

Introduction

The Old-Catholic Church is often linked to Jansenism. This book will naturally also delve into this topic. The Jansenist movement had no clearly described goals, no organization, no well-defined theological premises, and no liturgical movement at all. Most of those suspected or accused of being Jansenist by their contemporaries or later scholars had no intention of revising the liturgy of the Catholic church. Only a few of them spent time on it. Even liturgical Gallicanism, which will be discussed later, was much more loosely tied with Jansenism – whatever that may have meant – than earlier scholars often assumed.

In contrast, one of the most striking characteristics of the Old-Catholic Church of the Netherlands is its strong emphasis on liturgy. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is the most important element of community life. Considerable energy is spent on its form and content. Though the Old-Catholic Church is one of the smallest denominations in the Netherlands, the reach of its liturgical books encompasses broadly that which is found in each of its parishes. Even in smaller parishes, which are sometimes only just able to provide a service because they barely have enough personnel, those members who are present reveal a strong commitment through their singing, playing, caring and service, which betray the large amount of work done by a small numbers.

Of course, the word “liturgy” comes from two Greek root words which mean “people” and “work.” In the classical Greek world, this referred to every service done by well-off citizens to benefit the entire society. While the term initially referred to any kind of public service, it evolved to mean cultural service in particular. The latter definition

remained in use for some time. Until this century, traditional catholic authors in particular described liturgy simply as public worship. In popular parlance, liturgy is what happens Sunday mornings at ten in the church. But this should not remain the definition, certainly not in a book about the contemporary Old-Catholic church.

True, liturgy does usually take place in a church. But a church is first and foremost a community of people inspired by Christ and in communication with them, not a building. Through prayer and faith, this inspiration is put to work in the service of others: work by and for the people of God.

Liturgy, the Diaconate and the Priesthood as Responses to God's Revelation

Worship and faithful action are thus two ways in which Christian inspiration becomes reality. These two faces are re-discovered in two characteristics of the church: liturgy and diaconal ministry. These go hand in hand. Both are characteristics of assistance. They are literally done *gratis pro Deo*.

Unfortunately, in the not-too-distant past, liturgy was limited to "Sunday morning, ten AM," and diaconal ministry was just a sandwich from the outreach ministry, which damaged both the Church and its surroundings. Both liturgy and diaconal ministry are humanity's answers to the acts of God, in which He reveals Himself to humanity. When He appeared to Moses at Mount Horeb (Exodus 3: 1-14) in the inexplicable sign of the burning bush which was not consumed, the place where Moses stood was called "holy ground." Moses had to remove his shoes as a sign that this place was unapproachable, as a result of what transpired there. The only reply that humanity can give to the revelation of God as "Wholly Other," is an offer to repeatedly – through words and signs – fail to do right be the God who is Holy and Complete and is far and above all our thoughts and actions. But God has also revealed Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ, who experienced in his own body the suffering and need of humanity, who succumbed to it and came out whole on the other side. Such revelation asks for a response that takes the

form of love of neighbor, which does not ask but offers, even unto its end. The coming of Christ can only be answered by humanity by listening to him when he calls and following him on his way through the world. And furthermore, to be for others what he was, who offered hope and new life through his resurrection. God does not lie down in the face of the powers of this world, which are focused on oppression, destruction, and death.

Rather, He wakes His son to life, so that all humanity will live as he does.

When Christ was baptized in the Jordan River, God also revealed Himself as the Holy Spirit. The Messiah heard the Father call him his beloved Son, and saw the Spirit in the form of a dove rest on him as proof. (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1: 9-11, Luke 3: 21-22, John 1: 32-34). The answer that humanity can and must make to this revelation of the Spirit, which Jesus himself calls “Comforter,” or “Advocate,” (John 14: 16, 14: 26, 15: 26, and 16:7); which is to say, someone who truly offers to stand in solidarity and work for true resolution, which comes only from an open relationship with God and neighbor. After all, service to others begins with listening, with being ready to hear the other, and being willing to be “your brother’s keeper.” (Genesis 4:10) Therein lies the third aspect of being Church, which is tied as closely to liturgy as it is to diaconal ministry: pastoral ministry. In these three aspects, the Church as community of believers in the world mirrors to the Trinity of God. In her prayer, she addresses the Father. Through the Father’s very name, “I Am who I Am,” which can also mean “I Will be there for You,” (see Exodus 3:14), humanity may believe. In her service she brings the Son - who did not come to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20: 28) – closer to the people, to give them hope for the future. In her work as a shepherd, she proves the truth of God’s word that she, inspired by the Holy Spirit, may announce by being an example of God’s love.

The Body of Christ

The Church shares thereby in God’s being, by making Him relevant, by letting Him be close to the people by her nature. But this does not mean that she is like God. The

Church is not perfect, and continually comes up short. In her visible form she is not holy in the sense of being without sin, for she exists in the affairs of people, who continually dirty their hands in the world. She does not exist above the thoughts and actions of humanity, because on earth she can only be comprised of humanity. For just this reason, in the Creeds of Nicea and Constantinople, the articles regarding the church – “and in one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” – assume the article “I believe” as subject of the sentence. Therefore, it follows that the Church cannot and may not say of itself, “Our organization is one, holy and universal, and as such is exactly what Jesus and his disciples meant and demonstrated.” Instead, it says “I believe.” Now faith is the foundation of our hopes, and the assurance of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1) The one, holy, catholic and apostolic church is not an earthly reality but an ideal. The world is on the way to reaching this ideal, and we know ourselves as members of this one body. (I Corinthians 12: 12-28) The spirit of the Church, which Paul likened in a familiar metaphor with a human body, lies therefore in the bonds of human connection in the present world, on the way to the new world which has come through Jesus Christ and at the same time is yet to come in the Kingdom of God.

In the liturgy, these connections and expectations are made visible through the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup, a sign that Christ’s body has been broken. At that moment, it becomes clear that we are the broken body of Christ, baptized in the blood of that connection. The Church continues to celebrate that sign, in memory of his death and resurrection, until he comes again and brings together all creation under one Head. (Ephesians 1:10) We are the body, both as church and as all creation. The liturgy, and in particular the Eucharist, therefore contain elements of the end of all things, the eschaton. This dimension is therefore also referred to as the eschatological dimension. Without an understanding of this dimension, the mystery of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist remains incomprehensible.

Eschaton is a Greek word which can mean both “end” and “goal.” When we speak of the Eucharist in an eschatological sense, we use both meanings of this word. The Eucharist affects the end of time as well as the goal of the end times. The breaking of the bread makes clear the goal for our existence. With this sign which he gave to his disciples,

Jesus gave one sense of its meaning. This is why he could call the bread which he shared with those whom he called his “friends” at the last supper his body, and the wine which he shared his blood. As we search for meaning, we begin to understand the sense of these words and thereby the sense of the true presence of Jesus Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Symbol and reality

Liturgy means that a visible form is given to the inspiration which is sent from Christ’s life and proclamation. It shows that there are signs which keep the hope alive of the coming completion of the Kingdom of God, and that God should be worshiped in Spirit and truth. (John 4:24) Through liturgy, the Church continues to celebrate the presence of Christ through the celebration of his death and resurrection in the past. This mystery of the life which gave itself away to the destruction of all of created reality, and thus proved itself to be stronger than death and destruction is celebrated in the church.

This is the basis for the church’s diaconal and pastoral ministries in the world. In the suffering of Christ is expression of the fact that the suffering, the oppressed, the poor and desolate – in short, those whom this world has beaten down – carry the image of the shepherd who was killed in order to be the lamb that gathers the dispersed flock, (see Matthew 26:13 and Zechariah 13:7) at the same time both penitent and penance, priest and sacrifice. The central theme of all Christian liturgy is Christ, who through the signs of bread and wine offered himself, so that we, who believe in him, will offer ourselves as living sacrifice. This sacrifice is concretely manifested in diaconal ministry, which is similarly grounded in the service of Christ himself. It is manifested because it cares about those who find themselves in need and thus specifically carry the image of Christ. Through her engagement with the least of her brothers and sisters, the Church fulfills her mission of reconciliation and liberation of the world.

One could describe liturgy as a feast with consequences. On the one hand are consequences directed to the outside world, the tasks of diaconal ministry for the church and its members. On the other hand are consequences directed to the interior, consequences for the establishment and functioning of the life of the Church. Through the sacrifice of Christ, in bread and wine and in unspeakable suffering on the cross, all of creation is redeemed from endless death. He is life, not just or most importantly the life of the redeemed individual, but the whole community of humanity in its relationship with the whole of creation. The powers which destroy life, deny the meaning of existence, and make death a threat through its resolution in a senseless no-longer-being are all brought to nothing through the resurrection of Christ. In contrast, liturgy gives witness to the hope that we may share eternal life through the resurrection, and the belief in the all-powerful continuation of existence, of the love which allows people to offer themselves for service to their neighbors.

