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LITURGY AND PERSONAL DEVOTION

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### I. COMMON PRAYER AND PRIVATE PRAYER

SHORTLY after the war a young Englishman, who was working for the Y.M.C.A. in Salonika, took the opportunity provided by a short furlough to visit Mt. Athos and its monasteries. He had arranged, when his visit was at an end, to return to Salonika on foot through the hills, and as it chanced that an old monk of Athos had also to make that journey, it was agreed that they should travel together. All day they tramped over the hills, and at nightfall, having supped at a country inn, they shared a small bedroom. The young man knelt by his bedside and said his prayers before sleeping; when he rose from his knees he was startled to find that his companion was already in bed. Could he have gone to bed prayerless? In the morning the same thing happened; while the young Englishman was shaving, the monk rose, performed his hurried ablutions and undoubtedly left the room without prayer.

At the end of three days of one another's company, the Englishman, who had said his prayers night and morning without fail, was quite certain that the old 'religious' had not once prayed. This omission was to him as incongruous as it was shocking. Before they parted at their journey's end he plucked up courage to ask the old man for an explanation of this omission of so obvious a duty. The monk was clearly surprised by the question, but quite ready to answer it. He pointed out that he was a member of a community—a worshipping body; every day and always the community offered its common prayer in liturgy and office. When he was there the monk took part in that prayer; when he was not there he could not take part in it, but the prayer went

on just the same. Was there anything else his young friend would like to know? He was very ready to instruct him.

The incident may serve as an introduction to the study of the subject of this essay, inasmuch as it shows how wide the cleavage can become, and has become, between the Liturgy and personal devotion. Common prayer and personal devotion, each so necessary to the other, are here seen almost completely separated—and yet sharing the same bedroom. It is only because they are sharing the same bedroom that the contrast becomes startling; the cleavage has been in existence for centuries and underlies the problem of our divisions and misunderstandings. Christians are continually puzzling one another and shocking one another in much the same way and for much the same reasons that the monk was puzzled by the representative of the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.M.C.A. man was shocked by the monk. We can agree that both were wrong, but may still be divided on the question 'which of them was farthest from the truth'?

The vast majority of our own people would affirm without hesitation that their countryman was nearest to the truth—indeed, it is doubtful whether they would admit that he was in the wrong at all. Private prayer was, until fairly recently, about the only religious exercise which church-people in this land regarded as being of obligation. (Not that we now recognise other religious exercises as having this nature; it is doubtful whether any religious act is now regarded as obligatory.) Daily private prayer was considered to be an obligation by the English churchman in the same sense as the Sunday Mass is an obligation for the Roman Catholic. His sense of the value of corporate prayer was weak, but he was touchingly regular about those he said in private.

These daily private prayers are still generally recognised as a Christian's duty, and a man will go on saying his prayers when every other religious practice has become infrequent or been abandoned. He feels that he can understand what they are for; they fit into his picture of reality; they are part of a man's individual religion, and religion is primarily the relation between the individual

soul and God. These private prayers provide the means by which he holds communion with his Maker; they are the acknowledgment of the call of Jesus to each of us to a moral and spiritual reformation of life. The basis of all true religion is the soul saying to God 'My Father, which art in heaven.'<sup>1</sup>

Having given their vote emphatically in favour of the young Englishman and his private prayer, the same judges would go on to criticise the attitude of the monk towards corporate prayer. It seems so clear to them that the object of 'services' is to stimulate personal devotion—that if a service does not do that, if it does not fit into a man's life of personal devotion and help him to grow in holiness, it has no object, and can safely be neglected. There is even something insincere in taking part in a service unless it is the expression at that moment of the worshipper's religious feelings. The monk knew nothing apparently of this personal aspect; he only seemed to know about corporate prayer, to which he attached extraordinary importance; indeed, he seemed to believe that his liturgy and offices had, as it were, a life of their own and that he could rest on the knowledge that they were being offered to God in his absence. It was certain that he would assert the supremacy of corporate prayer over private prayer; it was probable that he would assert that there was no such thing as private prayer.

