

GOD our Creator

intends to sanctify everything He has made. He intends to manifest Himself in His world. This manifestation is to be not only natural, fleshly (in the vestiges of His wisdom seen in all created things) but also spiritual and divine.

In other words, God not only saw, from the beginning, that all created things were "good," but He also intended them to be holy, that is to say sanctified by a consecration that would transfigure them in His own light.

For this it was necessary that man, the high priest of creation, should consecrate the universe to God by the action of his own spirit united to the Spirit of God and consecrated to God.

Man fell, and with him fell creation. God sent His Son into the world to redeem man and to elevate the fallen world with Him, and to perfect the work of sanctification, the manifestation of the divine glory in the cosmos, the work which man had failed to accomplish in Adam. This is the work of Christ, the lord and redeemer of man, the head of the human race, the king of the new creation.

We live in the kingdom of Christ, the new world, consecrated to God, the messianic kingdom, the new Jerusalem. The history of the kingdom is working itself out, but in the mystery of faith, hidden from the wise of this world (1 Cor. 1:19-21) and the final day of its manifestation is reserved for the future — the end of time.

Time, which is now enclosed between the two advents of Christ — His first coming in humility and obscurity, and His second coming in majesty and power — has been claimed by God for His own. Time is to be sanctified like everything else, by the presence and the action of Christ.

The redemption is not simply a past historical fact with a juridical effect on individual souls. It is an ever present reality, living and efficacious, penetrating to the inmost depths of our soul by the word of salvation and the mystery of faith. The redemption is Christ Himself, "who of God is made to us wisdom and justice and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30) living and sharing His divine life with His elect. To be redeemed is not merely to be absolved of guilt

before God, it is also to live in Christ, to be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, to be in Him a new creature, to live in the Spirit.

To say that the redemption is an ever present spiritual reality is to say that Christ has laid hold upon time and sanctified it, giving it a sacramental character, making it an efficacious sign of our union with God in Him. So "time" is a medium which makes the fact of redemption present to all men.

Christ has given a special meaning and power to the cycle of the seasons, which of themselves are "good" and by their very nature have a capacity to signify our life in God: for the seasons express the rhythm of natural life. They are the systole and diastole of the natural life of our globe. Jesus has made this ebb and flow of light and darkness, activity and rest, birth and death, the sign of a higher life, a life which we live in Him, a life which knows no decline, and a day which does not fall into darkness. It is the "day of the Lord" which dawns for us anew each morning, the day of Easter, the *Pascha Domini*, the day of eternity, shining upon us in time.

For fallen man, the cycle of seasons, the wheel of time itself, is only a spiritual prison. Each new spring brings a temporary hope. Autumn and winter destroy that hope with their ever returning reminder of death. For man living only in the flesh, only on the level of his nature, for man living without God, the great realities of human love and fertility are without issue. We are begotten by parents who disappear from the face of the earth and are forgotten. In our own turn, we grow, become strong, bring forth sons, and then we too fail, and die and are forgotten. Our sons in their turn will pass through the same cycle which ends inexorably in death, and in oblivion.

It is as if the whole of nature were striving upwards, but striving in vain. Generation after generation she kindles the flames of countless human spirits, capable of an eternal destiny, souls that have insatiable aspirations for love, for wisdom, for joy in God. The flames leap up for a brief moment, then die down and are extinguished. They are followed by others. None of them can reach up into eternity. The cycle of the seasons reminds us, by this perpetual renewal and perpetual death, that death is the end of all. The universe which came into being will some day grow cold, perhaps, and die. What will remain?

Sanctify
the
world

transf. by
his own
light

Adam →
Christ

embryo

Time
must
be
sanctified

time -
a sacram.
character

seasons
good
(things)

↓
8th Day
(Augustine)

in fallen
world -
cycle of
death

Dec. 1956

Pagan man

The modern pagan, the godless child of technology or the "crowd man" is something more than fallen. He lives not only below the level of grace, but below the level of nature — below his own humanity. No longer in contact with the created world or with himself, out of touch with the reality of nature, he lives in the world of falsity and illusion, the world of systems and fictions with which modern man has surrounded himself. In such a world, man's life is no longer even a seasonal cycle. It's a linear flight into nothingness, a flight from reality and from God, without purpose and without objective, except to keep moving, to keep from having to face reality.

To live in Christ we must first break away from this linear flight into nothingness and recover the rhythm and order of man's real nature. Before we can become gods we must first be men.

A.D.

