

RITUAL – SYMBOL – LITURGY

Why is Mass so boring?!!

1 REFLECTIONS



- a In the last twelve months, think of the **best** liturgy you attended
- b What about that liturgy made it the **best**?
- c In the last twelve months, think of a **“bad”** liturgy you attended
- d What about that liturgy made it **“bad”**?

2 VATICAN EXAMINATION

- 1 What is liturgy?
- 2 What is ritual?
- 3 What is a sacrament?
- 4 How many sacraments are there?
- 5 What is magic?
- 6 What is the Eucharist?
- 7 What are rubrics?
- 8 What is theology?

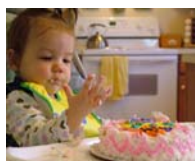


- 9 What is an apostle?
 - 10 Who celebrates Mass?
 - 11 What is the sign of the Eucharist?
 - 12 Why is there a tabernacle?
 - 13 What gifts are brought up at the Eucharist?
 - 14 How many Eucharistic Prayers are there?
 - 15 What is beautiful about the Mass?
- ... *Quick! Get a catechism!*



3 WHAT IS RITUAL?

a Examples of Ritual:



1 **Dancing:** “allows a tongue-tied person a ceremony of love”

2 **Birthday Party:** Seating – ritual communication
 Ritual time ... *past, present, future* ...
 Ritual food – personal and group
 Darkness and Light
 Ritual Song → Hip-pip and Happy Birthday
 Candles look back in life
 Three wishes look forward



... *candles ... the past* Christ **has** died
 ... *cake ... the present* Christ **is** risen
 ... *wishes ... the future* Christ **will** come again

3 A quiet word of comfort at a funeral; hug ... handshake

4 “Scoffing” a good wine – clinking the glasses; a toast

5 **The Aussie Barbecue** *par excellence* ... *expressing ourselves as a nation*
 outdoors we are an “outdoor” people
 men do the cooking men – hunters
 women are inside, in the kitchen women – home
 bring a plate or a drink dependence in a harsh land
 ... *as society changes, so does the ritual*



b Ritual as an Art or Event:



The **EXPRESSIVE** versus **UTILITARIAN**

1 Ritual not utilitarian, not useful, not practical
birthday cake is not “practical” food
and you insult the guest if you don’t try a piece!

2 Ritual **expresses** a relationship

3 Ritual is always **repetitive** ... *and this brings*

- security
- no explanation is required
“Please stand for the Alleluia verse”!!!!!!!!!!!!
- freedom to enter in or leave it
- you don’t wonder what’s happening next!



4 Repetition of itself is NOT boring [*Leave out the Gloria, it’s too boring!!*]

5 Ritual is not **magic** “Open, says-a-me!”

Magic is asking God to do what **I** want
Prayer is asking God to do what **God** wants

6 Ritual is **symbolic** and **not perfectly done**

No Warner Brothers production; no “retakes”

7 Ritual transcends time and space ... **past, present, future**

8 Ritual **does and says what we can’t do and say**



4 WHAT IS NOT RITUAL!

The Guru's Cat



When the guru sat down to worship each evening, the ashram cat would get in the way and distract the worshippers. So he ordered that the cat be tied during the evening worship.*

After the guru died, the cat continued to be tied during the evening worship. And when the cat expired, another cat was brought to the ashram so that it could be tied during evening worship.

Centuries later, learned treatises were written by the guru's scholarly disciples on the liturgical significance of tying up a cat while worship is performed.

*(*ashram = a group of people living together for spiritual development)*

5 RITUAL – TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING

- a The human search for **wholeness** and **participation** in **ALL** reality is what ritual is about.
- b Ritual is not just following a set of **rubrics** or **nigrics** [*red or black directions in the ritual, lectionary*]
“The theme of the reading is ...” Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!! No!
- c Ritual is a symbolic transformation of experience that no other medium can adequately express.
- d When we want to communicate **“more than words can say,”** we turn to ritual.
Friar Mychal Judge ofm, the Fire Department chaplain, NYC, died 9/11
- e We are personally engaged in this meaning-making, symbolizing, faith activity, yet ultimately we cannot do it alone; it is a profoundly **relational** activity ... not **I** but **we**.
- f Ritual reaches deep down into the mystery of life: many candlelight processions of vigils after deaths. Ritual not only endeavors to describe reality. It also attempts to express the *meaning* of reality. When we experience events which “stand out,” “touch the depths of our hearts,” “shake us from our usual manner of life,” ... every attempt to express the depth of meaning experiences in these “odd situations” in ordinary discourse or ways falls short, is judged inadequate.
- g The death of the twins ... *at the funeral* grandmothers lighting the candles, the parents blowing the out.
- h The death of the life member of the surf club and “godless” surfers performing their ritual of farewell.
- i Ritual language is the language of **metaphor**, of **imagery** ... *a narrative or myth*.
- j Ritual **“force”** is not external, not imposed by some authority. The **“force”** of the ritual is in the ritual itself – a foreigner experiencing the **haka** close up ...
- k The meaning expressed in ritual elicits a **commitment** from the participants ... *John Paul II's funeral*.
- l Ritual is **structured**, bringing **intimacy**, **social direction**.
- m Ritual is **reliving events**, **remembering**, **retelling stories**, **reinforcing identities** of who **we** are.
- n Ritual we do regularly and repeatedly, hence ritual must be “boring” ... as “boring” as waves washing up on the sea shore ... the beach changes, ever so gradually ... one day **ritual** will break through and “speak” to us ... the ritual will be an “eye opener.”
- o People cannot live without ritual ... every religion ... fertility rites ... May pole dances!
- p The Church has a yearly cycle of rites: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Ordinary Time ... up to All Saints ... and the money-makers of this world also have a yearly cycle, a yearly “ritual” to make more money: lights, presents, Valentine’s Day, chocolate eggs, Mothers Day, Christmas in July, mid-year sales, Fathers Day and, of course, in parallel with All Saints Day, Halloween.
- q Ritual expresses what we can’t reach:
 - we bless a meal so that the meal is not just “putting on the feed bag”
 - blessing is an **expression** of our community, friendship, and hope for world peace