We are not bound to answer the question 'which was

<sup>1</sup> In view of this, it is curious to observe how small a contribution to the knowledge of the subject has been made by the English Church since the Reformation—or indeed before it. In spite of the importance attached to it, it does not appear that her members have ever received much instruction on the subject of how they should offer those private prayers or have been led to believe that there was anything much to be learnt. They receive the impression that praying is something which any Christian should be able to do without instruction. A child, of course, must be taught some prayers to say; an adult can easily find out for himself. There is nothing to be learnt from the experience of others in the present or the past. The result in many cases is known to have been that men and women have continued to say childish prayers, with a few additional petitions, until old age. And it is beyond question that many people in our day abandon even the practice of private prayer as having no value for them, before they have learnt how to pray or have taken any steps at all to discover elementary facts about its nature—as though one laid aside the violin as a 'rotten instrument' after some desultory attempts to teach oneself to play it.



farthest from the truth?' Common prayer and personal devotion are not rivals. But we recognise that the monk has right on his side to this extent, inasmuch as common prayer is prior to personal private devotion. The person who gives his unhesitating judgment in favour of private prayer would also unhesitatingly say that the primary business of religion is to help the individual to lead a good life. If this is indeed so, the Church has changed her mind as to the nature of her being and the purpose of her existence, for her belief *was* that she was a worshipping body, not a body of worshippers, and that her worshipping prayer—the common prayer she offered as the Church—was her great task.

No one would be so foolhardy as to depreciate the importance of the religious experience of the soul. As Dr. Wotherspoon wrote, "The truth that Christianity and its exercise necessarily demand social faith and social life may be overstated: Robinson Crusoe might be a sound Christian before the arrival of Man Friday, and St. Simeon on his pillar was surely a Christian of some sort. The spiritual life is always lonely because it is personal and in much cannot be shared, and the salvation of one's own soul is not so contemptible a quest as some hold it to be. Personal religion is all important."<sup>1</sup> But we must recognise, as the monk of Mt. Athos recognised, that we exist primarily as members of a worshipping body. Those prayers by the bedside, so infinitely important, cannot be regarded as the norm of Christian prayer if he who offers them thinks of them as being his private business.

We belong, we are told, to a praying Church, but that might imply no more than a belief that we belong to a body of people which regards prayer as one of its various duties. The truth is more important and exciting than that. The Church does indeed say to us, 'Remember, my children, to say your prayers'; but she says first and says more emphatically, 'Remember, my children, that you belong to a body which is a praying body, in the sense that it is itself,

<sup>1</sup> *Religious Values in the Sacraments*. Croall Lectures, 1926-27 (p. 290).

so to speak, a prayer.' The prayer of the Church is there already: that is where the monk was so right. What we have to learn to do—or to remember to do—is to join in it, to put *our* prayer, such as it is, into that living stream: that is where the monk was surely remiss. The Church's prayer is for the Christian *the* prayer, and there is no other Christian prayer beside or in addition to the prayer of the Church: our private prayers have no existence of their own: they live only as part of the prayer of the Church.

## 2. THE CHURCH'S PRAYER

"Mutual prayer," wrote Khomiakoff, "is the blood of the Church." We do not describe the circulation of the blood as a duty of man, but as part of his physical existence. So prayer is not a duty of the Church, which is the Lord's Body, but a part of her being. The Church has no life of her own; she has only the Lord's life—His livingness: the Church's aliveness is the Lord's aliveness; and the Lord Himself is the Christian prayer.

And having with us Him that pleads above,  
We here present, we here spread forth to Thee  
That only offering perfect in Thine eyes,  
The one, true, pure, immortal sacrifice.

