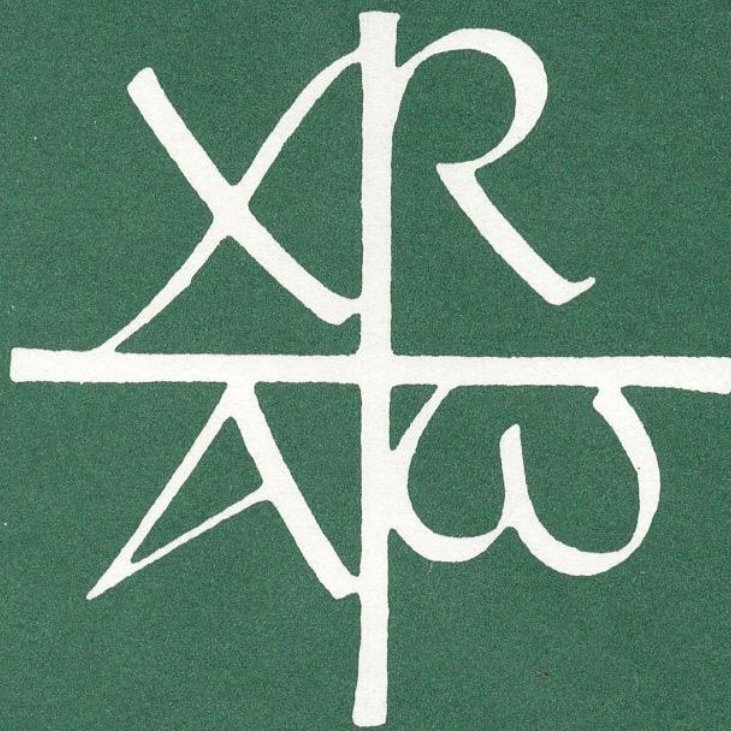


PARALITURGICAL DEVOTIONS OF THE WESTERN CHURCH AND
THEIR ROLE IN ORTHODOXY

BY

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SAINT LUKE'S PRIORY PRESS

BOX 84

STANTON, NEW JERSEY 08885

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WHAT ARE PARALITURGICAL DEVOTIONS?

Paraliturgical devotions are those prayers and acts which are done outside of the official liturgy of the Church and above that which is required by the Church. These are private prayers which are offered out of devotion or love of God. They are part of a person's private prayer life. Oftentimes, they are derived more or less directly from liturgical prayers and offices. This is most often the case in the Orthodox East. Private prayers tend to be drawn directly from the liturgies of the Church. Even longer devotions such as canons and akathists are modeled on their liturgical parallels and are traditionally read with a liturgical beginning and ending. In the East, many such devotional canons and akathists exist. There are canons to the Mother of God, to Jesus Christ, to one's Guardian Angel, of Repentance, and of preparation for Communion, among many others. Akathists also exist to the Mother of God, to Jesus Christ, of preparation for Holy Communion, and to various and sundry saints. These services are sometimes performed in Church liturgically, and are also said by individuals as their private prayers. In addition to these more ordered devotions, there exists also the tradition of repetitive prayers, such as the "Jesus Prayer."

There is the tradition on Mount Athos of using prayer ropes to count a number of "Jesus" prayers, a number of "Most Holy Theotokos save us" and also short invocations to various saints, repeated over and over in multiples of 100.¹ Such series of prayers are indeed paraliturgical. They spring from private piety alone. In the West, more varied forms of private devotion exist. The Rosary is a combination of a series of repetitions as well as an ordered, thematic meditation. Also in existence are such devotions as the Angelus, a thrice daily meditation on the Incarnation, and the Way of the Cross, a meditation on the Passion of Christ.

In both the East and the West there exist also the cult of various miraculous icons or individual appearances of the Virgin or Christ.

These things are all manifestations of private, popular piety. They must, however, be in conformity with the doctrine and faith of the Church in order to exist within the community of the faithful.

There is a tendency today to ignore or suppress such private piety in favor of public, liturgical piety. This is to be entirely one-sided. A healthy Christian spiritual life needs private prayer to continue to grow. Even Jesus says, "When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who is in secret will reward you." Mt. 6:6. Jesus himself often is seen going off to pray and going into the mountains or the wilderness to pray. He evidently felt that it is valuable and necessary to pray privately as well as in common with the community.

There are those who deny that there is any place at all for private prayer, that it is not as valuable as public prayer, which is the "real" prayer of the Church. This is to deny that the individual must also approach God on his own or even that he can. Jesus himself by word and example has condemned this attitude. We need both in the Church. The Church must come together and pray as a body as well. The Church is one and the body must pray as one. But each individual must also develop a relationship with God. If each individual is not in touch with God, he will not really be able to pray as part of the group. He will be outside the reality of prayer. Neither can one cease to participate with the public, corporate prayer and think that all he needs is to come to God on his own. This renders the individual

alone and helpless, outside of the community, the body of Christ. Therefore, the life of the Church must encompass both the private devotion and the liturgical services. Each defines and supports the other. Neither is the fullness of Christian spirituality without the other.

As we have pointed out, private devotions exist both in the East and the West. Most of these have developed since the split between the two Churches. Sometimes one form is almost unknown in the other Church. In our time, however, there has been more contact between the two, and some exchange of devotions. In the East, a few western devotions have become known through the Uniate movement. These tend to be identified with this movement and are, therefore, suppressed wherever they are found, often with great trauma to the pious individuals who have grown to love them. Also, along converts from the West, these things are known and may be practiced furtively with some feeling of guilt. Western Rite parishes, now, too, tend to have a problem deciding whether they should keep various of these practices or whether they should give them up.

In order to provide a satisfactory answer, each practice must be considered and evaluated as it exists, on the basis of what it actually consists. Only with such examination can it be determined what fits into the community of Orthodox Faith. St. Paul writes: "Do not quench the Spirit ... but test everything; hold fast what is good..." I Th. 5:19, 21. A responsibility is given; it is irresponsible to reject everything without examination or to accept anything without examination. The Church cannot ignore the private prayer life of its people. Even when a Christian prays privately, he is still a Christian, and a member of the Church. Rather, the Church must look at these things and decide whether something fits into the Faith, or expresses it.

