very beginning of religious life. It also allows novice mistresses and superiors to gauge the effectiveness of their training. Constant practice by sisters

⁹ Romano Guardini, The Faith and Modern Man, trans. Charlotte E. Forsyth, London, Burns Oates, 1953, p. 40.

will, with the passage of years, be the means of development and maturity and allay the danger of regression to childishness which is so often the result of blind dependence.

f) Effects of Mental Prayer.— The effects of mental prayer conscientiously made are further light and then courage to accept mortification.

1) Light.— The practice of mental prayer is the greatest means by which we obtain God's light to know him and to know ourselves. When we give ourselves wholeheartedly to prayer we do acquire a greater and more ardent love of God with a corresponding contempt for ourselves. We need great interior light to see, even darkly, God's infinite perfections and our essential need of him therefore we must constantly pray for this divine light which is received frequently during moments of mental prayer.

2) Mortification.— We must never forget that true prayer is inextricably bound up with mortification: the mortification of our interior faculties as well as of our body. Mortification must prepare the way for prayer by lessening the intractable movements of sloth, worldliness and ambition. Religious should be recollected and recollection is not gained by continually giving in to weariness, boredom or dryness. Self-discipline must be exercised; each time a decided effort is needed and exerted to continue

unsatisfactory-seeming prayer for the length of time required by Rule a sister may find future attempts at mental prayer accompanied by greater ease of recollection and intimacy with God. Continued mental prayer results in continued courage for such efforts.

g) Prayer Before and After.— In all probability, for the majority of sisters, the time of mental prayer will follow the recitation of Lauds; in which case no further prayer of preparation is needed. When mental prayer is made at some other time, however, each sister could say a short prayer to the Holy Spirit, formally or informally worded, as seems suitable at the moment.

There is a place in the prayers of sisters for those composed by their founders. This might be a proper place for one of them, if such is available. For example, the "Prayer for Our Institute" composed by St. Alphonsus de Liguori.

4. Vocal Prayer.— There are two main reasons why time for vocal prayer, including recitation of the Office in common, should be specified on the horarium.

a) When sisters are tired, distracted, helplessly incapacitated before God, a formula as the Divine Office will come to the rescue, placing itself on the lips, making possible the expression of proper sentiments. In other

words, the formulas serve as stepping stones to converse with God. Moreover, by the simple grandeur of her prayers, Mother Church educates her children to avoid the misconception that in talking to God one need use a proliferation of high sounding words.

b) The set formula broadens our ideas. Instead of petitions for things of personal concern as is so often the case in personal prayer, the Church teaches us to pray for all the world. Charity cannot be limited, the soul is drawn to practise catholicity in the finest sense of the term.¹⁰

Communal exercises have a most important place in the novitiate as by design they tend to instill proper habits of prayer. The longer a sister is in the convent, however, the more time should be made available instead for personal prayer. Indeed, vocal prayers if fairly numerous easily become mechanical and stilted; an end in themselves instead of a means.

5. Spiritual Reading.— "So faith comes from hearing what is told, and that hearing comes through the message about Christ" (Rom. 10:17). In great part "the

¹⁰ Cf. Franz M. Moschner, Christian Prayer, trans. Elizabeth Plettenberg, St. Louis, Mo., B. Herder Book Co., 1962, pp. 110-122.

message" comes to the believers of the twentieth century through reading.

No brief is necessary to accord a place on the horarium for spiritual reading. Long and respected tradition and writing have promoted its value and usage has proved it essential. Ideally, the union with God which is achieved during the offering of the sacrifice of the Mass and the recitation of the breviary is to be continued throughout the day. Spiritual directors are unanimous in asserting that this union cannot be fully nurtured without the help of spiritual reading.

Spiritual reading is ... a remote preparation for mental prayer; without it the mind is empty and the will has nothing on which to work — the wellsprings of prayer dry up.¹¹

All of the horaria consulted have a fixed time for this exercise. The answers to questionnaires, however, show dissatisfaction with this arrangement. There is practical unanimity in calling for private reading and the majority of sisters would prefer to have freedom to choose their own time. Indeed, each sister has the best opportunity of judging what time is most suitable for her, taking into account the "Order of the Day" and the exigencies of her work in the active apostolate.

¹¹ Peter P. James, "Reading as an Aid to Mental Prayer", in Spiritual Life, Vol. 7, Fall, 1961, p. 229.

