

Introduction

To date, there has not been a successful attempt to monitor what goes on in liturgical celebration as it actually happens. No survey has been undertaken; the input of the laity regarding their feelings towards the Mass, for instance, is virtually non-existent. There are, however, many authors who claim, more or less by 'common knowledge,' that there is a certain amount of alienation of the laity regarding the celebration of the Mass.⁴

Ralph Keifer, in an article on ritualizing, puts it this way:

People are now being asked to do the impossible: to be continually attentive while being given no role or stance in the liturgy which would let them experience involvement.⁵

In discussing methodology for a liturgical theology, Mary Collins says, what we are faced with:

is the even greater measure of structural incongruity between the set of processes, activities, and relations which currently sanctioned liturgical practice symbolizes and the actual religious experience of many participants in Christian Worship. This is by far the greater liturgical problem.⁶

While Vatican II eliminated a great many liturgical problems by its reform of the liturgy, it has also created new difficulties to replace the old. A loss of mystery is a common complaint, usually expressed by sighs over the loss of Latin or incense. Yet simple interpersonal communication is certainly a mystery itself. A feeling of

4. C.f., Victor Turner, "Passages, Margins and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas," in *Worship*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1972), 390–412 & 482–94, Aidan Kavanagh, "How the Rite Develops: Some Laws Intrinsic to Liturgical Evolution," in *Worship*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1967), 334–47, Edward A. Fischer, "Ritual as Communication," in *Worship*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1971), 73–91, Brendan Byrne, "The Scripture Readings at Mass: Are They Really Communicating?" in *Worship*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1969), 166–74, Ralph Keifer, "Ritual Makers and the Poverty of Proclamation," in *Worship*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1972), 66–76.

5. Keifer, "Ritual Makers and the Poverty of Proclamation," 71.

6. Mary Collins, "Liturgical Methodology and the Cultural Evolution in the United States," in *Worship*. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1975), 95.

detachment is a complaint: "at least in the old days, you could say your own prayers." However, no matter what the specific obstacle is, the grounding problem is one of alienation.

This estrangement can be directly connected to liturgical performance. In particular is the lack of any real human spirit in the sacred action. Edward A. Fischer, speaking about the communication factors in ritual, says,

The man who leads ritual or directs it... needs the ability of vibrating his feelings into others - call it charisma, call it empathy.⁷

Unfortunately, there seems to be more of the opposite in most cases, but this is not impossible to solve. We believe it to be part of the greater problem, which Mary Collins has indicated.

It is to this problem that we will turn. Chapter one will demonstrate some parameters of the problem of performance in liturgy. Chapter two will offer a performance model based on the noted Russian theatre theorist, Constantin Stanislavski. The third and final chapter will show why and how this model may be applied to liturgy, in this case, the Mass.

7. Fischer, "Ritual as Communication," 80, This concern for communication is dealt with at greater length in chapter two.