THE ROSARY

Perhaps the most popular and well-known devotion of the Western Church is the Marian Rosary. Almost every Roman parish has its Rosary Society and it is encouraged among young people by Church Schools, Parochial Schools and by parents. For many it represents the major form of their private prayer life.

The Rosary as we have it today has its roots in the early middle ages. Legend had it that St. Dominic was teaching among the Albigenses in the very early 13th century and that the Blessed Virgin appeared to him. She described to him the Rosary and recommended it as a tool for his mission work.¹ It is because of this legend that the Dominicans have had a major role in the propagation of the devotion.

It is more realistic, however, to recognize the gradual development of the devotion. All the way back in the ninth century, monks were encouraging laymen who could not read to recite a series of "Our Fathers" in place of the daily office and Breviary in which they were unable to participate. It became popular to use 150 "Our Fathers" because of the 150 psalms in the psalter.² At about the same time, others were using additional prayers or antiphons, particularly the Angelic Salutation. All favored three groupings of 50 to correspond to the psalter.³

Eventually, in the twelfth century, the Angelic Salutation was enlarged by the addition of Elizabeth's greeting, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the Fruit of your womb." The name of Jesus appeared in the thirteenth century.⁴ By this time, there were two systems operating, one using the "Our Father" and the other using the "Hail Mary" as substitutes for the psalms.

At the same time, another form of prayer was developing. Monastics looked through the psalms and interpreted each in reference to Christ or Mary. At the end of each psalm, a verse would be added explaining the interpretation. Eventually the psalms themselves dropped out leaving just the explanatory phrases. These were gathered into collections called 'Rosaries.'⁵

Around 365, one Henry of Kalkar grouped 150 "Hail Marys" into groups of 10, adding an "Our Father" before each one. This marked the beginning of the Rosary as we know it. Then in 1409, Dominic the Prussian attached the phrases in praise of Mary to the "Hail Marys" of Henry. What resulted was a Rosary with a distinct meditation or thought for each "Hail Mary!"⁶ Just such a Rosary was popularized by the Dominican Alan of Rupe, who founded the first Rosary Confraternity.

The problem with such a Rosary, however, was that it was too long to be memorized and the 150 meditations had to be read. Eventually, therefore, it was simplified, and only one meditation remained from each ten.⁷ This is the system surviving today, with fifteen "Mysteries" or meditations from the lives of Christ and the Blessed Virgin attached to the 15 "Our Fathers" which divide the 150 "Hail Marys."

The Devotion as it is practiced in the U.S. and with only incidental variations all over the world, is this: It begins with the sign of the Cross and the Creed. Following this come one "Our Father" and three "Hail Marys." This is the opening. Among some religious this is replaced by the versicles from the opening of the hours: "O Lord open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise. Make haste O Lord to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord."

The Rosary proper consists of 15 "decades" or groups of ten divided into three groups of five. These fifteen decades correspond to the fifteen mysteries, which are also divided into three groups: the "Joyful," the "Sorrowful," and the "Glorious" mysteries. These mysteries as they exist today are:

The Joyful Mysteries:

1. The Annunciation;
2. The Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth;
3. The Nativity of Christ;
4. The Presentation of Christ to the Temple;
5. Christ in the Temple at the age of 12.

The Sorrowful Mysteries:

1. Jesus' agony in the Garden;
2. The Scourging of Christ;
3. The Crowning with Thorns;
4. Jesus' carrying of the Cross;
5. The Crucifixion.

The Glorious Mysteries:

1. The Resurrection of Christ;
2. The Ascension of Christ;
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit;

4. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
5. Mary's glorification as Queen of Heaven.

Each of these mysteries is meditated upon while reciting one "Our Father" and ten "Hail Marys" It is usual to recite only one "chaplet" or group of five at a time. After five or all fifteen of the decades are said, the Rosary concludes usually with this hymn to Mary:

Hail, holy queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope; to thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary

V. Make me worthy to praise thee, holy Virgin. ⁸

R. Give me strength against thine enemies.

Then finally, the collect from the feast of the Rosary is said to end the devotion:

O God, whose only-begotten Son by his life and death and resurrection has won for us the rewards of eternal salvation, grant, we pray, that we who meditate on these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the blessed Virgin Mary, may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise: Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who being God, lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen. ⁹

Thus, as it stands now, the Rosary is a well-defined meditation on the lives of Christ and His Mother, with a definite progression of themes, and a liturgical beginning and ending. As such, it might best be compared to an Akathist or a Canon as used in the Byzantine east. Indeed, the Roman Church has seen this similarity, and recommends either the Akathist or the Paracletis to the Uniate faithful in place of the Rosary. ¹⁰ If we look at the structure of such eastern devotions, we will see that they too begin and end with some kind of liturgical framework and that the main body is a series of praises or supplications with a particular theme or progression of themes. As a piece of literature, the Rosary cannot compare since there is no precise form to the meditation, these being supplied by the individual. In form and function, however, the Rosary is quite the same as the Akathist or Paracletis.

Other Rosaries exist besides the standard Marian version. One connected with the name of St. Bridget consists of six decades of Hail Mary separated by the "Our Father" and the Creed. This one has no meditations attached and is not nearly so well-known. Similar variations exist. ¹¹ In addition, other series of prayers have been collected and arranged to be conveniently counted with a standard Marian Rosary or which use "rosaries" of their own. Many of these are not as well-developed as the Marian Rosary nor are they as widespread. Most operate on the same principle, however; being short "services" of praise or supplication to Christ, Mary or a particular saint.

Looking at the Marian Rosary from an Orthodox perspective, hardly anything can be found objectionable in the devotion itself. It is a laudable meditation on the Incarnation and lives of Christ and Mary. All but the last two of the mysteries are taken directly from Biblical texts. The last two are taken from the tradition of the Church. One need only look at the liturgical texts of the east to substantiate that these also are part of the Orthodox tradition.

Regarding the Assumption:

Glorious are thy mysteries, O pure Lady, thou wast made the throne of the most High, and today thou art translated from earth to heaven...