Provided that the sister reads for the full duration of time exacted by the proper authority, there seems to be no good reason why the time of reading could not be broken up into two or more periods, at least occasionally, if such proves to be more convenient.

On the other hand, Cardinal Suenens suggests:

Spiritual reading for professed nuns could be spread out through the week (not through the day) so that the same number of hours could be devoted to it without cutting both the day and the reading mechanically into sections. No doubt the nuns would thereby derive greater benefit from the reading.¹²

Only the psychology of the individual combined with knowledge of her intellectual level will furnish the answer to this problem in the case of each sister.

Similarly the answers to questionnaires, conversations with sisters and personal experience reveal the same desire for freedom to choose the place of reading. Inclinations vary: the chapel seems to be the favorite place, but rooms where one may have privacy follow as a close second, with a marked preference for the outdoors in fine weather.

There will still be exceptional days when the reading will need to be in common; that is, when special letters, regulations or bulletins are addressed to the

¹² L.J. Suenens, The Nun in the World, trans. G. Stevens, Montreal, Palm Publishers, 1963, p. 122.

community in general by ecclesiastical superiors. In such cases the superior would read the communication to the assembled sisters.

For the maximum amount of good to be extracted from it, the reading must be suited to the background and intellectual capacity of each sister. Perhaps in no other field is freedom of choice more important. Nevertheless sisters must be trained to seek and to follow advice. Their needs will change at different periods of their life. A wise director can be of the utmost help.

Whether the length of time is measured by the week or by the day, it must be understood that the time apportioned is for reading which is truly spiritual. Extra time could well be allowed for the reading of Catholic periodicals and newspapers.

The reason behind the allotment of a specific length of time for both types of reading is based on feminine psychology. Without doubt some sisters would be satisfied with the lighter type, at least for fairly long periods at a time. They would continue to take the "milk, not solid food" (1 Cor. 3:2); the reading of Scripture might again be neglected. On the other hand, sisters rather inclined to scrupulosity, would suffer a guilt complex for using any time for such things as newspapers or periodicals.

The highly commendable practice of raising the mind and heart to God in special prayer before and after spiritual reading is still to be encouraged, but the choice of the prayer may well be left to the individual.

The prayer need not be long, simply the sister's personalized plea, that the Holy Spirit will speak to her through the words of the spiritual writer. Godfrey Diekmann suggests, for example, a slight adaptation of the prayer in the Missal immediately before the Gospel, "May the Lord be in my heart and in my mind so that I may worthily and properly read and understand his glad tidings. Amen" or even merely "Speak, Lord; for thy servant hears" (1 Sam. 3:9).¹³

The prayer will doubtless change with a sister's state of health, her attitude to the reading itself, and the circumstances of life in general at the moment.

Sisters should frequently question their motives in choosing their reading. One may advance in learning — the material content of the Bible, the development of theology — but yet grow selfish in the attempt. Knowledge alone is no substitute for love. And growth in divine love is the incentive for spiritual reading.

¹³ Godfrey Diekmann, "Living with the Church in Prayer and Reading", in Religious Life in the Modern World, Vol. IV, Prayer and Sacrifice, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1962, p. 110.

The words of Frank Sheed express this consideration neatly:

A man may be learned in dogma, and at the same time proud or greedy or cruel: knowledge does not supply for love if love is absent. Similarly a virtuous man may be ignorant, but ignorance is not a virtue. It would be a strange God who could be loved better by being known less ... every new thing known about God is a new reason for loving Him.¹⁴

6. Examination of Conscience.— It would be acceding to the wishes of many to delete the noon examen, except in novitiates. The older sisters do not need a special time to see their predominant fault; if they are serious about their spiritual life it is before them constantly. Certainly it comes immediately to mind at every lapse. The sisters on active duty unanimously claim that they do not have the time to make an examen properly during the noon hour. The young, however, are still in need of formation.

The combined nightly examination of conscience (searching for ways of better pleasing God) would require about five minutes. Approximately fifteen minutes, therefore, should be allocated to Compline on the day's horarium.

The revision of life has been given a serious trial period from six to ten years in Switzerland, France and

¹⁴ Frank Sheed, Theology and Sanity, London, Sheed and Ward, 1948, pp. 8 and 9.