The focus of this witness is the celebration of the Lord's supper. The evangelists tell us how Jesus dined with his disciples and gave a new application and understanding to the existing traditional Jewish blessings over bread and wine. When he breaks the bread and passes the wine, he follows the customs from before his time, but at the same time he makes tradition more relevant by adapting it to his own living and dying. Likewise, even now, liturgy repeatedly re-creates the traditional story in current times. Through this, it recognizes that we – as individuals but also as community – also want to live in this tradition which we admittedly received from the past, but which is no less important for our existence today. Therefore, liturgy should never be relegated solely to tradition, as if we could ignore the reality of our shared existence as human beings. For whoever follows Christ as Redeemer, this existence is the sign of Christ's resurrection and therefore the sign of hope for the coming Kingdom.

The risen Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, in the creatures of bread and wine, but also in us, who form his body in this world. The existence of Christ is a true presence which is not comprehensible through reason alone, and is of a higher order than we can understand, but it is also very concrete and approachable, as food and drink for living people. The arrangement that Christ set into motion by his eventual victory over that

which most threatens our existence, necessitates his resurrection – the turning point in the history of all creation – be celebrated with arranged symbolism, which can be experienced as reality because Christ's works, his living, dying, and resurrection have become the fundamental realities of those who believe in him.

The Church as Visible Sign

The church building, the home where the community gathers, is first and foremost a house. It is also referred to as such: "The House of the Lord." This is the place where the meeting of God and humanity take visible form. One may not say: this is the only place where people may meet God, because this meeting is not bound to time or place. Whoever says, "I don't go to church, because I can experience or meet God in some other place, in different circumstances, without outward forms or signs," speaks the truth in some sense. But it is only partially true, because this expression describes only half of the experience of God, and only describes the experience of an individual meeting. Of course, people experience God's presence in nature or inward contemplation, but this experience is also one-sided.

The Old or First Testament refers to the "Tent of Meeting," the holy place where Israel kept the Ark of the Covenant during its wanderings through the desert. In and around this tent, two kinds of meetings occurred, just as they do today in our churches. The members of the community meet each other, and God allows Himself to be found in clear signs. These two kinds of meetings cannot be separated from each other. Where there is no community, an individual can at most enter a church building to seek quiet and soak in the atmosphere of the sacred – which admittedly can be holy, to deliberate within his mind, to pray or just be silent, but that is not liturgy. God is present there as He is present everywhere. Where the community gathers without concrete signs of God's presence among the people, they are gathering for at most a meeting or a formation group, to discuss things or learn from each other. This all has value, but it is not liturgy. Worship

in the church, celebrating and praying together, is more than just solidarity and more than just being singularly focused on God. Worship unifies these aspects, and moves this unity to a reality where the holy and the human are bound most closely together. Just as at the Lord's Supper, which is celebrated in the church, unites godly and human attributes, so also one finds in the church building human signs and signs that have a supernatural meaning, sometimes within the same object or in the same piece of architecture.

The Lord's Table

The Lord's Supper was originally celebrated at an ordinary table, and in fact, today any table may serve as the Lord's Table. At the same time, one also refers to it as an altar, which is a reflection of the heavenly altar at which is celebrated an eternal worship to honor the Lamb that was sacrificed and is worthy to receive the praise of all creation. (see Revelation 5:13) This last attribute is difficult for people to imagine.

We cannot imagine a heavenly worship service without using earthly images. This is why we are forced to aid our efforts by transforming elements of our daily lives into signs pointing to other things. When we do this, we must maintain the right middle ground between two extremes. On the one hand, we must not be able to distinguish the item itself from the thing it points to. For example, that a table in the church has become a holy altar, so that only holy servants may touch it, even to dust it or cover it with a clean cloth. At the other extreme, the distinction between the sign and that-to-which-the-sign-refers is too great. That leads to reasoning such as: if Christ's sacrifice was offered once for all times, then our celebrations can only serve as memorials. Even when we repeat Christ's own words, with the bread and wine in our hands, just as he did, they will still remain what they are. The sacrifice of Christ is too great and too unique, quantitatively and qualitatively too different from what we can do in human means to be otherwise. What is left at the end of the meal is bread, and old bread at that, in little pieces, only useful for feeding chickens.

These two approaches, here described in their extremes, seem to be polar opposites, but they do have one thing in common. Both make too great a distinction between the sacred and the profane. In the first approach, those things which become symbols lose their original purpose and meaning, rendering them solely sacramental objects with no usefulness in daily life. The evolution of church vestments which today are barely recognizable as clothing provides an example of this phenomenon. There are also objects which admittedly do serve a very straightforward purpose, but whose practical functioning is drowned out by a symbolic interpretation or sacred meaning that they have been rendered impractical or that their original purpose has been completely forgotten.

In the second approach, the sacred is so unapproachable, that every earthly sign and human action are by definition profane. Humanity cannot bring God closer through its imperfect signs, and will forever remain in this disability. Liturgical garb is therefore unnecessary, an improvised table on sawhorses is enough for the Lord's Supper, and in the celebration itself, everything is no more than its outward appearance would suggest.

If one wants to minimize these two extremes – and it should be noted that the tendency towards the former is generally stronger in Old Catholics than the tendency towards the latter – one would see on one hand, the table that forms the focal point of the church as an otherwise ordinary table that is set aside for a well-defined purpose and is therefore functionally distinct from other tables; while on the other hand, the table is like Mount Golgotha, where the sacrifice which would redeem all creation was brought, and the sign of the grave from whence the Savior rose to reorder the world in the image of Paradise. The altar table is not in and of itself made into a holy and untouchable object because it has been set aside for a liturgical purpose, but to an ordinary object has been added an additional dimension. Thus it forms a connecting link between ordinary everyday existence and the holy, which has come about through the revelation of God in this existence. The practical function and the symbolic function both lead to the fact that one does not find on this particular table an disorderly abundance of items, but only those things which are necessary to celebrate the eucharist.

The altar table is a permanent fixture in Old Catholic churches, and forms the liturgical center of the church. Usually, the celebrating priest stands behind it, from the perspective of the congregation, but sometimes the priest stands in front of it. This is related to the developments which begin in the years after the Second Vatican Council in the Roman Catholic Church, which did not pass by the Old Catholic Church. In general, the changes in the shape of the liturgy were not completed as quickly in the Old Catholic Church as they were in the Roman Catholic Church, largely due to fundamental differences in decision-making, which at a minimum relates to the synodal aspect of the old catholic vision of the church. Therefore, one still finds that some communities continue to use the “classic” version of the altar. In those cases, one finds not so much a table, as a sort of chest placed against the rear wall of the church. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, similar altars were commonly placed on a sort of stage-like rise, with candles upon them and large paintings behind them. Thus, many parishes furnished in this era retained these altars, even though people in many other communities decided to set up a more table-like altar. This was a controversial question, in which other emotional issues also often played a role, and during which distinctions between understanding and feeling the liturgy were expressed. People felt (and still feel) that in the “classic” setting, the sacrificial nature of the eucharist receives more emphasis, whereas a set up where the leader looks at the followers and therefore stands behind the table is a more adequate expression of the fact that the eucharist is an experience of community. Still, both views are part of the theology of the eucharist and they do not need to be mutually exclusive. In a small church building, of which there are many in the Old Catholic Church, it is often not necessary or even possible to change the construction of the altar, because there is simply not enough room, and because the community aspect of the eucharist is already present through the small space and slight distance between the priest and the members.

No matter how the altar table is constructed or set up, there are always candlesticks with candles on it or next to it. In the olden days, the candles served only to provide the necessary light for the service, but today their function is almost entirely symbolic. The candle is a symbol for Christ, whom John’s Gospel called “the Light of the world.” (John 8:12) At the same time, the candlelight is a reminder to be “light in the Lord,” (Ephesians 5:8) and thereby in the form of Christ. This is made clear on certain

occasions such as the Easter Vigil, when candles are distributed to churchgoers, so that they may receive the light of the paschal candle and pass it on to others. Likewise, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, which has been dubbed the “Mary’s Light celebration” because of the candlelight procession, even though it is properly and historically a feast of Christ, not of Mary.

The Reserved Bread – Eat it or Worship it?

What bread is left after the celebration of the Eucharist can be viewed, as we stated earlier, as more than plain bread. Outside the celebration, the tangible elements of bread and wine which have been taken from their everyday function by the Eucharist retain their new meaning and greater worth.

Beyond that, those who cannot participate in the Eucharistic celebration due to illness, infirmity, or age have the right to receive the Eucharistic elements in their own living quarters. After all, the community of believers lies within the communion with the Lord, and vice versa. When the priest brings the bread of the Eucharist – the body of Christ – to the ill, the handicapped, and the aged, he or she represents the community as well as the body of Christ, so that not one of his members may be lost. The broken bread, even in its tiniest crumbs, represents the risen Christ, and continues to do so even after the celebration has ended in the strictest sense of the word. The bread is therefore stored in a specially furnished cabinet, found near the altar table. When the altar is found against the rear wall, the tabernacle stands in the middle of the altar. The wine is often difficult to save and to transport, therefore it can suffice to save the bread for later distribution.