Vespers -- Lord I Call Dormition

It was right that the eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word should see the dormition of His Mother according to the flesh, even the final mystery concerning her: that so they might be witnesses not only to the ascension of the Savior, but also to the translation of Her who gave Him birth...

Litya, Dormition.

... Therefore, dying thou hast risen to live eternally with thy Son.

Matins Canon, Dormition

The Lord and God of all gave thee as a portion the things that are above nature. For just as He kept thee virgin in thy childbirth, so did he preserve thy body incorrupt in the tomb, and He glorified thee by a divine translation, showing thee honor as a son to a mother

Matins Canon, Dormition

This is not the place to go into various Roman theories regarding the Assumption of the Virgin. Certainly as a mere fact stated in the Rosary there can be no objection. We cannot deny that according to our Orthodox tradition we believe that Mary was assumed into heaven. Regarding the glorification of Mary as Queen, we need again only look at our own liturgical texts:

The Bride of God, the Queen and Virgin, the glory of the elect, the pride of virgins, is translated to her Son.

Aposticha, Dormition.

I shall open my mouth and it will be filled with the Spirit, and I shall speak forth to the Queen and Mother.

Canon of the Akathist.

And finally, at every liturgy, during the Prothesis, a triangle is cut from the bread and placed on the Discos while the verse is read: "The Queen stood at thy right hand, clothed in a robe of gold and diverse colors." Thus, at every liturgy, which is our participation in the Kingdom of Heaven. It must reveal an eternal truth.

It can therefore be concluded that the Rosary itself contains nothing contrary to Orthodoxy either in doctrine or in spirit. It is, rather, a very pious devotion, which can serve to increase prayer and faith. Certainly, there is no objective reason to actively suppress it when it is practiced by members of our parishes.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Another well-known and popular devotion is the Way of the Cross, or Stations of the Cross. This particular devotion to the passion of Christ is quite old in the Church but as a formally standardized devotion was not regulated until quite recently.

Tradition has it that the Blessed Virgin herself used to visit the various holy sites connected with her Son's passion and that there she would meditate on God's love for man.¹ Certainly it was a characteristic of the Church in Jerusalem to visit and remember the holy sites. This is evident from such sources of *Egeria's Travels*. Pilgrims from all over the Christian world came and were impressed by this.

Already in the fifth century, a set of "stations" had been erected in Bologna.² Later, during the 12th and 13th centuries, returning crusaders brought with them a devotion to the holy places. When in the mid-fourteenth century, the Franciscans gained control of the holy places, they began to promote devotion to them and to the passion of Christ. Accordingly, they set up stations in all of their Churches, chapels, and monasteries throughout the world.³ Thus, the devotion spread, although it varied from place to place, even the number of stations varied from five to more than thirty. Finally, in 1731, Clement XII standardized the number at 14 for the entire western Catholic world. The Stations as we have them today are:

1. Jesus is condemned to death.
2. Jesus shoulders his cross.
3. Jesus falls the first time.
4. Jesus meets his Mother.
5. Jesus is helped by Simon.
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.
7. Jesus falls a second time.
8. Jesus speaks to the Women.
9. Jesus falls a third time.
10. Jesus is stripped of his garments
11. Jesus is nailed to the Cross.
12. Jesus dies on the Cross.
13. Jesus is taken down from the Cross.
14. Jesus is placed in the Tomb.

Of these, 3, 4, 7, and 9 are part of the tradition of the Church. The rest is taken directly from the Bible. They follow the progression from Jesus' trial to His burial. In the Orthodox Church, a similar meditation on the Passion of Christ is found on Holy Thursday evening in the service of the Passion Gospels.

In actual practice, nothing is required in this devotion except that one move from one station to another and meditate in general on the Passion of Christ. No specific prayers are provided officially, and it is not necessary to meditate on the actual stations themselves. Various collections of meditations and prayers are published in order to guide the faithful in their meditations, however, as always with such pious literature, some are considerably better than others. Most have in common however, a versicle and response between each station.

V. We adore Thee, O Christ and we bless Thee:

R. Because of thy Holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

This is also almost universal at public readings of the stations. These versicles set the tone for the service or meditation, keeping it from becoming a pointless, morbid, or sentimental meditation concerned only with Christ's sufferings. These versicles put the sufferings in perspective as a means to an end, the salvation of the world. Rather than a sentimental lament is a solemn adoration of our long-suffering Lord who so loved the world as to voluntarily submit to His Passion for our sakes. In spirit it is most similar to the line from the Kathismata of Holy Thursday evening, "We fall down in adoration of Thy Passion, O Christ" which is repeated three times. We realize that His Passion is the means to our salvation and this realization colors our devotion. It is the same way with the Way of the Cross in the West. Some complain that the Way of the Cross ends with the entombment and not with the resurrection of Christ. This is like complaining that we do not sing "Christ is Risen" on Holy Thursday. We are Christians, it is understood that we experience

everything in the light of the Resurrection. We know certainly that Christ is indeed, risen. If not for the resurrection, we would not be concerned with the passion of Christ at all. His Passion was not an end in itself, it was the means to an end.

This devotion then is a healthy, balanced meditation on Christ's passion and His sacrificial love for mankind. There is nothing in it contrary to our Orthodox faith. Certainly some published prayers and meditations on the stations can be found objectionable, but others can be found which are excellent. One needs to exercise judgment and taste when acquiring or using such printed helps.

THE ANGELUS

Three times a day, in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, most western churches ring a bell which is a signal for prayer. At these times the prayer, "Angelus Domini" is recited while kneeling. These bells and sometimes even the time of day have become known by the first word of the prayers, the Angelus. This prayer consists of three versicles and a prayer:

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary
R. and she conceived of the Holy Spirit
 Hail Mary
V. Behold the Handmaid of the Lord
R. Be it done unto me according to
 thy word
 Hail Mary
V. And the Word was made Flesh
R. And dwelt among us
 Hail Mary
V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises
 of Christ.
 Let us pray

Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, Thy Grace into our hearts; that as we have known the incarnation of Christ thy Son by the message of an Angel, so, by His passion and Cross, we may be brought to the glory of His Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.¹

Obviously, this is a remembrance of the mystery of the Incarnation, with the final prayer giving the soteriological reference for the entire devotion.