That is not the gushing fervour of a 'dévot,' but the sober statement of a theologian. The Body of the Lord which He presents to the Father as a sacrifice pure and immortal, bearing still the marks of our usage of Him, is the Christian prayer. And the Church is the Lord's Body; not in the sense that she is a body of people who have declared their allegiance to the Lord, but in the sense that she is primarily Christ Himself in His own being. He is the living whole: we are only part of that whole. Prayer, then, is not one of the duties which the Church undertakes, as once she undertook the duty of providing the means of education. It is part of her being, because it is part of the Lord's being. To be a member of the Church is to be part of that prayer which is the Lord's prayer. When, therefore, we make our most private and urgent prayers in some

private and urgent need of our own or of someone we love, we *can* only pray as *church people*, and so must join our poor little private prayer to the corporate prayer which is always going up to God out of the Church's being, which is Christ Himself. It is of this truth that we are reminded when we end each prayer "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is in the Liturgy that this fact receives its most complete earthly expression. It was in the breaking of the bread that the Church first learned what Christian prayer is, and Christians of to-day must still learn this lesson there. The standard type of Christian prayer is common prayer: that is what the Lord taught us not only in the Liturgy, but also in the 'Our Father.' We are to learn how to pray by ourselves by having learned first how to take part in corporate prayer, for it is in that act that we discover how to pray as members of the Body of Christ. If we try to reverse this process—thinking of prayer as being primarily our private communion with God—we shall hardly keep from thinking of common prayer as the gathering of a number of people to say their private prayers together, a thing very difficult to achieve and of doubtful utility.

The objections to corporate prayer which are commonly met with to-day are due in large measure to a reversal of this process. It is indeed difficult to offer private prayers in public. The presence of other people, the necessity for making the concerted movements of the service—these and many other necessities of common worship distract the individual in his private devotion. One reason for the popularity of Low Mass in Western Europe is the opportunity it provides for undisturbed private prayer.<sup>1</sup> The solemn Eucharist, in which as many as possible, both clergy and laity, have a specific part to perform in the service, and everything is used for worship which can be used for that

<sup>1</sup> This is not an adverse criticism of the quiet and the silences of that service. These are as valuable as the corporate silences of Quaker worship. It is a criticism of the person who prefers the low celebration of the Holy Communion because there is there the least interference with the soul's private communion with God. One cannot help suspecting that some Christians would prefer that the Church should not be thronged with worshippers at that service.

purpose, is often appreciated as an act of congregational worship to be preferred to sung Mattins as the leisurely and not too exacting devotion of the later hours of Sunday morning. But although this whole, corporate, dramatic act is the least inadequate form of worship, not so much because of its dignity as because it is most clearly the act of the whole Christian people, yet many devout church-people express a preference for making their communion at a Low Mass, in spite of its inadequacies and sacerdotalisms. In effect they are saying 'Since corporate prayer is at times unavoidable, let it be as little distracting as possible; that is what matters most.' This suggests that the task of living in communion and fellowship with one's fellow-men is not particularly difficult or important, and that the final vision of God is to be like a private view of an exhibition of pictures.

It is precisely these difficulties and distractions of common prayer which make it so valuable, and which help to keep Christians within the stream of the catholic and apostolic life. The stuff of religion is not the refined desires and delicate movements of the soul reaching out after spiritual experience as though it were disembodied, but the common things of life—its 'bread and wineness,' and the bodies which the Apostle besought his brethren to offer as a living sacrifice, and our human environment which is largely a physical environment. It is out of this stuff that our prayer is made.

We are to learn, then, how to make prayer in private by having learnt first how to join in common prayer: we do not learn how to take our part in common prayer by learning first how to pray as individuals. Common prayer provides the visible setting of the earthly Church and its earthliness, which we have to make ourselves remember when we are praying by ourselves. That is why the churchman finds corporate prayer so great a means of grace; but when we use prayer as a means of self-perfection—praying, in order to make ourselves better—we find common prayer tiresome. We have forgotten then that 'being made better' is a by-product of prayer, not its purpose.



## 3. THE TRAINING OF THE LAITY IN PRAYER

For their training in this life of personal devotion—a devotion of which the Lord explained the nature in the breaking of bread and the Our Father—the Church made ample provision for both the clergy and laity of her first generations. The clergy are still adequately provided for: whether they use the means or not, their part in the Liturgy and their duties in the matter of the daily offices afford them ample opportunity for this training. We shall deal with this subject at a later stage. What concerns us at the moment is the fact that, for many centuries, the training of the laity in personal devotion after the Scripture model has been laborious and difficult owing to their virtual exclusion from the action of the Liturgy. The service has come more and more to have the appearance of an offering made by the priest in the presence of the people. This is due in part to the substitution of Low Mass for High Mass as the normal communion service; in part also it is due to alteration in the manner of celebrating High Mass; in the process of simplification some of the acts which used to remind the people of their share in the mystery have disappeared.