During the Middle Ages, the Eucharistic elements that were reserved in this manner increasingly became an object for worship. The bread baked for the Eucharist – which in the Western Church is made from unleavened dough – thus increasingly lost the character of “regular bread,” and became more and more often a wafer, the “heavenly host,” raised up by the priest at the high point of the mass. Viewing this host took the place of

consuming it, and leading to a practice of excessive respect for the consecrated host, scruples prohibiting those who were not sufficiently devoted from touching it, and a strong diffidence about taking communion. The distinction between the sign and that which it indicated began to fade in various conceivable ways. In the course of this development, viewing and honoring the consecrated bread was considered sufficient to partake in the community of Christ. The last vestiges of this can still be found in the so-called “Adoration of the Holy Sacrament,” when, during a song of praise, the monstrance – an appliance made of precious metal and glass, which holds a consecrated host – is shown to the faithful during the blessing of the priest at the end of the vesper service in the evening. This practice is still allowed, as long as it is not overdone or in opposition of the general principle that the Eucharist began as a meal and should remain so, no matter how stylized the meal may be.

This is not a non-committal feast

For a long time, the earliest Christians preferred to celebrate the Lord’s Supper on or near the graves of martyrs, people who had given their lives for the as-yet impermissible spread of Christ’s word. This is the root of the practice of taking the relics of martyrs – and later of other persons worthy of honor – and bringing them to churches to save in close proximity to the altar table. Even today, one finds in most altar tables a hollowed out section in the tabletop, where several relics were inserted and sealed with a stone at the installation of the altar.

This stone is known as the altarstone, or the anointing stone. This latter name refers to the tradition of anointing a new altar at its installation with chrism, a mixture of balsam and oil. This chrism is used primarily at baptism, confirmation, and ordination; in other words, primarily for people and not for things. An altar is thus placed into service in the same way a person becomes part of the mystical body of Christ. The Roman Canon, one

of the Eucharistic prayers with a honorable heritage and rich tradition, explains this connection this way:

“Submissively we pray you,
God of heavenly power,
Pray your heavenly angel to carry this sacrifice
To the throne of your Majesty
to bring to your altar in Heaven.
And we, in our multitude,
who have a place at that altar,
and who shall receive the most precious body and blood of your Son,
Let us be blessed by you,
by all the heavenly blessings
you will grant us in your mercy.”

This prayer does not refer to the altar in the church, but to heavenly worship, in which humanity on earth may join. But joining this worship is not based on personal initiative, and nobody remains noncommittal in it. The precondition for resurrection is necessarily death, which even the Son of God could not and did not wish to avoid. In the second Eucharistic prayer in the Prayer Book of the Old Catholic Church in the Netherlands – a prayer which has some origins in the prayer of St. Hippolytus (believed to date from the beginning of the third century, but possibly later) – the idea of the eucharist as sacrifice is formulated as follows:

“Then send, we pray, your Holy Spirit,
The giver of all life and sancitification,
Over us and over these, your gifts
The bread and wine of eternal life,
And receive them from our hands
As a sacrifice that pleases you,
In which we give ourselves to you,
In that the bread which we break
Is in communion with the body of your son

and the chalice which we bless,
is in communion with his blood.”

If we can give anything to God, it is not in the first place the bread and wine, but rather we ourselves are that which is offered to God. The martyrs gave their lives in the most literal sense for Christ and his message. When we bring the oblation of bread and wine, it includes the gift of our own lives. When they are brought to an altar which is anointed as we are and in which the witnesses of earlier eras are bodily present, this oblation confronts us with the possible ultimate consequence which our faith may have for us as well. The inclusion of relics in altars thus has nothing to do with exaggerated worship of saints or heroes, but has everything to do with the fact that the celebration of the Lord's supper is not a non-committal event.

The cloths which cover the table have a similar level of meaning. Obviously, they have the same practical function as a tablecloth at an ordinary meal, but they also symbolize the robe of Christ, for which the soldiers cast lots at the crucifixion. This meaning is made clear during the simple clearing of the table after the celebration, which takes on symbolic meaning on Maundy Thursday before Easter. On that day, the Church remembers how Jesus celebrated the meal with his disciples and afterwards fell into the hands of his enemies. At the end of the service, if possible, the coverings are removed from the altar and the following selection from Psalm 22 is sung or said:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,
Why are you so far from my aid,
And the words of my distress?

These words were prayed by Jesus himself when he was hanging on the cross. In the same psalm we read:

They divide my clothes among themselves,
And for my clothing they cast lots.

This is precisely what happened, according to the Gospels (John 19:24)

Now, liturgy is not a play, in which events from the life of Jesus are dramatized. Liturgy is more than that: it confronts us with the reality of existence, because what happened to

Jesus occurs daily in our world to countless victims of senseless violence, blind hate and cruelty. God is in solidarity with these victims through the person of Christ, even through death. Thus a set of linen cloths, which in the literal sense have only a practical function, manage in the liturgy to remind us of God's solidarity, through their indication of the Son, who was a victim in this world, but who through his resurrection also conquered the powers of this world. In addition, the linen cloths on the table also indicate the resurrection: the women who discovered the empty tomb, found only linen cloths in the place where Jesus had been laid. (see John 20: 6-7)

Around the Crucified

In the first centuries Christianity found itself threatened by internal disputes around fundamental issues of the faith. The Church needed to speak out quickly on questions concerning the person of Christ and the relationship between his humanity which renders him like us, and his unity with God the Father and thus his divinity like God the Father on the other hand. The conclusion reached to this question, in Council of Chalcedon in 451, appears at first glance to be a weak compromise: Christ is fully divine and therefore exactly like God the Father, but at the same time fully human and exactly like us, except without sin. Thus, he has two natures: that of God and that of humanity. Some groups within Christianity were unable to integrate this compromise into their manner of thinking, since it did not include philosophical underpinnings for terms like nature and person. To delve further into this topic would take us too far afield.

For us, the topic of greater interest is the unity in person of the one whom, in the words of the Creeds of Nicea and Constantinople, is Christ, "born of the Father before all worlds, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, of one being with the Father, through whom all things were made," is the same one who, according to the Apostle's Creed, "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, who descended to Hell and on the third day rose again from the dead." The one who is before all time, of

the same substance as God the Father, is the same as the beaten and humbled man whom we see hanging on the cross with a crown of thorns under a sign that says, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.”

The cross takes a central place in the church; attention is always focused upon it. The cross reminds us always of God’s solidarity with His creation, with us human beings. The cross makes clear what God’s almighty power is really all about. Many people think power refers to dominance, to a person who puts everything under his will and has all means in his control, against whom everyone and everything is subjected. This image has caused much suffering throughout the years: if God is all-powerful in this manner, He is the one who causes all kinds of disasters and suffering without sharing the reason or cause for them; who allows one to live in good fortune and peace while the other is not spared an ounce of misfortune. It is right that people rebel against this image, and can’t reconcile what they hear about an almighty God who guides the world to his righteousness and pleasure, while they see how much injustice and imperfection there really is in the world. The image of such a omnipotent being does not mesh with the examination of every day, unless one wants to make a significant distinction between God’s love and His justice. His kingship is made visible to the world as his Son, who is one in substance with the Father, is crowned with thorns and seated on the throne by being raised on the cross. The omnipotence of God is revealed in the powerlessness of the crucified, who undergoes the same fate as countless others in this world. God is not the one who causes or allows the suffering in the world, but the one through whom people can reconcile the absurdity of life, because God Himself was willing to share that lot with humanity.

Two Roman functionaries who played a role in the judgment and punishment of Jesus testified to this, possibly without even realizing it. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, first asked cynically, “What is truth?” (John 18:8), but when Jesus, beaten and wearing the crown of thorns, came out, he said, “Behold the man.” (John 19:6) This Jesus is the image throughout the ages of the victim, although within that image is the fact that “though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2: 6-8) The other Roman was the centurion who was present at the death of Jesus and said, “Truly this man was God’s son!” (Mark 15: 39, Matthew 27: 54) Out of the mouths of two Romans, who did not believe in the root of the matter, comes the proof of the humanity of God and deity of the Son of Man, both as it were around the cross. This is why this sign stands central and why there are so many other symbols in the liturgy that reflect the two natures of Christ.

In the mixing of the water and wine – a piece of the readying of the elements for the Eucharistic feast – the priest can, if desired, utter a prayer derived from the Christmas liturgy which puts the essential elements of this belief into words:

The dignity of humanity
You, oh God, have wonderfully made,
and even more wonderfully restored
As this water is mixed with wine,
So may we be taken up into
the godly life of him
Who wanted to share in our person-hood.

In the prayers which are said during the Easter Vigil, when the Church celebrates her most important feast, that of Christ’s journey from death to life, the night of Easter is referred to as follows:

O truly holy night,
wherein the heavenly and the earthly,
the divine and the human are bound together.

Here we see, as it were, the intersection of two lines. The vertical line symbolizes how God from the perfection of heaven troubles Godself with the brokenness of the world by sending his only begotten son. The horizontal line shows that Jesus as a human also lived among the people and also that we must fulfill our calling on earth just as he demonstrated for us. When we make the sign of the cross over ourselves, which occurs at

several points in the liturgy and also in personal prayer, the movement is from above to below, from the forehead to the breastbone, and then horizontal, from one shoulder to the other. Thus the sign of the cross covers the entire person, just as our existence is saved in cross and resurrection.