For man in Christ, the cycle of the seasons is something entirely new. It has become a *cycle of salvation*. The year is not just another year, it is the *year of the Lord* — a year in which the passage of time itself brings us not only the natural renewal of spring and the fruitfulness of an earthly summer, but also the spiritual and interior fruitfulness of grace. The life of the flesh which ebbs and flows like the seasons and tends always to its last decline is elevated and supplanted by a life of the spirit which knows no decrease, which always grows in those who live with Christ in the liturgical year. "For though the outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. . . . For we know if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven" (2 Cor. 4:16; 5:1).

The Word of God having entered into time by His incarnation, His birth of a Virgin Mother, has changed the cycle of the seasons from an imprisonment to a liberation. The Church prays God, at Christmas, that "the newbirth of Thy only begotten Son may set us free, whom the old bondage detains under the yoke of sin — *ut nos Unigeniti tui nova per carnem nativitas liberet, quos sub peccati iugo vetusta servitus tenet.*"

The liturgy makes the very passage of time sanctify our lives, for each new season renews an aspect of the great Mystery of Christ living and present in His Church. Each new season shows us some new way in which we live in Him, in which He acts in the world. Each new feast draws our attention to the great truth of His presence in

the midst of us, and shows us a different view of His action in the world, now in His mysteries, and again in His saints, now in His sacraments, and again in the hallowed building of His churches, in His altars, and in the relics of His saints.

The liturgical cycle renews our redemption in Christ, delivers us from the servitude of sin and from the corruption of a fleshly mode of being, which in this time of struggle and preparation tends to assert itself in our lives. The liturgical cycle shows us that though we are caught in a struggle between flesh and spirit, though we are indeed the "fighting Church" — the Church militant — yet the victory is already ours. We possess the grace of Christ, who alone can deliver us from the "body of this death." He who is in us is stronger than the world. He has "overcome the world." In the cycle of the holy year, the church rhythmically breathes the life-giving atmosphere of the Spirit, and her bloodstream is cleansed of the elements of death. She lives in Christ, and with Him praises the Father.

And so, while the cycle of time is a prison without escape for the natural man, living in the flesh, and doomed to disappear with all the rest of his world that passes away, and while time is for the man of our cities only a linear flight from God, for the believer who lives in Christ each new day renews his participation in the mystery of Christ. Each day is a new dawn of that *Lumen Christi*, the light of Christ which knows no setting.

The liturgical year renews the mysteries of our redemption each day in the Mass. It renews our participation in particular mysteries of the life of Christ. It teaches us the ways of the saints and renews our union with them in the charity of the Spirit. It is a year of *salvation*, but also a year of *enlightenment* and of *transformation*.

The mysteries of the liturgical cycle not only bring to our souls new outpourings of the salvific waters of grace: they also enlighten our minds with insights into the ways of God, ever ancient and ever new. They teach us more of Christ, they show us more of the meaning of our life in Him, they make us grow in Him, they transform us in Him. Indeed, the liturgy is the great school of Christian living and the great transforming force which reshapes our souls and our characters in the likeness of Christ.

→ I have no Grace! etc.

Dom Odo Casel has compared the liturgical year to a ring which the Church, the virgin bride of Christ, triumphantly displays as the

sign of her union with the incarnate Word. This holy ring is the gift of Christ to His Church as a pledge of His love and of His fidelity to His promises. The "cycle" or "circle" of the liturgy, which eternally returns to its beginning, is a symbol of the unity of God who is eternally the same yet ever new.

More than that, however, the liturgical "ring" of feasts is a symbol of that first "cycle" of actions by which Christ redeemed the world — the "ring" created by His descent into time, His life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven restoring all things, in Himself, to the Father.

"The Father Himself loveth you because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and I go to the Father" (John 16:28).

These words of St. John show us that the Church's belief in Christ is not a mere static assent to His historical existence, but a dynamic participation in the great cycle of actions which manifest in the world the love of the Father for the ones He has called to union with Himself, in His beloved Son. It is not simply that we are "saved," and that the Father remits the debt contracted by our sins, but that we are *loved* by the Father, and loved by Him in so far as we believe that He has sent His Son, and has called Him back into heaven and given all power into His hands.

In the liturgical year, the Church sees and acclaim this action of the Father who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for the salvation of men. It is a dialogue between mankind and the Father, in which the Father manifests Himself in His Word, and in which the Church, filled with the Spirit of the Father and the Son, praises and magnifies the glory of the Father.

To enter into the liturgical cycle is to participate in the great work of redemption effected by the Son. "Liturgy" is "common work" — a sacred work in which the Church cooperates with the divine Redeemer in re-living His mysteries and applying their fruits to all mankind.