In our own country this training in personal devotion through participation in common prayer has a history of its own. On the one hand we have had certain advantages denied to other church-people. The use of the vernacular in the Liturgy has made it possible for the laity to take part in the prayer of the Church and prevented them from feeling that they are quite unnecessary. Of equal importance has been their admission to the offices. In this matter the Church in these provinces set herself the task of making a morning and an evening office which could be used by clergy and people: they were built out of the old materials which had been used for the prayer of God's people for centuries: they fitted on to the Liturgy and derived their life from it in the way the offices should. This was potentially a great aid to the people's personal devotion. They could grow accustomed to the Church's prayer and learn how to make their own prayers in union with her prayer

—learn to say 'Our Father' instead of 'My Father.' But the fate of the Liturgy prevented this reform from having its full effect. The admirable desire that every Mass should have its consummation in a general communion led to the Liturgy being celebrated infrequently: the offices became separate services—services one attended instead of the Liturgy. The people no longer learnt how to take their part in them by having first learnt how to take their part in the Eucharist. Divorced from the Eucharist, the meaning of Mattins and Evensong was not apparent, and they could not be the guide to personal devotion which they should have been. Moreover, when people did attend the Liturgy, it was celebrated without any active assistance from them beyond the collection of the alms by a clerk or churchwarden. In view of these grave deficiencies in his training, it would hardly be surprising if the layman believed that he was most Christian when he was alone; if he thought that his religious feelings and experiences were the all-important thing in religion; if he failed to realise that the sustaining element alike in common worship and private prayer is the pleading of Christ's Name, and that his personal devotion can only be grounded on that act of faith which is without ceasing.

Further, when it is remembered that for several centuries there has been no effective reminder in any liturgical service of the communion of saints, no petition direct or indirect for their prayers; that during that same period there has also been no public memorial of the departed such as formerly occurred in almost every office: that the people of God have been taught that it was useless to ask the saints for their intercession and wrong to go on making those prayers for departed souls which they offered for them when they lived—it would again be hardly surprising if the present generation of Christians tried to pray alone instead of with the Church on earth and in communion with the faithful departed and the blessed company of heaven.

In point of fact this has not happened as generally as, and to the extent that, one might have expected, though such grave deficiencies have necessarily had grave conse-

quences. That it has not happened to a greater extent among church-people is due, in large measure, to the observance among us of the liturgical year. There have been periods when even this became feeble, but at the present time it is steadily becoming more widespread and more thorough. Even among Free Churchmen the observance is gaining ground.

The Church's observance of the liturgical year is a practice which has immense value and a deep effect on the personal devotion of her members. Especially is it valuable as a means of preserving and increasing the sense of fellowship in prayer. By directing the attention of everyone to one particular mystery of God and His Christ, so that all worship God at the same time for the same blessing of His manifested love, the Church keeps us together and draws into the stream of her prayer the most private worship of her individual members. By setting forth her Lord's incarnate life in its glorious order, she leads her children, almost without their knowing it, to realise that He Himself is their one prayer and to think of themselves as members of that Body. By her commemoration of the saints—their birth, their conversion or their death—she does something to keep before her children the destiny which God has for them as members of the Christian family, and the nature of that heavenly life for which they must prepare themselves here—that life as part of the beloved community whose animating spirit is God. Finally, by her appointed seasons for general fasting and penitence she sets them all thinking and praying together about the actual estate of life in which they live here, and joining corporately in the penance and discipline which the facts of that estate make necessary. They learn then that sin itself is corporate in its nature—that “men make an implicit compact not with Death and Hell alone but with one another, to hold down the truth in unrighteousness, to connive at an outraged social order, to tolerate the inertia of selfishness, to prostitute the divine standard of purity to the debased usage of the world.” And because sin is corporate, the penance, the discipline, and the sorrow must be corporate too.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Kirk on the Atonement, in *Essays Catholic and Critical*, p. 269.