The history of this devotion is obscure. It apparently developed from three separate occasions for ringing the church bells. In this case, the bells were first, the devotion coming later and giving its name to the bells.

In the eleventh century, Pope Gregory IX ordered that all church bells be rung in the evening to remind the faithful to pray for the success of the Crusades. In 1264, Bonaventure began encouraging his Franciscans to say three "Hail Marys" at that bell.² In 1327, John XXII made this universal in the Latin church.³

In the 14th century, it was also a custom among monastics to recite three "Hail Marys" at the bell, which summoned them to Prime. It was also a custom around this time, to ring a bell on Fridays at noon, to commemorate the Passion of Christ, (this theme still survives in the final prayer). A tradition has it that King Louis XI of France in 1472 ordered a noon bell to be rung every day upon which it was the custom to recite, again, three "Hail Marys."

By the 16th century, these three had become one devotion in the form in which we have it today.

One excellent reference to this devotion from the sixteenth century is found in Fr. Lorenzo Scupoli's work, *Spiritual Combat*, which was republished on Mt. Athos in a version rewritten by St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, *Unseen Warfare*. St. Nicodemus chose to alter much of the book to bring it into line with contemporary eastern spirituality, but this reference he left untouched:

Every time you hear church bells, bring to mind the greeting of the Archangel to the Mother of God. "Hail, thou that art highly favored" and dwell on the following thoughts and feelings: give thanks to God for sending from heaven to earth these good tidings, by which the work of your salvation began; rejoice with the holy Virgin in the transubstantial greatness to which she was raised for her deep humility; in company with her and the Archangel Gabriel, adore the Divine Fruit which was then forthwith conceived in her most holy womb. You will do well to repeat this glorification often in the course of the day, accompanied by the feelings I have described; make it a strict rule to repeat it at least three times a day: in the morning, at midday, and in the evening. ⁴

This is a beautiful description and recommendation of the Angelus. St. Nicodemus has captured very well the spirit and themes of the prayer. Certainly there is nothing here which would make the devotion unpracticable for the Orthodox.

During Paschaltide, the Angelus is not said, but is replaced instead by the antiphon "Regina caeli, laetare," which is said standing. The form is the same as that of the Angelus, consisting of several versicles and a prayer:

Queen of Heaven, rejoice,
Alleluia
For He whom thou didst deserve to bear,
Alleluia
Hath risen ah He said
Alleluia
Pray for us to God,
Alleluia
V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary!
Alleluia
R. Because Our Lord is truly Risen.
Alleluia

Let us pray:

O God, who by the Resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, has vouchsafed to make Glad the whole world, Grant, we beseech Thee, that, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, we may attain the joys of eternal life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen. ⁵

This is more suitably Paschal; in fact it sounds much like the 9th ode of the Easter canon. "The Angel cried..." It is still a meditation on the Incarnation, but here is more directly related to the Resurrection.

The Angelus is a little reminder throughout the day of Christ and His work and gift to us. It helps to prevent the day from becoming entirely secularized with work or business.

It reminds Christians who they are throughout the day when it is easy to forget what we celebrate on Sunday mornings... It is a step towards the sanctification of every day.

THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

The devotion to the Sacred Heart also is rooted in intuitions of the early Church and even in the Old Testament. Fundamentally, it is a recollection of the sacrificial love of Christ as witnessed in His Incarnation, passion, and death. It includes also, the fullness of Divine love for mankind which is evidenced throughout the history of our race and is fulfilled in Christ's act for the salvation of man.

The Biblical focus of all of this is the piercing of Jesus' side with a lance at the Crucifixion. Many Church Fathers see this as the symbolic origin of the Church as the New Eve from the side of the New Adam. Symbolic interpretation is also given in that as Christ suffered spiritually in His passion, this is symbolized by the physical wounding of his heart. Therefore, the act of piercing Christ's side represents all that he endured for his love of man, both physical and spiritual. "Truly, the wounds of the flesh showed forth the wounds of the spirit." This is from the Office for the feast of the Sacred Heart.¹

During the middle ages, the emphasis was moved from the wound in His side to His Heart specifically. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Franciscans particularly, used Christ's heart as a symbol for exploring the mystery of Our Lord's Divine Love. It became particularly popular among monastic orders, including the Cistercians and Dominicans as well as the Franciscans.

During the seventeenth century, the devotion was popularized among the laity, and the Society of Jesus adopted it as valuable in missionary and teaching efforts. They promoted the cause of the establishment of an official liturgical expression of the devotion in a feast.

John Eudes (1601-80) worked particularly hard for the establishment of a special Mass and Office for the Sacred Heart.² He is ranked as one of the founders of the modern devotion along with Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-90).³

Margaret Mary was a contemplative nun of the order of the Visitation. She had had a very sickly youth and had grown, as a result, very contemplative. When she was 24 years old, she entered the convent where she spent the remainder of her life. It was there that she received three visions of Our Lord over a period of two years, 1673-5. The first instructed her to spread the devotion to the Sacred Heart, the second encouraged a Holy Hour of meditation on the Sacred Heart connected with the Blessed Sacrament This was to be celebrated on Thursday nights and was to be followed by communion on Friday. The third revelation commanded her to work towards the establishment of the feast of the Sacred Heart.⁴

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is peculiar in that most popular piety is centered around Margaret Mary's apparitions rather than the liturgical texts of the Mass and the Office. As a result, it has become one of the most sentimental and emotional and least theological of all dissident western devotions.

As laid out in the liturgical texts, the Sacred Heart is a focusing on the sacrificial love of God in Christ. The Introit of the feast sets this tone right at the start:

The thoughts of His Heart are from generation to generation: that he may deliver their souls from death, and feed them in famine.