It is quite clear that the Church does not regard the liturgy as a mere source of aesthetic satisfaction, or as an expression of Christian culture. Nor is it merely a way in which the Christian society becomes formally aware of its existence and its relationship to God, in order

to praise Him. It is a *work* in which the Church collaborates with the divine Redeemer, renewing on her altars the sacred mysteries which are the life and salvation of man, uttering again the life-giving words that are capable of saving and transforming our souls, blessing again the sick and the possessed, and preaching His Gospel to the poor.

In the liturgy, then, the Church would have us realize that we meet the same Christ who went about everywhere doing good, and who is still present in the midst of us wherever two or three are gathered together in His name. And we meet Him by sharing in His life and His redemption. We meet Christ in order to *be* Christ, and with Him save the world.

In order to understand the full meaning of the liturgy we have to grasp the liturgical conception of time.

The Christian "present" of the liturgy has something of the character of eternity, in which all reality is present at once. The past and the future are therefore made present in the mysteries of the liturgy. In the Advent mystery, the Church not only re-lives the longing of the prophets and the patriarchs for the Redeemer, not only prays to God for the grace of a "new nativity" at Christmas, but also anticipates the coming of Christ at the Last Day. In every liturgical mystery the Church embraces the whole history of man's salvation, while concentrating her attention, for the time being, on one particular phase of that history.

At Christmas, we celebrate the coming of God into the world. We look especially at His birth at Bethlehem and see how that birth reveals to us the infinite mercy of God. But at the same moment we return to the very beginning of all. The generation of the Word in the bosom of the Father is also present to us, and we go forward to the end of all when, having come again into the world at the Last Judgment, and taken all things to Himself, and made all things new, we ourselves will share, by glory, in His divine and eternal sonship and hear the voice of the Father saying to us, in Him: "This day have I begotten thee!"

In every liturgical mystery we have this telescoping of time and eternity, of the universal and the personal, what is common to all ages, what is above and beyond all time and place, and what is most particular and most immediate to our own time and place. Christ

in His infinite greatness embraces all things, the divine and the human, the spiritual and the material, the old and the new, the great and the small, and in the liturgy He makes Himself all things to all men and becomes all in all.

The works which Christ accomplished in time remain in eternity, treasured in the Sacred Heart from which they came forth, and the liturgical mysteries make these works present to us each time they are celebrated. Not only that, the liturgy incorporates us in His mysteries and renews their effect in time and in space. By the liturgy, while remaining in time, we enter into the great celebration that takes place before the throne of the Lamb in heaven, in eternity. As the Church prays, "as often as this saving Victim is offered up, so often the work of our redemption is carried out" (secret, ninth Sunday after Pentecost).

The liturgical year takes the passage of time and elevates it to the level of eternity. Time is "baptized" and sanctified by the infusion of the divine light hidden in the liturgical mysteries, a light which flows forth to penetrate our living and our actions and to fill them with the presence of the Lord Christ, the *Kyrios Christos*.

In each new liturgical feast we celebrate Christ Himself, not just the various things which He did, or the exploits of His saints. At Christmas, we celebrate Christ, living and present to us in Mystery, and commune with the divine mercy that He manifests by His birth. At the Epiphany we celebrate Christ as present among us, diffusing upon the world the light and glory of the Father and making known the Father's plan for the salvation of the gentiles. At Septuagesima we return to the creation of the world, in the Word, who is present with us: we consider man's flight from God into the darkness of sin. We share with Christ the labors and sufferings of His public life in Lent; then we enter into His passion. In Holy Week, Christ is present in the midst of His Church as the Lamb slain before the beginning of the world, as the Servant of Yahweh whose sufferings were foretold by Isaias and Jeremias, as the Christ who is crucified even today in His holy Church. At Easter, He is present among us as risen and triumphant, and shedding upon us the light of eternal peace. At Pentecost He is present among us as the founder of His Church and the giver of the Paraclete.

In all these liturgical seasons, as Dom Gueranger says, "Christ

Himself is the source as well as the object of the liturgy. Hence the ecclesiastical year is neither more nor less than the manifestation of Jesus Christ in His mysteries, in the Church, and in the faithful soul. It is the divine cycle in which appear all the works of God, each in its turn. . . . If every year the Church renews her youth as that of the eagle, she does so by means of the cycle of the liturgy; she is visited by her divine Spouse who supplies all her wants" (*Liturgical Year*, Vol. 1, 9-10).

Pope Pius XII has canonized these teachings in the succinct formulas of *Mediator Dei*:

Throughout the entire year, the Mass and the divine office center especially around the Person of Jesus Christ. . . . When the sacred liturgy calls to mind the mysteries of Jesus Christ, it strives to make all believers take their part in them so that the divine Head of the Mystical Body may live in all the members with the fullness of His holiness. Let the souls of Christians be like altars on each of which a different phase of the Sacrifice of the High Priest comes to life again. . . . Hence the liturgical year . . . is not a cold and lifeless representation of the events of the past, or a bare and simple record of a former age; it is rather *Christ Himself who is ever living in His Church* (151, 152, 165).