Dialogue as the foundation of liturgy

The beginning of this article referred to liturgy's character as the answer to God's revelation. Thus the principle of liturgy as a dialogue has already been introduced. God addresses humanity and humanity answers. Just as life becomes unlivable when one loses contact with those closest relations, so also a liturgy which lacks dialogue would not only be unbearably boring, but would also miss something fundamental. The leader and the community are continually in communication, though the leader does initiate this – he leads the community.

This is not a privilege, which would raise the leader above the community, nor a task which would place him or her outside it. In contrast to the way many people still experience it, the priest is not the one who dedicates the oblations of wine and bread of his or her own initiative or through receipt of a special power. The priest goes on behalf of the congregation into the business of the celebration of the Eucharist “in the person of Christ.” This is an issue which has caused much confusion throughout the years. The one who in truth completes this transaction is Christ himself, as “high priest of the good things to come,” (Hebrews 9:11) “who entered once for all the Holy Place ... thus obtaining eternal redemption.” (Hebrews 9:12) The priest, together with the community, places the sacrifice of Christ into the context of this day and age, using the signs of bread and wine and the words of Christ himself. This is why, after the elements have been prepared, he also invites the congregation to join him in prayer:

Pray, brothers and sisters,

That our sacrifice may be received by God,
The Almighty Father.

The congregation replies:

May the Lord take this offering from your hands,
To the glory and honor of his Name,
And to our salvation and that of his whole Church.

Thus, the priest has not received some secret power to transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and the words of the priest also do not bring about a mysterious change in the substance of bread and wine. The ordained servants are and remain people like any other.

But what is the purpose of the ordination which they have received? This function may also be symbolized by a cross. It stands in the community, among the people. The servants come from the congregation, and the function they perform is a human function; therein lies the horizontal line. But it comes equally from above, as a sign God has made, and which indicates Him. The church does not ground the ministry in itself, but in the command Christ gave to the apostles. The priest who leads the Eucharist does not do it of his own power, but by representing Christ, who gave himself as a sacrifice. This is why the minister cannot conduct the service based on whim, and why the dialogue which forms the Eucharist is set and ordered. Even the order is not based on whim, even though it is at the end of the day the work of man: people in the distant and not-so-distant past wrote the words; people composed the music and wrote the words to the hymns and songs; habits were created by people and sometimes also stopped by them. But the liturgy as such is the Church's business. The Church, doing this business, has both a human and a divine nature, just as Christ does. The outward forms are thus transferrable to other forms, but the essence remains the same.

It goes without saying that this nature of dialogue determines in large part the liturgical practice. The Old-Catholic worship service is characterized by dialogue and responsive singing. Even when the congregation is small and the church choir is made of only a few

singers, the worship service is never a monologue by a priest; there is a spoken and a sung reply. Likewise, a priest conducting private mass without a congregation is unthinkable in the Old-Catholic Church. There is always a community, even if the community consists of a handful of people. There can be no church without ministers and Eucharist, but likewise there can be no ministers and Eucharist without church.

Inward and Outward

Thus far, we have focused on matters of principle and theory, with occasional commentary about the practice and form of the liturgy. But, how should we imagine an Old-Catholic celebration? What attracts outsiders? What sustains them? And also, are there elements which bewilder or repel them? We need to be honest with ourselves and others in this regard.

One can demonstrate that the Old-Catholic Church in practice attracts people. It is precisely those who appreciate liturgy, mysticism and symbolism, who feel drawn to the Old-Catholic Church. This is not just a handful, and the number of people who have consciously joined the Old-Catholic Church in one way or another in the present time is increasing, and is large relative to the “born and bred” Old Catholics.

Those who attend an Old-Catholic Eucharist for the first time usually notice two things: the gravity, care and respect which surround everything having to do with the celebration; and the personal attention given to all. There is almost no place where someone can enter a church and leave again without being noticed by member of the congregation, a verger, the pastor, or a volunteer specially chosen for this service, and having exchanged a few words with them. A “stranger” in the service will invariably be assisted in the finding of texts and songs in the liturgical books. After the service, the priest usually stands in the church vestibule to personally greet all in attendance, and there is a good chance that it will be precisely the unfamiliar person who will be invited for a cup of coffee in the church hall or rectory. Of course, that depends on the relative size of the congregation.

Large churches with a great bevy of visitors are the exception rather than the rule. Most Old-Catholic Churches in our country have seats for less than one hundred persons, and in truth one must confess that they are usually not all occupied. This is sometimes considered a problem, but it also offers an advantage: it leaves room for personal attention and close relations among the members of the congregation.

The other aspect – that of the gravity, care and respect – can be explained historically as well as sociologically. Jansenism traditionally emphasized the inward preparation of those who would take part in the Eucharist. The fact that people had to celebrate services in “*schuilkerken*”¹ for a long time due to societal pressures also contributes to this. Because people could not consider improving the outsides of these buildings, by beautifying the gable or building towers for example, they turned inwards in this way as well. So there are many places where the house of God is beautifully furnished, and where the interior decorations, altar linens, and vessels are cared for with great care and energy, and at great financial investment. Even in the smallest parishes, one finds delicate old vestments at hand, church silver of museum quality, antique paintings and beautiful carvings in the pulpits, altars and communion benches. The small congregation which inherits all these things sees themselves to this day as responsible for the proper care and maintenance of these. But they do not see themselves primarily as conservators of antiquities. Rather they would like to preserve a spiritual inheritance, and not in a static manner, as if no development was possible, but rather in a dynamic manner, so that new things and current trends can influence a living tradition.

This is why some liturgical developments occurred at a slower tempo and more thoughtful manner than they did in the Roman Catholic Church, especially in our country. The consensus-based decision-making method mentioned earlier, which has both episcopal and synodal characteristics, also contributed to the gradual nature of these developments. All this means that some Roman Catholics who observe an Old-Catholic service sometimes recognize things from their own past, sometimes to their joy, sometimes to their bewilderment. It takes some time to discover that old forms can

¹ hidden Catholic churches, which were legal as long as they were not visible from the street, trans.

contain other meanings than they had known. This is one of the larger problems the Old Catholic Church confronts in the area of liturgy.

Some believe that because of this historical development, there is also not enough attention paid to its understanding of the priestly office and the Eucharist. It is also not easy to make it clear that the priest, who stands alone in front of a baroque altar and behind a closed gate a few steps higher than the believers, and thus completely closed off from them, is not more important than they are and that he has no power to do things beyond what the believers can observe, that there is no such thing as a material change in the bread and wine which is solemnized by the priest through the words of power said at the proper moment, accented with incense and altar bells. On the other hand, the Old Catholic church does recognize the danger hidden in simply abandoning the old practices without any discussion. Whomever completely changes the interior of his own home in one day, and puts all the old furniture at the curb for the trash pickup, risks finding himself the next day like the proverbial cat in the warehouse who doesn't feel at home in his own house, even if the old interior was horribly old-fashioned and the new one includes every modern convenience. The question is more complicated when it comes to the Church, because the question is not one of aging vs. modern. The dilemma lies in the question of forms which sometimes do not adequately clarify their meaning, but instead complicate it through the emotional weight which have become attached to these forms. This is directly connected to the regularity of the study of liturgy, which shows that those things which are placed under the rubric of ritual can take on other meanings than those which it had originally, which in some cases can even be the polar opposite of the original ones.

Recent Developments

In the days after Vatican II, it seemed as if the doors which had previously been closed in the Roman Catholic Church had been opened. The spirit of "*aggiornamento*,"

“updating” the church, impacted primarily the liturgy in the Netherlands. This could not pass unnoticed by the Old Catholic Church.

The basic pattern for the celebration of the Eucharist in both churches was the Roman Missal of 1570. Still, the design of the liturgy in the two churches was different. There are two reasons for this. First, since the beginning of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the time when the two sides of Dutch Catholicism began to split apart, they developed separately from each other. In the nineteenth century, when the Roman Catholic Church took a strong step into the public sphere of the Netherlands as a result of newly-acquired religious freedom, the Old Catholic Church – which at that time still preferred to be called the Roman Catholic Church of the Old-Episcopal Cleresie – led a woeful existence. The Roman Catholics could build large, often neo-gothic churches in cities and towns, which were a visible expression of the inspiration which came mostly from the central authorities in Rome. It was the perspective revolving around a medieval church, which literally stood in the center of the life of the people and governed and ordered that life. Uniform services of worship played an important part of that perspective.

Only rare Old Catholic churches had the means to play such a prominent or emancipated role in society. They remained in their *schuilkerken*, in which they celebrated the liturgy as they had known it throughout the previous centuries: indoors and focused on inward experience.