Such is in brief outline the provision made by the Church in this land for the training of her children for the vision of God. Her directions are sufficiently clear, and the means she has provided for following those directions are adequate. That her children have not always followed her directions as carefully as they should, and that some of the means she provided fell almost into disuse for a considerable period of time, are due to causes which it is not the business of the present essay to discuss. What is of great interest to observe is—that when men began to take her formularies seriously once again and to study her directions, as the Tractarians did, the result was not only a renewed sense of the Church and her fellowship, but also a great deepening of the desire for personal devotion. The history of the last hundred years provides strong proof that common worship, when it is really worship, is the parent of that private devotion which is its counterpart. Such great changes as the startling revival of the Religious Life for men and women, the renewed study of prayer and its orderly practice, the growth of the habit of making a retreat, and the use of confession as a normal means of grace, are immensely significant. Although each of these can be regarded as the result of an individual desire for personal growth in holiness, yet each of them has arisen out of the movement which the Tractarians originated, each has been born of a new sense of the fellowship of the Church, and each depends for its fruitfulness upon a lively awareness of membership of the Church.

We do not propose to deal here with the revival of the Religious Life; but something further should be said about those three means of graces for ordinary church-people to which we have just referred—prayer, retreats and confession. (a) *Prayer*. In these last decades we have witnessed a great change in the practice of private prayer. Among church-people and also among the ‘religious-minded’ it is increasingly realised that there is much to learn about it. Many new books have been written on the subject and old books have been reprinted; most of these have a considerable sale. As evidence of interest in the study of prayer



this is very encouraging, but in some ways it is not without its danger. In the first place, while it is true that the Christian ought to know about prayer as a subject of study, in outline at least, such knowledge by itself will not enable him to pray. It would be possible to be an expert in the literature of the subject without knowing anything of prayer itself. Secondly, it is confusing to read many books on such a theme. It is much more profitable to know one or two books thoroughly and to read them often at intervals in one's life. Thirdly, the great books about prayer have been written by men who have assumed that their readers had around them a strong Church life. Their description of prayer and their advice about its practice can be gravely misleading to those who are living outside the Church's fellowship and without her sacraments.

These writers assume, in fact, that their readers think of themselves as members of a worshipping body, that they know that man cannot "present himself before God in and from the midst of his natural desires and necessities,"<sup>1</sup> that "mere man cannot pray at all." When eucharistic worship is a normal activity of our life, we naturally think of our private prayer as having that nature—or rather we do not think of it, for we do not know of any other way to pray. "The Eucharist is our co-operation with Christ in his heavenly ministry" (what else is prayer?), "or equally it is His co-operation with us in our approach to God" (again, like prayer). "Christ cannot be alone: there is nothing in which He says to us 'I have no need of you;' in His glory as in Gethsemane He calls us to be with Him. And apart from Christ we can do nothing—least of all 'do this.'"<sup>2</sup>

Without that background of eucharistic worship, it is so easy to conclude that it is a good thing to pray because prayer provides the best means of dealing with our reactions to the difficult and tiresome elements in our lives, or because it comforts us to do so. We do not pray in order to make our lives, even our interior lives, easier. We do not even

<sup>1</sup> A. L. Lilley, *Prayer in Christian Thought*, quoted by Dr. Kirk, *Vision of God*, p. 438.

<sup>2</sup> Wotherspoon, *ibid.*, p. 242.

pray in order to make ourselves better. Either or both of these may be the result of prayer, but neither is its purpose. That purpose is to see God in the face of Jesus Christ and, having seen, to adore: it is to engage ourselves in that human activity by which we express an unselfish love of God: of that love so expressed there is bred the desire that God's will may be done by us and all men, in order that His love of us may have fruit.