Belgium. According to the account of those who have taken part, it would seem to be the way in which the Holy Spirit is leading the present generation which is so sensitive to the movement of group dynamics.¹⁵

It would be ridiculous, however, to assume that revision of life could be introduced into a congregation by the simple fact of placing it on the horarium. Even a modicum of success would depend on the preparatory education of the sisters. Moreover, trial should be made in a few picked houses where difficulties may be met and overcome before revision of life is inserted into the Rule in any manner whatsoever.

II. POPULAR DEVOTIONS

In order of importance we have placed liturgical and formal prayer ahead of personal devotions, but with no intention of minimizing their worth. There is a place for truly personal prayer on every horarium. It fills a felt need in the life of every person who believes in God. The length of time allotted should be stated that each sister will feel free to use it with no qualms about neglecting

¹⁵ Cf. J. Bonduelle, O.P., "Deux dossiers sur la révision de vie", in La Vie spirituelle, Supplément, Vol. 66, Sept. 1963, p. 432, and Albert Maréchal, La Révision de vie: toute notre vie dans l'Évangile, 2nd ed., Lausanne, Action Catholique Romande, 1960, pp. 7 and 262.

her duty. She is left completely free as to the manner and content of the prayer.

The interdependence of formal and personal prayers is precisely explained by Bernard Häring.

Formal prayers are important and even necessary for community prayer in divine worship and in the family. We need the sublime prayers taught by Christ, the Church, and the saints, so that through them we may learn how to pray. Yet, under no circumstances, may our personal prayers be confined to the mere recitation of routine prayer formulas. Our community prayers, as well as our private prayers, will become truly living and worthy expressions of our sentiments only when we practise authentic interior prayer. The meaningless and mechanical recital of prayer formulas does not even deserve the name of prayer. Standard prayers should be an expression of our own attitude of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition, or they should at least give us an incentive and inspiration towards a personal encounter with God in interior prayer.¹⁶

Way of the Cross.— Deep impressions can be formed by making the Way of the Cross. The experience can, for some, become disturbing because of the psychological impact caused by gazing upon the pictures, or even by forming one's own pictures when the station is suggested by a simple cross, and the subtle invitation of the walk between the stations.

¹⁶ Bernard Häring, Christian Renewal in a Changing World, trans. Sister M. Lucidia Haring, New York, Desclée Co., 1965, pp. 290-291.

SUGGESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY PRAYERS

220

It could be a good thing for some persons so to be disturbed occasionally and aroused from lethargy; on the contrary it could have distressing effects upon others. Therefore, the Way of the Cross is suggested as a purely personal devotion when its use is conducive to spiritual profit.

Bible Services.— The novenas which prepared the way for the greater feasts might be replaced occasionally by a more meaningful Bible Vigil. Certain liturgical seasons might be accentuated by Bible Services from time to time. These celebrations could be recommended in general and be carried out at the discretion of the local superior who would take into consideration the wishes and suggestions of all the sisters in the house.

Visit.— By Visit to the Holy Sacrament in this instance is meant time set aside expressly for that purpose — converse with Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament. It does not mean the many unplanned short visits made in passing. There could be no objection, however, to a combination, such as praying the rosary or making the Stations during that set time.

Rosary.— That the rosary has its place on the horarium is acknowledging the truth that the liturgy and the rosary fill two different spiritual needs; public prayer

and private devotion have each their own place in the scheme of salvation. Certainly one does not grow into the liturgy by growing out of the rosary. Both are prayed at every level from the simplest to the most profound.

Pius XII, writing of "other devotions", strikes the balance and warmly commends "those special prayers in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary among which the rosary, as all know, has pride of place."¹⁷

Many find it a good practice to say only a decade or so at one time, thus praying to our Mother during several short periods each day.

Angelus.— In most religious orders it has ever been the custom to begin the day's community prayer by the recitation of the Angelus. There would seem to be every reason to continue this commendable practice. We have the example of our present Holy Father, as well as of those of living memory, who interrupted audiences in order to say the Angelus at the appropriate time.

St. Thomas teaches that Mary's supernatural and meritorious consent was given in the name of the whole human race which stood in need of the promised Redeemer.¹⁸

¹⁷ Pius XII, Encyclical Mediator Dei, Nov. 20, 1947, in AAS, Vol. 39, 1947, p. 584. Vatican Library Translation, St. Paul Editions.

¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 30, a. 1: "Et ideo per annuntiationem expetebatur consensus Virginis loco totius humanae naturae."