The philosophical movements of the era – including Jansenism– influenced the liturgy in ways still visible in Old Catholicism. The influence is of Gallicanism, which was widespread in France. This philosophy focused on the autonomy of the French Catholic church, not only in organization and in its position vis-à-vis the governance of the popes in Rome, but also in terms of liturgy. In the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century the French under the influence of Gallicanism revived local practices, often dating from the early middle ages or even earlier. A type of liturgy evolved that united two foci: the connection with these old practices which had fallen into oblivion after the importation of the Roman liturgy in the sixteenth century; and at the same time, a desire,

especially in the liturgy of the word, to meet the contemporary needs more than the Roman worship. This liturgical Gallicanism had an unmistakable influence on the portion of the Catholic church in the Netherlands which later formed the Old Catholic Church. From liturgical Gallicanism flowed solemnity and simplicity, linked to intentional shaping of the liturgy, a strong Biblical orientation, and a critical but respectful manner of handling the most important hallmarks of the tradition. All these elements transferred into the liturgy of the Old Catholic Church, and are readily found in various parts of the liturgical books.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the Old Catholic Church initiated changes which led to the general use of Dutch in the service in 1909, and the complete rejection of Latin, which was in no way the case in the Roman Catholic church. While the replacement of this respectable, though for most believers unintelligible, church language with comprehensible (and singable) Dutch constituted a very progressive reform for the bishops of the time, it did have two negative consequences, whose impact was more strongly felt after fifty years. The Dutch used in the Book of the Mass and the Book of Vespers was experienced as old-fashioned in the 1950's, and when the liturgical books were revised, people were especially careful with the language around the celebration of the Eucharist. The order of the Roman Mass of 1570 was barely changed in any real sense. Some of the seasonal songs were eliminated or replaced by a choice of hymns, the silent prayers of the priest were made audible for the congregation, the pope was not prayed for by name, and the ranks of the saints named during the Eucharistic prayers were reduced. These were not fundamental changes, but the developments in the study of liturgy were set forth. There were continual calls for a new order for the Mass, which led to the appearance of a new Order for worship at the end of the 1960's, which included more of the current language and drew from the scholastic insights into the historical development of the Roman liturgy.

At approximately the same time a new hymnal was begun, in the form of a binder which included more modern hymns. This collection was an addendum to the Old-Catholic Songbook, which dated from 1942 and contained 281 songs of very divergent character and heritage. There were hymns that were only sung in the seventeenth or eighteenth

century in the catholic church; there were familiar hymns from the protestant and Anglican neighborhoods; and songs written by more contemporary poets within the Old Catholic circle. The book circulates a spirit which generally speaks a bit more to people in our time, even though people find many worthwhile things in it.

The number of books which a churchgoer needed in order to be able to reasonably follow the service, after the additions of 1980, had reached at least four. This made the structure of the service somewhat opaque for occasional visitors, but also Old Catholics themselves. In addition to this practical concern, people began to long for a cycle of Bible readings which allowed more different segments to be read than would come as part of the order of liturgy, for more contemporary hymns, for a better notation of Gregorian chant, for a wider variety of choices in Eucharistic prayers, and more contemporary Dutch. There was a desire to bring all liturgical texts, hymns, and readings into one easy-to-handle book, which had not succeeded earlier because of the breadth of the tradition. Beginning in 1980, two commissions have been working on this project. The first result of their work was, after a number of pre-publications and provisional editions, a new Old-Catholic Hymnal saw the light of day in 1990. The original commission to put everything in one volume appeared not to be possible at the moment: a sign of the great riches the Old Catholic church has saved in its liturgy and the treasures she has created through weaving together the traditions borrowed from others. Still, there are again voices who find it desirable to try this project again.

The Hymnal of 1990

The scope of this hymnal for one of the smallest churches in the Netherlands is interestingly much larger than that of the Songbook of the (large) Churches. The contents are much more varied, as befits the structure of the Old-Catholic liturgy. In it there are songs in couplets, but also songs from other genres. Alongside the one hundred fifty unrhymed psalms which are sung in old Gregorian chant form - which would get a

place later in a book with liturgical texts - one finds in the hymnal over a hundred musical settings of the psalms. This includes rhymed psalms as are sung in the Protestant churches, unmetred songs, responsive psalms in which the choir sings the text and the congregation sings a recurring refrain, and settings for multiple voices which largely come from the Anglican Church.

After this follows two hundred canticles which have a well-defined role in the liturgy. Many of these are Gregorian chants, a very old and refined style of singing, which has no time signature and a particular notation, which give more nuances in performance than regular musical notation. Until then, the Old Catholic Church only used a bastardized form of Gregorian chant, while the Roman Catholic Church began in the twentieth century to use songs based on older sources. The improvements in the 1990 edition come from handwritten sources dating from the ninth through the beginning of the twelfth century. These sources, of course, have Latin, not Dutch, texts. The Commission for Liturgical Music continued and advanced the work that had begun at the start of the century with much attention and great precision in order to not alter the flow of the original melody. One could raise the criticism that the original melody was so tied to the original Latin that they could not support texts in other languages. This discussion also occurs outside the Netherlands, and nobody has yet had the last word. In this manner, a number of songs developed over the course of almost eight years, including introits to the Eucharist on Sundays and major feasts, sung prayers, responsive chants, songs to introduce the scripture readings, and Gregorian chants for special days.

These liturgical songs are followed by 342 hymns, including many familiar ones which are generally sung in most Dutch churches. But there are also hymns which are part of the specific Old-Catholic legacy. This includes Christmas and Easter carols, many from Flanders. Though these were relatively well known in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, they were only saved as part of the living tradition of the Old Catholic Church. Conservation certainly seems appropriate in this case! In this century, after Dutch became the language used in worship, Old-Catholic poets and composers were also active, which led to the additions in the earlier hymnals. A number of these new songs were also incorporated in the new book. These composers included Anton B.H. Verhey

(1871-1924), Alex de Jong (1889-1956) and Andreas Rinkel (1889-1979), former archbishop of Utrecht, who composed songs and anthems for the mass, and thus are not yet forgotten. Under the heading of “homegrown poets,” aside from the classic Andreas van der Schuur (ca. 1656-1719) and Cornelis Kuiper van der Stam (1771-1837), we include the Bishop of Deventer, Engelbertus Lagerwey (1880-1959), and the above-named Archbishop Rinkel. Modern poets who contributed to the contents of this part of the hymnal include Jan de Wit (1914-1980), J.W. Schulte Nordholt (1920-1995), Th. J.M. Naastepad (1921-1996), Willem Barnard (b. 1920), Ad de Bester (b. 1923), and Huub Osterhuis (b. 1933), who left an important imprint in Dutch religious poetry.

Twenty-eight settings for the service music for the Eucharist – the kyrie eleison, the song of praise Gloria, the acclamation “Holy, holy, holy Lord” in the Eucharistic prayers, and the Agnus Dei at the breaking of the bread – round out the book. These include the works of contemporary local composers, but also rest on foundations of compositions from the early Middle Ages.

When the Hymnal was reprinted in 2006, a small supplement was added with a few more hymns and a contemporary ordinarium – according to some too contemporary – by Daan Manneke (b. 1939).

The 1993 Church Book

The publication of the Church Book of 1993 is of great importance, and occurred after portions of it were published earlier for trial use. This book includes a set order for the Eucharist, and the texts for the seasonal prayers which occur within the service. In addition, it included all the texts which are used during the sacraments and a few non-sacramental services, and the orders for the liturgy of the hours, which will be discussed later in this article. The last part of the Church book includes the unrhymed psalms and canticles mentioned earlier. An appendix contains supplemental liturgical material as well as lectionaries for the Eucharist and daily liturgy of the hours, as well as a calendar for those feast days and memorials with fixed dates. The Biblical readings, using various

translations and brought together in the Lectionarium – which was published at the same time as the Church Book – are read according to a three-year cycle which sets a schedule for every Sunday and feast. The Church seasons follow the same schedule in each of the three years.

The Church Year

The Church organizes time according to a calendar of celebrations and days of mourning. Easter is intentionally the principle feast; all other celebrations are derived from Easter, and vice versa. Easter is the culmination of every Sunday's celebration. Every Sunday, every first day of the week, is the day of Christ's resurrection.

The Church marks a period of time forty days before Easter, appropriately known as the Forty Days' Time. Formerly, it was known as the Time of Fasting [Lent – trans.], and this name is still used, but this name inappropriately accents a practice which is not commonly used anymore. Preparation for Easter is not only – or even primarily – about starving the body or denying oneself pleasures, but about reflection and anticipation, the counting of the days until our risen Lord rises in our midst.

The last Sunday before Easter is Palm Sunday. On this day, the Church celebrates the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem, when the faithful wait with palm branches in their hands and call "Hosanna," a cry of "please help" of Hebrew origin, to give voice to the waiting of Israel. This day marks the beginning of Holy Week.

The Thursday of that week, White Thursday, is set apart for the commemoration of the supper which Jesus celebrated with his friends; while Good Friday shows the suffering and death of Jesus. In a sober, but impressive service, the passion story according to John is read, after which the cross, the sign of suffering and defeat of death, is shown to the faithful in three phases. Through a long series of prayers on this day, the needs of the world – of all of creation – are brought before God. In the so-called Improperia, texts are sung or spoken in which the crucified confronts his people with the good deeds of God as contrasted with the bad deeds of the people. The reply to this, in Greek, is "Holy God,

holy and mighty, holy Immortal One, have mercy on us.” This is one of the few times when Dutch gives way to another liturgical language. It is the language which was understood by almost everyone in the early Christian world. This emphasizes the global reach of the cross, but also something more. What happened to Jesus tragically happens to countless other innocent people every day, who are tortured and killed everywhere around the world. The call for mercy for a world in which Christ is crucified is thus universal and arises in all languages from all the peoples in the world, who have become God’s people through Christ’s sacrifice, regardless of what they have done. In truth, it must be said that one challenge which adheres to this Improperia: it is not always clear who they address – whether it is the whole world, or the Jewish people – and who is the one who is speaking – whether it is Christ or God the Father. In addition, the very deliberate manner of the Improperia on Good Friday throughout the years has served as instigation for the hate crimes against Jews who were found guilty of the murder of Christ and therefore of God Himself.