Ps. 32: 11, 19 ⁵

The Epistle is Eph. 3:8-12, 14-19 ending with:

... That you and all the saints may understand and know the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, which surpasses human understanding; and that you may be filled with the fullness of God's being. ⁶

¹
The Gradual verse following is Matt. 11: 29:

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

The Gospel is St. John's account of the piercing of Christ's side and the Offertory is Ps. 68: 21:

My heart is broken with insults and sadness, and I looked for one who would share my grief, and there was no one: for one who would comfort me, and I found no one. ⁷

From these texts we can see that the theme and interpretation is clearly set out. Christ has done and suffered all things out of His love for mankind. The Offertory hints at another theme which is also woven throughout the texts, that of our ingratitude to Christ for all that He has done out of His great love.

Both of these themes are found in the Office as well. The hymn of first vespers deals with our sins, which were responsible for Christ's suffering, a recurring theme in Western spirituality:

Look how the proud cruel multitude of our sins has wounded the sinless Heart of God, undeserving of such treatment.

It was this that put direction and vigor into the soldier's hesitation; it was man's sin that sharpened the spear's point.

The Church, bride of Christ, is born of His pierced Heart; this is the gate in the side of the ark, put there for man's salvation.

Seven streams of never-failing grace flow from this Heart we may wash our soiled robes in the blood of the Lamb.

How shameful it would be to return to sins which would wound this sacred Heart; how much better to try to reproduce in the burning love of our hearts the flames that are signs of the love of His Heart.

Glory be to You, Jesus; from Your Heart You pour out grace; and glory be to the Father and the loving Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen. ⁸

The Hymn of Matins centers on Christ's love as His motivation for all that He did for our salvation:

Blessed Creator of the world and Redeemer of all mankind, light from the Father's light and true God from God.

Love compelled You, Christ, to take a human body that as the second Adam. You could restore what the first had taken from us.

That love of Yours which was the bountiful creator of earth, sea and the skies, took pity on our first parents' fall and broke the chains that bound us.

May that abundant stream of glorious love never cease to flow from Your Heart; may the nations always draw from this well of love the grace of Pardon.

It was for this that Your Heart was struck with the lance and for this was it wounded, namely to wash us from our sins in the water and blood that flowed from it.

Glory be to You, Jesus; from your Heart You pour out grace; and glory be to the Father and the loving Spirit, forever and ever. Amen. ⁹

The Old Testament lessons trace some of God's dealings with His people Israel. Here again, the theme of God's love and man's ingratitude are manifest. This is a familiar pattern in the Old Testament.

Also included are sections from the encyclical of Pius XI concerning the Sacred Heart. He explains the history of the devotion, which is especially interesting at one point:

... In more recent times, especially with the attempts by heretics to deter Christians from Holy Communion by the claims of false piety, devotion to the most Sacred Heart began to be practiced publicly. ¹⁰

The Jansenists had been working very hard to prevent the establishment of the feast. The whole theme of the feast tended to undermine their rather Calvinist theology of a severe and judging God. Thus, the establishment of the feast served as the Church's proclamation of Christ's love against Jansenist claims. Most interesting is the fact that devotion to the Sacred Heart was felt to encourage more frequent communion. Jansenist theology tended to scare communicants away from the altar because no one was considered worthy enough to receive. By emphasizing the love of God in Christ, the Church could again draw people to communion. The feast itself was arranged to fall immediately after the feast of Corpus Christi, which emphasized Christ's love in establishing the Eucharist. The feast is intended to coordinate with that event. Bonaventure's writings used in the office as lessons emphasize the love of Christ and our response:

Who will not cherish this Heart so wounded for us? Who will not love One so loving, embrace One so pure? As for us who are still dwelling in the flesh, let us use every opportunity to respond to Him who has loved us. ¹¹

Thus, we see the liturgical devotion is intended to produce a response on our part to Christ's love. As Christ himself said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Jn. 14:15. "If a man loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." Jn. 14: 23. This is basically the message of the feast of the Most Sacred Heart.

Popular devotion is, however, little based on this. Unlike the Blessed Sacrament devotions, which take their texts from the feast of Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart devotions seldom make use of its excellent hymnography. Rather they begin with Margaret Mary's revelations and piously reflect on these. Emotionalism and sentimentality are given full reign and abominable mush is published to touch the hearts of the faithful.

During her visions, Margaret Mary received twelve “promises” from Our Lord regarding devotion to His Heart.

These are as follows:

1. I will give to my faithful all the graces necessary to their state of life.
2. I will establish peace in their homes.
3. I will comfort them in all their afflictions.
4. I will be their secure refuge in life, and above all in death.
5. I will bestow abundant blessings upon all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in my heart the source and the infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection.
9. I will bless every place in which an image of my Heart shall be exposed and honored.
10. I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.
11. Those who promote this devotion shall have their names written in my Heart never to be effaced.
12. To those who shall communicate on the First Friday for nine consecutive months, I will grant the grace of final penitence. ¹²

These “promises” especially the last few are filled with a certain commercial mentality. We practically barter with God: we perform a few devotions and He sells us a few graces. How different this is from the love of God. How in the face of that could we presume to attempt to make a deal with God? What have we really got to bargain with anyway? Everything we have is a gift from God. It is a horrible example of popular consumer/commodity oriented spirituality.

Also expanded in popular piety is the idea of “reparation.” In the liturgical texts of the feast, there appeared the idea of man's ingratitude for Christ's love. Popularly this becomes guilt, which must be expiated according to the Roman ideas of such things. People became concerned with performing devotions to repay God for the rejection, which He has suffered from others. This type of legal exchange is very damaging to true spirituality and certainly contrary to the true message of the devotion itself. Nevertheless, these two aspects are the most prominent characteristics of the popular devotion as it is practiced today.

It is an excellent example of how a teaching of the Church can be perverted by popular piety almost beyond recognition.

As conceived by the Roman Church, this devotion is commendable. It encourages fervor and love of God, true repentance, and the desire to serve. As popularly conceived, however, it only perpetuates false doctrine and spirituality and destroys true, free, love of God. As a devotion, it is in need of purification and renewal if it should be allowed to exist in an Orthodox environment.

THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY AND RELATED DEVOTIONS

Closely allied to the Sacred Heart is the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This is a parallel to Sacred Heart, being the veneration of the love, purity and sanctity of Mary. According to the decree of Pope Pius XII in 1944, the purpose of this devotion is to ask through her intercessions, "Peace among nations, freedom for the Church, the conversion of sinners, the love of purity, and the practice of virtue."¹ Most of these aspirations are closely linked to Mary in devotion both in the East and in the West. The history of this devotion is parallel to the Sacred Heart, even having the same enthusiast in John Eudes of the 12th century.²

In addition to these two devotions, the Sacred and the Immaculate Hearts, there are many more such as the seven sorrows of Mary, or the Sacred Blood of Christ. (This last is not Eucharistic, but focusing on the atonement). All of them center on some aspect of Christ or Mary. Many of the devotional texts are sentimental or worse. As an example of the very worst, we quote from a poem found in a novena manual published by the confraternity of the precious Blood.

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

Loose the nails now; take Him down, He's stretched ... and taut ... and *dried!* (sic) No felon this that hangs here dead, No bleaching corpse with rigid head, A parchment white, inscribed in red, This Christ they crucified!

Take Him down with reverent care, He's fragile ... costly ... and dear! Parchment written on with whips, Penned with sharpened leaden tips, Paragraphed in livid strips Then stamped with iron spear!

Etc. ³

Most of these devotions are not bad in and of themselves, but they provide opportunity for this sort of literature. This last, just quoted, has obviously little spiritual value if any. It is if anything, detrimental to spiritual health, even blasphemous. This kind of stuff was produced in the late 30s and 40s in this country, but is a development particularly of the Spanish and especially Latin American spirituality which tends to focus morbidly on Christ's sufferings. These are obvious distortions of pure devotion and, while popular, are never sanctified by liturgical expression in the Church. It is this kind of abuse that tends to give all Roman Catholic devotion a bad name. Certainly we cannot judge all by this kind of poor writing. We may be sure that all existing canons and akathists are not theological, liturgical gems, and that is precisely why most of them have not been translated into English and are not often published. We can only hope for such fortunate obscurity for such examples from the West as well as the East.

THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL

This devotion was revealed to a French nun in 1830. Sr. Catherine Laboure had visions and revelations from the time that she entered the Convent, several of these of the Blessed Virgin. One particular vision, which was the beginning of this devotion, took place in November of 1830. She saw the Blessed Virgin, dressed in white, standing on a white ball, with a green serpent under her feet. The Blessed Mother carried in her hands a golden ball representing the world, and wore rings, which emitted rays of light. These were to represent graces, which she distributed to those who asked for them. An oval frame appeared around her with the legend, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you" written around it. The ball disappeared, and Mary stretched out her hands. Sr. Catherine was told to have a medal struck according to that vision and that it would, "Obtain great graces for all those who wore it with confidence." ¹ This vision of the medal turned around to show the reverse side an "M" with a cross superimposed on it and the Sacred and Immaculate hearts under it. She obeyed the vision and had the medal struck, which proved to be very popular. Miracles were reported in connection with it, which helped to promote its popularity, and also helped to further the cause of the official proclamation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which was proclaimed in 1854. ²

Looking at this devotion, we can see that it has little value from an Orthodox point of view. It consists only in wearing the medal and expecting that it will produce in one's life all manner of graces. To imagine that such an act would "Obtain graces" rather than prayer and a Christian life suggests a bit of superstition. Then there is the problem of the teaching of Mary's Immaculate Conception, which of course does not fit into Orthodox Doctrine. The whole devotion serves principally as a propaganda for this doctrine and actually has almost no value for the spiritual life.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

Devotion to various appearances and manifestations of the Blessed Virgin in the West, are similar to eastern devotions to various miraculous Icons and places of pilgrimage connected with them. These Icons usually merit a feast day complete with liturgical texts, as do many of the more important of the Marian appearances in the West.

One of the most popular and widely known of these western appearances is that of Lourdes. The story is quite well-known and has been widely publicized. Very briefly it is this: In 1858, a small sickly child of a very poor family in France, Bernadette Soubirous, had a series of visions in a local grotto. There she would go into a trance or ecstasies just watching the vision, which she described as a very beautiful young lady. Eventually she began to speak with the vision, which told her to pray for the conversion of sinners, asked for a shrine on the spot, and revealed a miraculous spring in the grotto. All of this continued from late winter to early spring until March 25, when the vision said to Bernadette, "I am the Immaculate Conception."

This last had a major impact, coming only four years after the solemn proclamation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Nevertheless it is an odd turn of phrase and certainly subject to careful interpretation. If this was a true appearance of the Theotoko, then certainly we cannot not admit that she said that she was immaculately conceived. This would be contrary to the consensus of our faith, which must remain consistent. If one wishes to admit that this is a true appearance, then another explanation must be found. The date of this revelation might be of some importance. March 25 is the day on which both the east and the west celebrate the Annunciation, the conception of Christ. The various accounts of the appearances seldom mention this fact, but it offers a very satisfactory alternative interpretation. This is possible that Mary referred to her conception of Christ rather than to her own conception. At least it is not any more unlikely. It is possibly an idle speculation, but if this is the correct interpretation of the phrase, then she could very well have been protesting the recent proclamation of the Immaculate Conception dogma. If so, nothing could have been less effective in the event for the appearances were taken as a support of the dogma!

As a devotion, this appearance is no different in general from its eastern counterparts. People travel to Lourdes to pray at the shrine and to take some of the water from the spring exactly as pilgrims go to Sayidnaya in Syria to venerate the miraculous Icon of the Theotokos there and to take home some blessed item from the shrine. People also pray to "Our Lady of Lourdes" and she is represented in art just like "Our Lady of Sayidnaya" or "Our Lady Kazan," in a particular recognizable way.

Each of these is a concrete, local manifestation with which people identify. For those who relate to these particular manifestations, our Church as well as the Roman one has tended to encourage and bless these things for public piety.

OUR LADY OF FATIMA

The other major appearance of the Virgin, which has become popular in the United States, is that which occurred in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. This has certain characteristics in common with other appearances of Mary, both east and west and has had a great impact on devotion.