The nourishment of the Christian's prayer is the Christian's Communion. In the Communion there is immediate contact with the actual Divine: there is also the vital unity of all believers inhering together in Christ. He prays as a communicant, aware of God-given communion with God and man; he is wise if he brings his private prayer into as close a contact with his Communion as he can contrive, either by offering it before or after that act, if there is opportunity, or by deliberately recollecting the gift he has received before he begins to pray, or by making his prayer in a place where the Sacrament is reserved.

Another practice which is most profitable for lay people is the reading of the psalms and lessons appointed for the day, or of some part of them. For a busy Christian this may be impossible, or at least inadvisable, owing to the danger of his reading through the passage in a hurry as a task to be accomplished; but there is a large number of people who can make sufficient time for this, and should be able to exercise the discipline necessary for its profitable performance. There are many who already use this means of grace; but it is doubtful whether their number is increasing, as it should be.

As a school of personal devotion the psalms and lessons are invaluable. They speak the same language as the Mass; "for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man" (Article VII). The psalms teach us to worship God through Jesus Christ: in them we hear Christ speak on His own and on our behalf as the Lord's Anointed and as our Mediator. The very fact that their sentences so often make nonsense



if we try to think of them as our prayer rather than His, teaches us what prayer is and how it is to be made, almost without our being aware of it. As for the lessons from the other Scriptures, they provide the food which is essential for our meditation. From them we derive the knowledge of God and of His ways with man which is the substance of prayer; to read them with thought and slowly is to obey His injunction to us 'learn of Me.' Here God reveals to us what we are like and what the world needs by showing us Himself: here also He teaches us how these selves of ours may be changed, and what we are to do for other people.<sup>1</sup> The private prayers of church-people would be immeasurably healthier if the Church's office or some part of it was more generally used as their basis.

(b) *Retreats.* The increase in the number of lay people who go into retreat from time to time is a most important change—especially as this habit begins to extend to the busy and the 'not particularly religious.' Parish priests have plenty of experience of the spiritual growth which generally results from the use of this means of grace. They can also bear witness to the fact that the desire to make a retreat normally arises in a soul when a sense of membership of the Church has been quickened, and is not the result of a desire to find its own way to God. Even a few members of a parish who make an annual retreat have the effect of strengthening the sense of membership of Christ's Body in the rest of the Family in that place. Certainly the fruitfulness of a retreat depends, as we have said, in large measure on a lively awareness of that membership in the retreatant.

For this reason it is not to be regretted that the laity generally take part in a retreat which is given for a number

<sup>1</sup> On the subject of the use of the Gospel as a source of our meditation Fr. W. Knox writes: "Our use of these subjects will have the further advantage of our counteracting the tendency, which is quite noticeably common in modern Christianity, to regard the person of our Lord as if He was merely the hero of a 'mystery religion,' who has saved us by His death and resurrection, and has handed down to us certain means of salvation, but of whom nothing else is known. We must always remember that He is not merely a divine Redeemer, but also a human example; the modern decline of Bible reading makes us liable to forget this." *Meditation and Mental Prayer*, p. 36.

of people, instead of doing so in solitude. The presence of others, even though they are strangers, checks individualism; but it is a pity that parochial retreats are so difficult to arrange, for they could be most profitable. When individuals, by choice or of necessity, make a retreat by themselves, they may well be advised to do so at a religious house. The community life, its common prayer and common table, provide a background which may counteract the effects of their solitariness as retreatants.

(c) *Confession.* Another change which has occurred in these last decades is the increased use of sacramental confession as an ordinary means of grace. Here again the parish priest can testify that the use of this sacrament not only marks very often the abandonment of a superficial religiousness, but is the result of a deepening of the desire to share the mind of the Church towards sin, and to be united with her in her penitence, as completely as possible.

It may indeed happen that at the beginning the adoption of this practice is due to a sense of the soul's individual uncleanness and the desire to have for oneself that pardon, peace and quiet mind which everyone naturally desires to have. Nor does it ever cease to be something that happens between the soul and God, a movement of the soul in penitence towards Him, a movement of God in forgiveness towards the soul. But as it becomes a normal part of the Christian's practice, the Church both in heaven and on earth and all his fellow-creatures are more and more present to the mind of the penitent. Not only does he learn to think of himself as joining as fully and as radically as he can in the Church's penance, but he realises also ever more vividly the extent of his indebtedness both to the elect people of God and to all mankind, because he is what he is and has done what he has done. He knows more clearly than he ever knew before the need of submitting his acts and omissions to their judgment, and the need of receiving their forgiveness for the injury he has done them by his secret sins as well as those that are known, since all alike have altered for the worse that person they had a right to have as their fellow-creature and fellow-member of the Church.