As her Fiat was for her the morning of the Incarnation it is fitting that sisters should join with her in morning prayer striving to imitate her purity of conscience, her humility, simplicity and desire to do God's will; offering themselves as instruments docile to the Holy Spirit — true handmaids of the Lord. All these virtues of Mary are mirrored in those actions of hers which are commemorated in this traditional prayer.

In houses where sisters say the prayer after meals together, it would be appropriate to add the Angelus at noon and evening. Otherwise, it could be said privately. Even those sisters who consider noon prayers impracticable would gladly find time for the recitation of the Angelus.

Renewal of Vows.— The excellent practice of renewal of vows should be retained. This may be done in private as frequently as one wishes. The public ceremony, however, would be more meaningful if restricted to a solemn renewal during the Holy Sacrifice only once or twice a year on feasts of special significance to the institute.

Prayer for Vocations.— The Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life makes it imperative that some mode of prayer for vocations, whether in public or in private, specified or free, be stated by the Rule. A short prayer recited after the Minor Hour is suggested.

CONCLUSION

In suggesting the exercises above, an effort was made to retain the prayers essential for religious life and to accord the modern trend as revealed by sisters' assertions, both written and oral, with the requirements of Canon Law.

Concerning popular devotions the words of the Constitution are so categorical that it is best to repeat them.

Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See.

But these devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some fashion derived from it, and lead the people to it, since, in fact, the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses any of them.¹⁹

It is clear that these exercises of piety are to be retained only when they serve as a harmonious preparation for the central act of the liturgy. They must never be given, either in time or ceremony, any advantage which might seem to subordinate liturgical functions. It is to be noted that these devotions are recommended but rarely, if ever, prescribed.

19 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Art. 13.

In this connection it might be well to add that there is another reason to account for the mounting disfavor of some of them.

Those whose habitual nourishment is derived from the strong bread of the Scriptures and the objective, theocentric prayer of the liturgy are understandably ill at ease with some of the formulae that are found in certain types of hymns and prayers. They find them unbearably sentimental and emotional, often impoverished doctrinally, rootless and lifeless, inferior compositions in every way. It argues no lack of piety to find such poor material unsatisfactory and unsatisfying. The blame lies not with those who cannot respond to these things but with those who compose and promote them.²⁰

The Constitution does not recommend any particular devotions for "liturgical seasons" but Pius XII mentioned "the prayers usually said during the month of May in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, or during the month of June to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus."²¹

These will be preserved, of course, but it is questionable if devotions to St. Joseph in the month of March should be allowed to conflict with Lenten exercises. And many other popular devotions will need to be reformed before it can truly be said of them that they "accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some fashion derived from it", or "lead the people to it". This will call for patient

20 O'Shea, The Worship of the Church, p. 550.

21 Pius XII, Mediator Dei, in AAS, p. 586; Vatican Library Translation, St. Paul Editions.

and resolute effort; close study should be given each case since diversity among devotions prevails from country to country, and from Order to Order.²²

²² Cf. P.M. Gy, "Les pia exercitia", in La Maison-Dieu, Vol. 77, 1964, pp. 30-31.

CONCLUSION

In the past, each Religious Order had its own set of prayer formulas which had been predetermined by the Founder or Foundress. Devotion to tradition and respect for the memory of the holy Founder nurtured a reluctance to change of any kind, even the slightest. In fact, rigidity and routine were sometimes, even considered virtuous.

Today, in keeping with the great liturgical movement in the Church, encouraged by the writings of modern theologians and the example of one another, Religious Superiors are learning the meaning of Council Decrees and, in consequence, are making vast strides in improving the prayers of their sisters. They realize that certain exercises of piety which have a history of long tradition no longer meet contemporary needs. First and foremost, sisters no longer assist passively at the holy Mass but participate to the full extent of their ability.

The history of the Divine Office shows that it was designed to fit the rhythm of the day as lived in the earlier monasteries. As such it is certainly unsuitable for active orders of sisters, but the rhythm of the day has changed even in monasteries. The Benedictines are making a serious study with a view to revising their Office along these lines. It seems regrettable that sisters in

CONCLUSION

227

active Orders should be excluded from the official prayer of the Church. Rather, following the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, part of the Divine Office, in the mother tongue, should be fitted to the rhythm of their day. It cannot be overemphasized however that solid instruction on the Bible is a prerequisite before the Divine Office can become meaningful prayer.