6 SIGN ... SIGNAL ... SYMBOL ... SACRAMENT

- a **Signs** ... we see them everywhere ... information ... “Believe in Jesus” ... “Fish Shop” ... “Pigs”
 - signs are descriptive, give information, no action is required!
 - signs answer the question: what is it?
- b **Signals** ... train or traffic signals ... speed limit ... hazard ... keep left
 - signals demand a reaction [but might not get it!]
- c **Symbols** are the “language” of ritual ... candles being lit ... incense smoking ... bread broken ...
 - from the Greek *symbollein*, meaning to throw together, like two halves of the same broken coin ... a “symbol” was exchanged at a sale of land, indicating two people in a contract, *each half implied responsibilities*

d Symbols ...



- require much participation
- are wide-ranging ... they just don't mean **one** thing
- explanations will never exhaust their meaning
[“We use incense now to show our prayers rise to God” !!!! No!!!!!!!!!]
- are **not coercive**, they don't force someone to do something

e Actions not Things



- symbols are **actions, not things** ... bread is not a symbol, but breaking bread and sharing it can be
- **symbolic activity** answers the question, “**What does it mean FOR US?**”
- symbols deal with **relationships beyond what is rational**
- love expressed through actions and words is done with symbols
e.g. flowers given by a “tongue-tied” young man
- symbols change relationships
e.g. half-dead flowers thrown at someone contradicts any “word” of forgiveness
- hence, **good liturgy fosters faith ... bad liturgy hinders faith**

f Doctrines



- symbols are doctrines ... they show what we believe
- **lex orandi, lex credendi** ... *what and how we pray is what we believe*
- symbols are the **basic building blocks of liturgy**
- *if the “ministers” get pride of place in our churches, and the poor feel rejected ...*
- *if the “rich” are acknowledged ... if some individuals are let rule the roost ...*
- *if the Presider is not “human” or “approachable” ...*
- *if a visitor is never welcomed ... if the handicapped are not encouraged or allowed close*
- *if the ordinary people are “kept away” from coming near the altar ...*

g Some Primary Liturgical Symbols



- Gathering** ... *summoned for a purpose*
- Bathing** ... *a communal activity*
- Kissing** ... *the intimacy of peace*
- Caressing** ... *laying hands, anointing*
- Dining** ... *with style and grace*

- not “arriving” at the door
- not “cleaning” myself
- not “trendy hand motions”
- not “touching quickly”
- not “eating, wolfing”

7 WHAT IS LITURGY?

a “Liturgy” the word derives from the Greek $\lambda \epsilon \iota \tau \circ \upsilon \rho \gamma \iota \alpha$ – *leitourgia*.

b *leitourgia* = two Greek words ... *leit* or *laos* and *ergon*
LAITY / PEOPLE WORK

- c **Liturgy = Public service or work** → **public worship**; and → → → → → **“dutiful service”**
- actions of the cultic priesthood of Israel;
 - **public worship of the Church**
 - hence, **divine service**
 - Christ going from death to life [Hebrews]
 - Liturgy has **authority**
 - ↳ the **authority of Christ**
 - ↳ **public prayer of the Church**
 - Liturgy is an exercise of the **PRIESTLY** office of Christ

Latin = “*munus, munera*”
The *munera* of Christ:
Priest, Prophet, King

d **Sacrosanctum Concilium** [Vatican Council II's first document, 1962 – on the **Liturgy**]

It is therefore quite right to think of the liturgy as the enacting of the priestly role of Jesus Christ. In the liturgy, the sanctification of human beings is being expressed through signs accessible to the senses, and carried out in a way appropriate to each of them. Furthermore, the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that is the head and the members, is together giving complete and definitive public express to its worship

– *Sacrosanctum Concilium article 7*

e “The Liturgy is considered an exercise of the *priestly* office of Jesus Christ.” [SC 7]

Christ – **priest**, prophet and king



- ☞ = **sacerdos** [NOT to be confused with “presbyter” = elder, e.g. parish priests]
- ☞ = **mediator**
- ☞ = the ‘Abba’-Jesus relationship ... God is no longer distant
- ☞ = we are drawn into that relationship ...
- ☞ = we become and are the body of Christ