Holy Saturday is the day of the peace of the grave. The Church thus refrains from celebrating the Eucharist, until evening has fallen and the Vigil of Easter begins. Then begins the most symbol-laden celebration of the catholic church. This celebration is so all-encompassing that we can barely begin to describe this celebration in this article. The fire is lit and blessed, in the dark, because the coldness and the dimness of the grave surround us in the world in which we live. The paschal candle is lit from the new fire. The paschal candle is a candle of very large proportions, decorated by a cross and other symbols. The flame is divided and the light of God, which hangs by altar, is lit again. This lamp, which ideally should always remain burning until the following Easter, was quenched along with all the other lights after the service on White Thursday. This lamp represents the presence of God in the church as His house on earth. When God hides His Face, as is symbolically represented on Good Friday, dusk covers the earth. The Paschal candle remains burning at all services after the Easter Vigil, until Ascension Day, because the resurrection has brought light to us and to the whole cosmos.

During the Easter Vigil, the water of baptism is also blessed, because this night is a pre-eminent time for baptism. In olden times, those who were preparing for baptism – the baptismal students or catechumens – would be brought step by step during the Forty Days

time to their new birth in water and the Holy Spirit. Of course, at the Easter Vigil, the Eucharist is celebrated, because baptism and the Last Supper are closely linked. Through baptism one becomes a member of the body of Christ, which is also what the community of those who celebrate the eucharist is. Even when there are no baptismal candidates, which has happened more frequently after the baptism of infants became the norm and thus the baptism of adults became the exception, the Eucharist is celebrated, because it is the supper of the risen Lord, which his disciples remember in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:35).

The Easter season lasts fifty days, until Pinksterfeest [Pentecost]. This word is derived from the ancient Greek word pentekoste, which means nothing more than the number fifty. The season of joy thus lasts longer than the season of intention and preparation. On the fortieth day after Easter, the Church remembers the Ascension of the Lord. In the past, as a sign of this, the Church extinguished the Paschal candle. This was not an optimal symbol, for one could suppose that the Lord was less present, or entirely absent, which of course does not mesh with his real presence in the Eucharist.

During Pentecost we celebrate the coming forth of the Holy Spirit, who was seen as tongues of fire on the heads of those who had gathered in Christ's name (Acts 2:1-4). The good news was heard in all languages, a contrast to the lament which arises in all the languages of the world on Good Friday, and also a contrast to the history of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11: 1-9), one of the scripture readings for Pentecost.

On the first Sunday after Pentecost, the feast of the Holy Trinity is celebrated, the announcement of the mystery that God exceeds the understandings of single and multiple, and thereby the possibilities and limits of our understanding and feeling. On the Thursday after this Feast, we once again remember the institution of the Eucharist, but this time with undisturbed joy, which is not overshadowed by the approaching suffering of the Lord. This day is called the Day of the Holy Sacrament. This celebration began in the thirteenth century and was influenced by the aforementioned reverence of the bread of the Eucharist. Thus, it is sometimes criticized by those who believe that the Eucharist is in essence a meal and that prayer to one of the elements of this meal is not consistent with the Old Catholic theology that surrounds it. In the Swiss Christkatholische Kirche

has therefore been left out of the newly instituted *Gebet- und Gesangbuch* [Prayer book and hymnal].

After this, we begin the season “without feasts.” The Sundays are counted as Sundays after Pentecost and they have a recognizable name which affects the readings in the Eucharist, sometimes to the extreme. They follow the events of the Gospels in order, using Matthew’s Gospel the first year, Mark’s the second, and Luke’s in the third. The fourth Gospel, John, is usually found in the Easter season and a number of other important days. The readings from the Old Testament are linked to the themes in the Gospel readings, while Letters from Paul are read in large consecutive chunks, so that over the course of a number of Sundays an entire letter is delivered.

This “season without feasts” is not entirely without celebrations. Of course, every Sunday is a celebration, a mini-Easter, because Easter is the greatest Sunday. But there are also commemorations which are tied to specific dates and may sometimes be celebrated on a Sunday. We will name a few here: on June 5 St. Boniface and his companions are commemorated; on July 22 St. Mary Magdalene, the woman to whom the risen Christ first appeared and whom the old church dubbed “apostle-like” because she brought the news to the apostles; the sixth of August is the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, which according to tradition happened on Mount Tabor, though it is not mentioned explicitly in the Gospels; on August 15 the Rest of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebration (the Old Catholic church disavows the dogma of the bodily ascension of Mary); Mary’s birth is commemorated on September 8 and on November 1 we celebrate All Saints Day, followed the next day by All Souls, the remembrance of all those who preceded us in death and rest in Christ. On November 7 we celebrate the great missionary of our region, Willibrord, the patron saint of the Dutch church.

The first Sunday of Advent, the preparation for Christmas, marks the beginning of the new Church year, but in truth, there is no real new beginning. The year of salvation does not orient itself to a calendar or a church year, it has no end, just as eternal life has no end nor beginning, because God is without beginning. There is no time in which he was not, and there shall never be such a time.

The four Sundays of Advent, which literally means “arrival,” or even “the coronation” of the Lord, leads to Christmas, the most popular feast in Western Europe. Yet Christmas is less important than Easter, and this is apparent in the Church year. There are fifty days of Easter, and to make this clear, they are not called “Sundays after Easter,” but rather “Sundays of Easter.” Yet the season of Christmas is short. The Sunday which follows Christmas is called “the Sunday after Christmas.” Even the Second Day of Christmas [Dec. 26, trans.] is not hallowed solely for Christmastide, but also for the first one to give his life for the will of Christ, Stephen the martyr. Easter is celebrated for eight Sundays, seven full weeks plus one day; but Christmas continues to be celebrated for eight days, the so-called octave. The octave includes the days honoring John the Baptist, and the Holy Innocent children killed by Herod of Bethlehem out of fear for the messiah. On January 1, the day when society rings in the New Year, the Christmas octave closes with the feast of the Holy Name and the circumcision of Jesus. Through the circumcision, Jesus is joined in the covenant God made with Abraham and the whole people of Israel, and receives the name “that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2: 9-11)

The season of Christmas also includes Epiphany, on January 6. This feast has become known with the more popular name of Three Kings. The worship of the magi is in reality only one aspect of this feast which is unusually rich in meaning. After the middle of the fourth century, an exchange occurred between the East, which had earlier been celebrating the arrival of Christ on January 6 and linked this celebration with his baptism in the Jordan River, and the West, which laid more emphasis on the nativity on December 25. Thus we see the convergence of three themes: the worship of Christ by the wise men, his baptism by John in the Jordan River, and the miracle of the water turned into wine at Cana which marks Jesus’s first public appearance.

On February 2 is the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, also known as the Feast of the Purification of Mary, or Candlemas. Forty days after his birth, Jesus, like all other first-born sons of Israel, was presented in the temple. At this service, candles are blessed and distributed, to symbolize the light that “for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory of your people Israel.” (Luke 2:32)

As time marches on, the Forty Days begins again, with Ash Wednesday, the day in which people recall their mortality in a mood of sorrow and mourning in their weakness. As a sign of this, we sprinkle ashes on our foreheads, “because we are dust, and to dust we shall return.” With this, we close the circle. The last act of a person’s life, death, is followed by the resurrection of Christ, and it is Easter again. The Church year is a cycle, a circuit, just like all existence. But it is not a cycle like that of a wheel, which simply turns on its own axle without progressing or developing. Existence is more like an expanding spiral, and not a downward spiral, as many today are inclined to believe, but an upward spiral. Life on earth develops, against the stream of days and all the pessimism of modern existence, slowly but surely to its completion, the Kingdom of God, which descends as a new Jerusalem from heaven, and claims the world (see Rev. 21:2).

The Colors of the Days

The days of our lives are not all the same, otherwise, existence would become so monotonous that we would lose our sense of time. In our daily lives, Mondays are different from Fridays, and Wednesdays are not the same as Sundays, because the circumstances in which we live those days differs, because we do different things. It is the same in the church. As the day of Resurrection, Sunday serves a particular function: this is the day in which the community comes together to celebrate Easter every week. The seasons of the year also differ from each other, and summer feels different than winter, so that people dress differently, and act differently. This is also reflected in liturgical practice. Throughout the year, the Church and her servants dress in ever-changing robes and ornaments.