Much of the stress and strain of religious life can be traced to the burden of "getting in" prayers that for some good reason were not said with the community. With the adoption of the Divine Office sisters can be made to realize that, when duty of state, or of simple charity prevents them from going to the chapel at the appointed time, they are to join in spirit with the community then praying and do what is demanded of them that moment in a spirit of love; they need not make up privately later on. For example, the morning Hours are not to be read at night; they should be said at approximately the proper time or not at all that day. There is no reason why sisters cannot be properly trained to avoid both scruples and laxity in this regard.

The question has arisen of deleting the rosary entirely. It is true one could do without the rosary, but one cannot do without the Blessed Virgin Mary. This need is appropriately translated into some prayer of Rule.

Canon Law specifies the rosary.

The visit to the Blessed Sacrament is also specified by law. Granted that the whole of Canon Law is under revision; yet, until new laws are promulgated, the actual laws are still in force and should be obeyed.

The definite trend towards mandatory but private prayer and the obvious preference for some freedom of choice as to time and place of religious exercises do not violate any rule of the Church.

Where trials have been made in this respect, the reports are better than satisfactory. This would lead to the conclusion that most spiritual exercises could be performed by a sister at a time that is convenient for her in the work she is doing, taking into consideration the routine of the house where she lives. The deletion of extra prayers such as novenas and litanies would leave time for personal prayer. The approval of the local superior would always be a requirement, moreover each one's prayer schedule should be sanctioned by the Major Superior at the time of her annual visitation.

Stripping the horarium of non-essentials will strengthen the spirit of prayer by allowing more opportunity for the study and practice of mental prayer. Instead of doing just what others do, a sister will be obliged to think about and regulate her own interior life. This

CONCLUSION

229

responsibility will sharpen her realization of the fact that religious life is a life of prayer — that pronouncing vows is a total and personal commitment to love God; she will receive sufficient grace, but the onus rests with her.

The reform of a prayer horarium in any Order cannot be made in one prodigious change, then again be considered established for ever; nevertheless, the future looks bright because the idea seems to have taken root that aggiornamento will ever be an on-going process, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

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ABSTRACT

This research was undertaken to discern what is essential in the community prayers of an order of sisters devoted to the active apostolate; to study the status, in the Church, of the prayers on the customary horarium; to inquire about the opinions of some of the sisters concerned; and, as a result, to suggest prayers in keeping with the liturgical movement in the Church that will strengthen the prayer life of sisters in active congregations in this the latter half of the twentieth century.

The word "modern" in this thesis is used with the meaning given in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: "that which belongs to the present time or is characteristic of it." It is not a derivative of the word "modernism", the adjectival equivalent of which is "modernist" or "modernistic". The word "modern" will not be used in conjunction with any methods or tendencies in the field of holy Scripture.

The method of procedure was:

- I. To study the concept of prayer in view of a deeper realization of the true meaning.
- II. To follow the history of prayer in order to throw light on the riches of the liturgy and to see the reasons back of recent changes.

ABSTRACT

2

- III. To examine in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy those articles which relate either directly or indirectly to the prayer of sisters.
- IV. To inquire into the importance of certain traditional prayers, their status in the Church, and their conformity with Canon Law.
- V. To consider the opinions of sisters on the subject of their community prayers by means of informal discussions, conversations, answers to questionnaires, and the trends supported by modern authors.

The result of this research led to suggestions which it is hoped will be useful to the makers of horaria for modern sisters.

Briefly, the prayers recommended are:

The Divine Office: Lauds for morning prayer and Vespers for evening prayer. Both of these exercises would be recited in common, as would also the Angelus and meal prayers, when practical; all other daily prayers would be said in private.

One of the Minor Hours, the one most convenient for any given day, to be said at approximately the proper canonical hour.

Compline at the end of the day.

Holy Mass at a convenient hour, not necessarily the same each day of the week.

ABSTRACT

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Each sister would be allowed some choice as to the time and place for her mental prayer, spiritual reading, visit to the Holy Sacrament and rosary in accordance with the work she is called upon to do, and the routine of the house in which she lives, always with the approval of the Superior General.

Noon prayers would be deleted; particular examen and general examination of conscience would be combined during the time of Compline.

Extra prayers, litanies and novenas, in common, would be deleted.

Renewal of Vows, Biblical Services and such would take place occasionally during the year according to the customs of the various congregations.