Three young children were tending sheep in the countryside around Fatima, when two of them had a vision of the Blessed Virgin. The lady appeared in the sky above them and asked them to return to the same spot on the 13th of every month and she would return to speak to them. As happened at Lourdes, crowds were quickly attracted to the place and returned with the children every month. Also, as at Lourdes, the church authorities tried to stop the whole enterprise, but were unsuccessful. The Lady encouraged the children to pray their Rosaries every day and to pray for peace; this was the time of the First World War. After each decade of the rosary, they were to add the prayer, "O my Jesus forgive us; save us from the fires of hell; raise all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need of Thy mere." She also promised that, if enough people prayed, the war would end soon, and Communist Russia would be converted. Otherwise, the war would continue, and Russia would grow in power and persecute the Church. At the final vision, there was some kind of miracle visible to the crowds, having to do with the motion of the sun. The reports of this vary, but apparently it seemed to move irregularly in the sky.

The appearances at Fatima came at a very crucial time. Russia had just been taken by the communists, and most of Europe was heavily influenced by the communists and atheists. There were strong anti-clerical and anti-church feelings in Portugal at the time, as well as vigorous atheism. This was why the civil authorities fought hard to stop the visions and the publicity; they feared a religious revival in their country. The religious revival occurred, however, and firmly established the Church in the lives of the people. It is estimated that seventy thousand people were present for the final vision and the miracle of the sun. ¹

It is very interesting that the Virgin was concerned with the peace of the world. This theme is also found in the Miraculous Medal appearance and in the east, especially in the appearance of the Pokrov. It would appear to be a characteristic of Marian revelations. Also, the Virgin encourages prayer, as at Lourdes and many other appearances.

Many Orthodox are upset about the promise of the conversion of Russia. Considering the time and the atheistic atmosphere of contemporary Portugal, it seems clear that she meant the conversion from atheism, not from Orthodoxy. Certainly we too hope for the defeat of atheists in the Soviet Union.

On the whole, Fatima falls into that category of local manifestations of the Virgin as at Lourdes. It differs, however, in that there is an organization of devout people who are devoted to the appearance and to spreading the message that people should pray the Rosary every day, dedicate themselves to Mary, and practice penitence. These are all excellent goals and the organization does much to foster piety and Christian living among its members. Most communities have some kind of local version of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, which is responsible for much of the popularization of this appearance.

THIRD ORDERS SECULAR

Third orders developed between the 13th and the 15th centuries as associations of laymen who sought to band together for mutual support and direction in achieving the Christian Ideals of monasticism while still living in the world. They placed themselves under the care of one or another monastic or religious order in doing this.

The first third order was developed by St. Francis of Assisi along with his order of friars. He wrote out a regular rule for a third order based on his rule for Friars, but modified for use in the world.¹ The purpose was the same as that of a religious order Christian perfection. This was to be accomplished through obedience to the Church and civil authorities; frequent reception of the sacraments of penance and the eucharist; regular prayer, usually daily Mass and the Divine Office; contribution to a common fund for charity; and moderation in lifestyle.

Eventually, other orders developed third order rules for associated laymen along the Franciscan lines: Augustinians, Benedictines, Dominicans, and others all developed third orders.

This movement is similar to a movement in Russia, where laymen living near monasteries could associate themselves with the monastic brotherhood, not as monks but as pious laymen who wished also to "Travel the Way to Holiness." ² In Russia this was done by staying at the monastery for a while and by visiting there for spiritual direction. In the west the third orders utilized the spiritual direction of the various Orders as well as banded together for mutual support in observance of their rule.

These third orders secular were given as tokens of their association with the order, a part of the monastic habit, usually the scapular. This was originally a long strip of cloth hanging down from the shoulders in front and back with an opening for the head. The scapular was made smaller for third orders, being two large squares of cloth with tapes connecting them over the shoulders.

Later other groups organized using a reduced rule and were granted a smaller scapular, about two inches square instead of the larger regular scapulars. With these went a much-reduced rule of prayer, e.g. merely a Rosary a day. Many such organizations and confraternities came into existence, each with its minimal rule.

There are five such small scapulars commonly in existence. The most common being the brown scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This serves the third order Carmelites as well as many other organizations of laity. Also in existence are the White Scapular of the Holy Trinity, the Black scapular of the Servants of Mary, the Blue scapular of the Immaculate Conception, and the Red scapular of the Passion of Christ. These are all given by the related orders to laymen who wish to associate themselves either as third order members or to a lesser degree to the regular rule.

The scapular serves as a symbol of the ideals to which the individual has committed himself. It is a visible sign of the life to which he has committed himself, as well as a constant reminder to him of the responsibilities both in life style and in prayer which he has taken up.

DEVOTIONS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is one of the most obvious features of pre-Vatican II Roman Catholicism. For some it even became one of the distinguishing features of the Roman Church. Always the presence of a very obvious Tabernacle on the altar drew the attention of anyone entering a Roman Church. Anyone passing the altar would stop and genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament reserved there. A few pious worshippers could be found clustered quietly in pews nearby. The most popular response to any feast during the year, after Christmas and Easter, would be at Corpus Christi and the annual forty hours adoration.

The history of the development which produced this lies mostly in the Middle Ages, but the roots are evident much earlier. Those roots are to be found within the liturgical tradition itself, as are the fully-developed forms also. Indeed, any devotion to the Blessed Sacrament must be seen in the light of the Eucharist's context within the Liturgy, and these devotions as extensions of the liturgy, not as existing independent of it. ¹

The very beginnings of any devotion to the sacred species of the sacrament themselves as the presence of Christ appears in the mid-fourth century, in Syria. Cyril of Jerusalem in his Catechetical Orations instructs communicants to touch the sacrament to their eyes before receiving it. Then before receiving the chalice, one is to bend and say, "In the way of worship and reverence, "Amen" ² and then afterward, "While the moisture is still on thy lips, touching it with thine hands, hallow both thine eyes and brow and the other senses." ³ According to Gregory Dix, this is intended as an act of reverence. He finds it repeated fifty years later still in Syria, by Theodore of Mopsuestia who goes on to instruct, "After you have received the Body (into your hands) you offer adoration ... and kiss it, and you offer prayers, as if to Christ our Lord, who is at present so near you." ⁴ Dix feels that this eastern attitude was then imported to the west where in the 7th century the hymn "Agnus Dei" was introduced into the Liturgy immediately before communion as an act of adoration. ⁵ Thus, both in the east and the west, we have the intuition that the sacrament is due reverence as to Christ Himself, and this very early in the life of the Church.