The first Christians did not use specific liturgical vestments, and did not borrow them from any temple cult, neither the Greco-Roman, nor the Jewish. But it is always possible that people dressed in fitting attire for coming together around the table of the Lord. In any case, there was definitely special clothing for those being baptized, who after their baptism were clothed in a white robe. The bishops, priests and deacons initially dressed in the ordinary clothing of Roman citizens, but by the sixth century there is already

evidence that special items of clothing were worn for the worship service, which in form and style really did not differ from everyday clothes. In the early Middle Ages, this wide robe, called a *paenula*, disappeared from everyday wear and became an exclusively liturgical garment. It was used until the tenth century for all orders of ministry, except the deacons, who wore a more functional garment, the dalmatic, presumably because they had more concrete and bodily work to do than the priests. The *paenula* was actually quite a cumbersome piece of clothing: it was virtually bell-shaped, so that one had to pull up at the elbows if one was going to do anything with one's arms. It was also called a *casula*, which means "little house," because it completely enclosed the wearer. The word "chasuble" is derived from this. In the Middle Ages, people began to shrink the roomy measures of the chasubles, so little remained of the once wide draped court robes but a stiffly hanging flap in the front and back with recesses for the arms, which led to the rather unfortunate nickname of "violincase." Since the midpoint of the last century, the Roman Catholic Church has returned to older styles, a development which also proceeded in the Old Catholic Church at a later date. In many places the violin case chasubles are still available, and they are sometimes beautiful examples of needlework.

Whatever their form, the chasuble and a portion of the other liturgical vestments have different colors, which since the Middle Ages have alternated according to the liturgical year. The front of the altar can also be provided with a cloth of a complementary color. The color for feast days is as a rule white, the color of innocence. The newly baptized are clothed in white, as a sign of their new birth, with the charge to wear this unsullied until the judgment of God, that is to say, that until they reach the final destination, human beings should pattern their lives on that of Christ, to be as he was. Often the white altar cloths for high holy days have brocade and embroidery, so that they look more gold colored than truly white.

Red has two different, but related, meanings, so that it is used for two different occasions. On Pentecost, it symbolizes the red of the fire which was seen when the Spirit descended. On commemorations of martyrs, such as that of Stephen the first martyr, the color red indicates that they were full of Holy Spirit (Acts 7:55), and at the same time it reminds one of blood, which was spilled for the witness of Christ, through whose blood creation

was redeemed. That is why red vestments can be used on Good Friday, and also on Palm Sunday, as “Hosanna,” the cry of freedom suddenly bursts forth, which later changes to “crucify him” . . . Often, however, Good Friday is remembered in black. The thought behind this is that the Church is depressed by the brokenness of the world and dies with the Redeemer its godforsakenness and death.

In the past, black was also used in Eucharistic celebrations for the dead. Occasionally this still happens, if it is specifically requested. But today it is generally experienced as an expression of an emotion which does not befit Christians. Black allows for no light, while we know that through death we can see resurrection, because Christ arose from the dead. Black has therefore been replaced by purple, a color which is also seen during times of introspection and preparation, in the Forty Days Time and Advent, periods which call for self-examination.

Green is the color of nature, which seems to awaken after winter and to clothe itself in green after its resurrection, just as Christ was resurrected. Green is therefore the color that reminds one of resurrection and witnesses to the hope of everlasting life. All Sundays without particular feasts are therefore celebrated in green, because they are all miniature Easters.

The priest wears not only a chasuble, but also other vestments, which we will discuss briefly. Over the cassock, which is usually black for priests and purple for bishops, comes first a shoulder cloth or amice. This is crafted from white linen and includes two cords for attaching it. It amice functions as a kind of collar to protect the collarless alb. It goes without saying that a cloth is easier to wash and maintain than a white robe which reaches to the floor and is sometimes decorated with lace. In the past, people made rather grandiose embellishments to these, but fortunately it seems that simplicity has returned. The alb is held closed with a cincture, which looks like a cord with two knots or tassels on its ends. The stole lies over the alb. It is a narrow band of fabric, which often has crosses or other appropriate symbols on the ends. Over this, the priest wears the chasuble.

The bishop wears approximately the same outfit, with the addition of a miter at solemn occasions. He then carries a shepherd's staff in his left hand and on his right hand he wears a ring. These three signs of the bishop's office are handed to him during his investiture. He wears a pectoral cross over his chasuble. Gloves are still worn on very rare occasions, though they are officially part of the so-called pontificalia, as are special liturgical footwear. These are also worn by a handful of priests as a remnant of the time of *schuilkerken*.

The deacon does not wear a chasuble. Rather, as noted earlier, he wears a dalmatic, which has sleeves, which gives the wearer more room to move than a chasuble, when it has retained its original form.

The Eucharist

The order for the Eucharist in the 1993 Church book assumes a celebration on Sunday and feast-days by a congregation, led by a priest. The priest is normally the person who serves the Eucharist; if a deacon is present, which is usually not the case, he or she fills an assisting function. When a bishop performs the service, it is not fundamentally different than when a priest does.

Usually in a congregation there is only one celebration on Sunday, in contrast to many Roman Catholic parishes, where two or more services on a Sunday are normal. This has a practical as well as an idealistic reason. The most obvious is that most congregations are not large and only have one priest. It is often not necessary to celebrate the Eucharist twice, because there is enough room for all the members of the congregation, and because a second celebration, which would mean more work for the priest, would be superfluous. Moreover, it would divide the already not-too-large congregation, which is not considered very desirable. But there is also a whole other kind of reason to celebrate the Eucharist only once on that day. The day can be viewed as a symbol of time in general. In God, there is no time, for God is eternal; but the person is time-bound and divides his

time in hours and days. Hours are not observable, but they are divisions of an observable unit of time, the day, the time which passes between two sunsets which we can see with our own eyes. The day is thus the symbol of time in general. Within time, the sacrifice of Christ, who as we have seen is the true host of the Eucharist, has occurred once and for all time. The effort to bring this sacrifice into the present, therefore, should only occur once per day, unless there is urgent need.

The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist begins with the introit, which consists of an unrhymed portion of a psalm which is sung according to one of the Gregorian chant formulas. The first portion of this, the antiphon, is usually a very complicated tune, which is preferably sung by the choir. The second part, as a rule a line from the same psalm from which the antiphon came, is sung responsively between the choir and the congregation. With the verse, "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, Now and forever, Amen," the sung psalm is ended, after which the antiphon is repeated. In practice, the introit is often replaced by hymns from the songbook, especially in those places where there are few choir members or where this type of singing is found to be too difficult or not celebratory enough to start worship.

The priest, accompanied by one or more acolytes, has entered the church in the meantime. Acolytes are usually younger persons, boys as well as girls, but sometimes also adults. In solemn services, the cross and the altar are censed as an introduction to the place where the focus of attention will be during the service. After an opening formula in the form of a greeting, the priest and the congregation say the confession of sin, for which there are two formulas. The first one contains some reciprocity: the priest confesses his sins on behalf of the community of believers - both those on earth as well as those already in the Kingdom of God - and the community does the same before the priest. The second form is more social in nature.

After the confession there is always an pronouncement of forgiveness and reconciliation. The choir and the congregation sing the first two fixed songs of the mass: the Kyrie Eleison and the Gloria. The first is a remnant from a litany-esque prayer, in which different needs and groups of people are summed up, and after each bidding is answered

“Lord, have mercy.” Today only the responses remain; the biddings have disappeared. In the hymnal are also a few alternatives, which also restore these biddings. In the song of praise which follows, joins in with that which the angels sang when Christ was born (see Luke 2:14), “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to those on earth whom He loves.” On the days when purple vestments are worn, and thus where introspection is the dominant theme, this song of praise is consistently omitted. A prayer, sung by the priest which usually contains a summary of the theme of the celebration, leads to the readings from the Holy Book. Usually there are three readings: one from the Old Testament, one from the epistles in the New Testament, and one from the Gospels. Between the first and second readings, a portion of a psalm is sung which is relevant to that which has just been read. After the second reading, an antiphon consisting of a tri-fold Hallelujah, repeated and alternating with some verses from the psalms, is sung. This hallelujah is replaced with a psalm with a more subdued character during the Forty Days time. On Sundays, after the Gospel a sermon is preached, sometimes followed by a song. The creed of Nicea-Constantinople closes the true service of the Word, which then segues into the service of prayer, which consists of a series of intercessions said by the priest, and answered by the community.

The salutation of peace serves as the transition to the service of the Table. In many congregations, the salutation of peace – a gesture of underlying connection – is truly exchanged among members of the congregation in the form of a handshake. Then the bread and wine are brought forward for the actual celebration of the meal. The hosts - small wafers of unleavened bread, sometimes very thin, sometimes more recognizable as bread - are prepared on the dish, called the paten, and the cup is prepared by pouring wine and water in it. The congregation sings a psalm or a hymn during this time, while contributing their financial assistance. The priest prays the prayer over the gifts, which leads into a responsive introduction to the Eucharistic prayer, called the preface. Choir and congregation reply with the third of the set songs: “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of heavenly power.”