Sacramental confession, like those other practices, depends for its fruitfulness very much upon the strength of our awareness of being a member of God's family.

#### 4. THE PRAYER-LIFE OF THE PRIEST

We have dealt, very briefly, with the personal devotion of the laity before considering that of the clergy, because much that has been said about the former applies equally to the latter. There is, for instance, nothing special to be noted about the use of sacramental confession or a retreat by a priest. But it may be well, in conclusion, to give special attention to the priest's duties in the matter of the Liturgy and the offices, and observe what it is that he learns from them about the life of prayer.

First, he cannot very well make any mistake about the Liturgy as the common prayer of the Church. When he is himself the officiant at the service he has no opportunity and therefore no temptation to turn it into a private prayer: nor will he then regard his official duties in the conduct of the service as a distraction from true devotion, since everything he is ordered to do, every gesture he has to make, as well as every word he is ordered to say, is part of the prayer. His particular function in the Church teaches him how to make himself part of the Church's prayer, and he does not forget this lesson even when he takes part in the Eucharist without being the celebrant.

What he has learnt in the Liturgy he applies to his private prayers. He will do this the more readily if he is able to offer some portion of them before or after the Mass. Part at least of his pastoral intercession should be offered after the thanksgiving, while the Lord as our only Mediator and Advocate is still vividly present to his mind. Many priests find great profit in making their meditation immediately before or after they celebrate, since this helps them to avoid thinking of that difficult prayer as merely an individual exercise. This is not always possible; but it can anyway be made at an hour sufficiently early for them to be perceiving still the fruits of Christ's Redemption very clearly.

Both the Liturgy and the daily office will be in any case the source of his meditation, and indeed of his whole personal devotion.

Secondly, the divine office: the priest will bear in mind that, whether it is said in public or in private, it is always common prayer, and must never be treated as part of his private devotions. How much more possible it is for us to avoid this pitfall than it is for the Roman Catholic priest, whose office is of such length and so unsuitable for public recitation as a complete whole, that it has become in effect a part of the private prayer of the clergy—sometimes it almost seems as though the Mass itself was suffering this fate also. Whenever it is possible, the office should be said with others to take part in it. The priest must also exercise an interior discipline to prevent this prayer, which is part of the external discipline to which he is subject, from becoming merely the performance of a compulsory task. Only exceptional claims on his time can excuse him if he hurries into church to say the office and hurries out of it immediately afterwards. The recitation of the office is a more solemn undertaking than his private devotions. He may very profitably make a large part of his own evening prayers, such as his thanksgivings, self-examination and daily intercessions, before or after the Church's evening prayer, in the same way that he makes the Church's morning prayer the basis of his meditation.

Finally, to say that a priest's devotions are subsidiary to his public prayer is not of course to say that they are not of great importance. To neglect them in the least degree is to run the risk of becoming formal in the discharge of his primary duties. Indeed, the dependence of the priest upon his private devotions is far greater than that of the layman. There is, for instance, the preparation and thanksgiving for his communion—communions which he is bound to make as often as the Liturgy is to be celebrated, and not as often as he privately thinks best for him. Preparation and thanksgiving for communion received in such circumstances, with such frequency, must have the support of much meditation and prayer if they too are not to become



formal. Furthermore, his dependence upon private devotion is greater than the layman's, for the very reason that his business is the doing of good works and the leadership in the people's common prayer. He may so easily suppose, unless his own prayer is deep and strong, that his public labours and prayers are a sufficient offering—forgetting that they are his job, like any other Christian's job. It is in his private devotions that he forms and expresses his intention to mean what the Church means and to will what the Church wills when he offers the Church's prayer.

## VII

## IDEALS FOR THE PARISH

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