The liturgy is the most direct way to union with Christ. It is the expression of the Church's consciousness that she is the Bride of Christ. It is the manifestation of her life in and with Christ. It is the evidence of her mystical life, which she has received from God, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. The liturgy, indeed, is the fountainhead of all true Christian mysticism. It is the contemplation of the Spouse, given to her in the Holy Spirit, the *donum Dei altissimi* who alone knows all the deep things of God. The liturgy is inspired by that *sensus Christi* — the mind of Christ — which is hers alone.

We must see that through the liturgy we enter into eternity, we ascend to Christ, or rather eternity enters into our lives, and we become aware of the Christ who has descended into our souls. Our prayer-life must be nourished by the liturgy, formed by it.

But the liturgical spirit leaves full scope to Christian liberty. *Ubi Spiritus Domini ibi libertas*. The liturgy is not slavery to fashion and to passing modes. It is life and prayer and contemplation in Christ, and everyone can and must make use of it in his own way, though

not
faddish

always according to the spirit of the Church. Each one must participate in a full, mature, and free manner: which means to say that he must give what is his own to the liturgy, not submerge himself in it and lose his personality in a corporate act without contributing anything to it or receiving from it anything that is his own.

The liturgy is the *common interior prayer* of the members of Christ expressed in open and public worship which manifests their union in charity and their participation in His sacred mysteries. As such it is, in the words of St. Pius X, the source of all genuine Christian spirituality. It is the prayer and praise of the Bride of Christ, the Church, and if we are one with her, then we too will be united, as she is, with the divine Bridegroom.

Thomas Merton

ASSISI AND THE MISSIONS¹

THE International

Liturgical Congress could and should provide the liturgical movement in mission territories with a strong impetus. To make possible the widest and most effective circulation of the suggestions of the Congress as they relate to the missions, it was decided to invite a comparatively large number of representatives from mission fields to the Congress. Since, moreover, the liturgical movement in mission countries brings with it a host of problems and wishes which are in special need of discussion, a special preliminary meeting on mission problems was arranged. The present writer undertook the work of sending out invitations on behalf of the central committee of the Congress.

¹ The Assisi-Rome International Congress was preceded by two smaller liturgical gatherings: an international study meeting, September 14-17, devoted to a scholarly discussion of the history of the divine office, and a meeting of missionaries, September 17-18, about which Fr. Hofinger reports in the present essay. We are indebted to Fr. Neil P. Hurley, S.J., an American student at the Jesuit College at Innsbruck, for translating the article from the German. — Ed.

His Excellency Van Bakkum, S.V.D., who had come to the Congress as a missionary representative, graciously accepted the presidency of the missionary conference and, in so doing, contributed immensely to its success. Three other bishops took part in the meeting of the missionaries: His Excellency, Rufinus Santos, archbishop of Manila; His Excellency, Zeno Aramburu, S.J., bishop of Wuhu; and His Excellency, Karl Weber, S.V.D., bishop of Ichowfu.

Success was also had in interesting the superiors of various missionary orders in the special meeting. The Capuchins sent their Mission Secretary, Fr. Eginio da Monaco; the Society of the Divine Word missionaries their secretary, Father Schuette; the White Fathers their Mission Secretary, Father Seumo; and the Oblates their Mission Secretary, Father Servel. The Maryknoll missionaries were represented by their General Assistant, Father Schwemmer. In all over fifty participants represented sixteen different missionary orders. The meeting can also be rightly judged a success from the diverse mission territories represented: China, India, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Africa. All these regions sent experienced representatives.

Unfortunately the native element was disproportionately weak in its representation: almost all attempts to stimulate participation by the native clergy in the Congress failed. A stronger participation of native missionary representatives can only be achieved by making travel for such people financially possible. For future meetings, such a problem must be taken into consideration and solved well in advance.

The excellent results of the meeting were manifest in all phases by great interest, a friendly candor, and above all through frankness of word and opinion both in the reports of the speakers and among the participants in the ensuing discussions. In all the essential questions relating to the present situation in the missions, an astonishing unanimity was noted. This was particularly true of the special problems of the liturgy in the missions and the important means of providing timely solutions.

While the language chosen for recording the participants' views was a form of Latin easy to comprehend, in the discussions themselves each speaker could choose between Latin and English. One might sincerely wish that the English contributions could have been