For the Eucharistic prayer, which forms the focus of the celebration, twelve texts are indicated, which can be used as the priest pleases. For the prefaces, more words are

available, which vary according the Church season or celebration. The twelve possible texts are: the Roman Canon from the Roman Missal of 1570, the “classic” text for the Eucharist in the Western Church; an adaptation of a prayer from the *Apostolic Tradition* by Hippolytus from the beginning of the third century; a prayer from 1982 that has been adopted by all the Old-Catholic Churches in the Union of Utrecht; a prayer uniting elements of various Western, but non-Roman, traditions; an adaptation from the Syrian Addai and Mari canon; two prayers from the Anglican Church of Canada; a prayer from the Taizé community; the so-called Canon of the Boskapel,² which is very popular in Roman-Catholic circles; two prayers written by Huub Osterhuis; and one completely sung Eucharistic prayer from the Christkatholische Kirche of Switzerland. Each of these has their own character, and the priest can greatly influence the content and atmosphere of the celebration through the choice of prayer. The prayer that Jesus himself taught us, the Our Father, concludes the Eucharistic prayer.

After the Lamb of God, the fourth of the set songs, the priest and the believers consume the bread and wine. Usually the believers come forward to receive the Eucharistic elements while kneeling at the communion rail; in some places this also occurs while standing. People generally consume the bread after dipping it in the wine, rather than drinking directly from the common cup. This occurs primarily for practical reasons; there are many divergent practices. The service concludes with yet another hymn, a prayer of thanksgiving, and a blessing said by the priest, after which the concluding hymn is sung.

All of this is surrounded by various ritual gestures and actions, such as the sign of the cross, the beating of one’s breast during confession – a gesture in which we knock on the door of our own hearts, as it were, through self-examination - through incense, through the raising of one’s hands in a classical stance of prayer, through kneeling, standing, bowing, and countless other actions, done not only by the priest, but also the congregation.

² a Eucharistic prayer developed in an (Roman Catholic) Augustinian community called the Boskapel, or Chapel in the woods, outside Nijmegen, in the Netherlands.

The Remaining Sacraments

In the course of the Middle Ages, the number of sacraments was fixed at seven, at least according to the Western Church. These seven are baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, marriage, ordination, confession, and unction of the sick. In the chapter on catechism each of these sacraments will be discussed in more detail, so that it is sufficient here to simply provide a sketch of the practice of the two sacraments most closely related to the Eucharist: baptism and confirmation.

Baptism is offered to children and adults and the manner in which this occurs does not differ greatly. The actual practice is to pour water over the candidate three times, while naming the person baptized and the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The baptism is framed by anointing with the oil of the catechuminate (only for adults), through which the candidate enters the ranks of the catechuminate, the sign of the cross and laying on of hands on the candidate, the saying of the Creed, the promises of baptism – said by the candidate him/herself or the parents or godparents – the consecration of the water of baptism (outside of Eastertide), the anointing with the oil of chrism, the dressing in white cloth, the gift of the baptismal candle, which is lit from the Paschal candle. The priest then touches the ears and mouth of the newly baptized, just as Jesus touched someone who could neither hear nor speak (Mark 7: 31-37), and utters the Aramean word “ephatha,” which means, “be opened.” Immediately afterwards, the text from Deuteronomy 6: 4-5 is said, wherein the greatest commandment is formulated: to love God all others and to love neighbors as oneself. The person who has been touched by faith can hear this word through the ears and the heart and proclaim it in word and deed.

An important part of the rite which occurs after the actual baptism is the anointing with the oil of chrism. This chrism has already been discussed in the section on the altar. From this so-called second anointing has developed through a complicated historical route, a new and distinct sacrament, confirmation. This consists of two key elements: the laying on of hands and the anointing by the bishop. In the first centuries, baptism and confirmation were also closely linked by the time in which they were done. Those who

converted to the faith were baptized on the Easter Vigil and immediately received the anointing from the bishop. When the Church grew larger and there was no longer a bishop in every congregation, a choice arose: no longer link baptism and anointing on the same day, or to allow the priest to complete the act without a bishop. Without going into the details which are too complicated for this article, suffice it to say that the Church in the West chose the first option, while the Church in the East chose the second.

Nowadays, when those who are baptized as children reach riper years and are therefore able to confess for themselves their faith before the bishop and the congregation, they receive the sacrament of confirmation, whereby their bishop, who has made a special visit to thereby symbolize the unity of the local communities, lays hands on them and anoints them with the oil of chrism. This emphasizes that the baptized has a part in the working of the Holy Spirit, and as such is completely made part of the community of believers. Baptism leads a person into the Church, and makes him a part of the mystical body of Christ; and confirmation empowers this membership. When an adult is baptized, as a rule he or she is immediately placed in the circle of those who receive the body and blood during the same service. At the baptism of children this often does not happen; normally children are admitted to communion after a few years. In the past, people even postponed admission until adulthood and even had confirmation precede first communion. Today, people are more often of the opinion that children may also come to the Lord's supper and they make the age of first communion come earlier, so that the connection between baptism and communion is more clear and confirmation is more of a marker for the entrance to adulthood.

Liturgy over the grave

The rites surrounding burial are not sacramental. Sacraments assume an action for the living, not the dead. But the Church also concerns itself with those who have died, and this is especially expressed in liturgy. When someone has died, the church takes a central

place in leading the deceased over the grave, and to comfort the survivors with the word of Christ's Gospel.

First of all, on the night before the funeral, a so-called night wake can be held, in which the Word of God is read and proclaimed, and people pray for the deceased and the for those who must say good-bye to their loved one. On the day of the burial or cremation, the eucharist is celebrated in a solemn but ornate manner, after which in a brief ceremony, the body of the deceased which has been carried into the church, is blessed with water and incense. The water reminds the congregation of baptism, and the incense of the worth of humanity: just as the offerings at the Eucharist are censured to indicate their particular worth, the person, who is offered to God, is censured. In the time when it was not permitted in our country for Catholics to perform burial rites in churchyards, the burial would be symbolically acted out in the home of the deceased person by saying some prayers and sprinkling dirt on the coffin. For that reason, it was referred to as a "earthing," [*bearding*], and in old-Catholic circles this term is still in use. Now the solemnization of the earthing also takes place in the church, and the events at the tomb are left relatively simple. Different places have very different practices in this regard, which often has to do with things like the distance between the church and the cemetery, the size of the interior of the church and the make up of the congregation, but also with things like the choice between burial and cremation, and the personal choices of the deceased, if he or she made these known during their lifetime. However the funeral and burial proceed, the prayers and actions continually point to the risen Lord; even with death in our midst we remain an Easter people.

A cycle of hours

The Eucharist is not the only celebration of the Church. As the old saying goes, when the heart is full, the mouth spills forth. So it is in the Church, one could spend the whole day praying and celebrating. This actually did happen during the Middle Ages in some convents and monasteries. Today, of course, there is not the opportunity for this. But it

is good to know that alongside the Eucharist, there are also prayer services, some of which are still celebrated in parishes.

Monks who followed the Rule of St. Benedict, followed eight “hours” of prayer or offices: matins in the very early morning, when it is still dark; lauds at the break of day; prime at the start of the day’s work; terce at the third hour after sunrise (around 9 o’clock); sext at the sixth hour after sunrise (noon); none at the ninth hour (around 3 PM); vespers in the late afternoon; and the night prayer just before going to bed. Of these, the afternoon service has also become a tradition in parishes. The vespers consist primarily of unrhymed psalms, sung as Gregorian chants. After the opening sentences and a hymn (which formerly had come closer to the conclusion of the service, but now has come closer to the start), there follows three psalms (in the past there were five, but at the start of this century people found this too much for parish church use)’ a short passage of scripture; and Mary’s song of praise, the Magnificat, with an antiphon which denotes the church season. Sung petitions, the Our Father, and the prayer of the day conclude the service.

Aside from the order for vespers, the Church book also includes the orders for lauds, noonday prayer (sext), and night prayer. The practice of lauds differs very little from that of vespers, except that the song of Zechariah is sung instead of the Magnificat. Noonday prayer and night prayer have a simpler structure and do not alternate as much.

Sometimes, a priest is not available to lead a congregation in the Eucharist. Allowance is made for these situations by using a morning service of prayer and Scripture readings, which is in reality an expanded service of lauds from the service of hours. A lector can lead such a service. This is not an official, but a layperson who has received training which prepares him or her for such a role, and also to provide a brief talk or reflection during the service.

Closing remarks

This discussion of Old-Catholic liturgy is far from complete. There is much more to note and to explain, the backgrounds are much too complicated to be described in a few words, and actual practice is so expansive, that a few dozen pages can never be enough to give a complete picture. In addition, developments in the church and in society must leave an impression on liturgy. The worship service is and shall always be a matter for human beings, who live in a changing world, and a world which will continue to change. For this reason, liturgy will continue to develop. The trick is for the Church not to allow this development to proceed so quickly, that it estranges the people, and yet not so slowly that it seems as if nothing is happening and that the Church has no message for the world. Liturgy at its essence is proclamation of the Living Word, and it will always be found in the tension between changes that occur and the search for rest, between human emotions and the channeling of those emotions, between spontaneity and craftsmanship, progress and tradition, the future and the past. This is why it is simultaneously static and dynamic: static because worship is service to glorify the Father, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17), and dynamic because all this takes place in a world which changes and develops from one minute to the next. Starting with the faith that this development will lead to the complete realization of the Kingdom that God has promised, we may hope and trust that liturgy, within the framework of our tradition, will remain a method through which the Word of Christ, the Word who in the beginning was with God and was God (John 1:1), will be made comprehensible in the world.