Along with this devotion, there is apparent concern for the handling of the Eucharist and its care. St. Cyril of Jerusalem in the passage quote above, cautions the communicants to take great care about crumbs because they are "more precious than gold and precious stones."⁶ Quite striking is the reference in the third century treatise *On the Public Games (De Spectaculis)* which mentions a "Lax Christian, who after his dismissal from the Lord's sacrifice, hastened to the circus and still bearing with him as is usual, the Eucharist, the unfaithful communicant carried around the holy body of Christ amidst the vile bodies of harlots."⁷ Here, the concern is not so much that the Eucharist might be lost, but that it was being profaned by being taken into such an atmosphere. The author is concerned that the Christian is not rendering the proper respect to the "holy body of Christ" by carrying it with him to secular games, which the author does not approve of anyway. It is clear that it was the Christian's responsibility to handle the Eucharist in his care with the proper respect due to the Body of Our Lord. This respect was due to it because of what it was in itself. It is true that it was reserved to be consumed eventually, but in the meantime the Sacrament was to be accorded proper honor and respect as the very Body of Christ.

In this matter the proper understanding must not be lost. The Church does not reserve the sacrament in order to worship it! This would be an obvious misuse of the sacrament. The sacrament was meant to be consumed. It is only from receiving it that the Christian can gain the benefits of it.⁸ Christ said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."⁹ He mentions no benefit from contemplating His Body and Blood. From the start, the Church reserved mainly to provide communion for those who might need it at other times than the liturgy, primarily the sick and the dying. Nevertheless, the elements remain the Body and Blood of Christ even after the Liturgy, while they are reserved. We do not believe that they are only the Body and Blood of Christ as they are being received, this is "receptionism." The statement quoted from *De Spectaculis* makes it clear that the Church considers the consecrated elements to remain Christ's Body and Blood. To quote from Gregory Dix:

The reserved bread is for Hippolytus "The Body of Christ" without qualification, even when it is being nibbled by a mouse. It is "the Holy Body" for Optatus even when it is being profanely cast to the dogs. It is for Novatian "The holy Body" even when it is being carried around by the careless Christian "Amongst the vile bodies of harlots."¹⁰

As the Body and Blood of Christ, the elements retain all the properties of the Eucharist. It would be a tragic reduction to see the entire Eucharist only in terms of the elements becoming the physical body of Christ. The Eucharist involves the entering into the New Age, the Kingdom of God; it is the unity of all the Church, which is also the Body of Christ. It is a unity of time and space outside of time and space. It is the giving up of ourselves into the Body of Christ that we might be one with each other and with Him. It is the mystery of Christ's incarnation and resurrection and also of our sharing in the deification, which He made possible. The Eucharist brings together in the best sense of "symbol," the entirety of the Christian faith and hope and reality. In a sense it *is* the Church, both being the Body of Christ. The actual appropriation and fulfillment of all of this is only in receiving it but in the meantime all exist remains just as powerfully present in the elements themselves. Therefore, it would be insensitive and even blasphemous for a Christian to ignore this reality when in the presence of these elements. Their nature and potential use demands full respect and honor when they are handled or reserved. The reality of their nature and potentiality make them a powerful presence even when they are not in actual "use."

It is natural that with the development of sacramental piety there arose also distortions or abuses of the sacrament. It is interesting to note that in dealing with these the Church always kept in mind what the nature and purpose of the sacrament really is and used this as the criterion for judging all practices.

Three examples exist which are especially illustrative of this. Around the ninth century there arose the custom of sealing a portion of the Eucharist inside the altar at the time of the consecration, either with or in place of the customary relics. The practice was widespread throughout northern Europe and is specifically mentioned in the rubrics for consecrating altars, which were written then in these areas.¹¹ The practice was objected to by various teachers at the time and eventually died out altogether. Most interesting, however, is the reasoning behind one medieval canonist's objection. Guido de Baysie, an Italian and therefore not from an area where the custom was widely practiced, claimed that Christ had said, "Take and eat," not "Take and bury."¹² Therefore, the usage was against the expressed purpose of the sacrament and obscured its meaning.

Another abuse, which apparently cropped up repeatedly for several centuries very early in the Church history, was that of burying the Eucharist with the bodies of the dead. This was done for various reasons, such as because the deceased had not received it before dying or to ward off demons. St. Gregory Dialogos reports that St. Benedict applied the practice on a particular dead monk who would not stay buried. The pagan and superstitious overtones of such acts are obvious, and it was condemned repeatedly by councils from the fourth to the seventh centuries. The Council of Carthage in 397 gave the reason that, "The Lord said: Take and eat, and dead bodies can neither take nor eat."¹³ Here again the practice was condemned because it was outside of the purpose and nature of the Eucharist.

Thirdly, in the Middle Ages it became generally popular to place a cross symbolically in a "sepulchre" on Good Friday. This was then brought out on Easter Sunday and carried in procession. Around the eleventh century, the Eucharist began to be placed in the sepulchre with the cross. This would seem a natural symbol, the sacramental Body of Christ representing Him during the memorial of His bodily death and burial. This was precisely what was objected to, however, in Zurich in 1260. It was considered "Contrary to reason ... altogether improper and absurd that the Eucharist, which is the true and living Body of Christ, should represent the dead body of Christ."¹⁴ This particular objection arises from exact understanding of the sacramental body of Christ. St. John of Damascus wrote, "The Bread and Wine are not a figure of the Body and Blood of Christ -- God forbid! But the actual deified Body of the Lord."¹⁵ It is the risen Christ's actual presence in His Church, not the dead corpse of the crucified Jesus. That Body rose and ascended to the Father. It is the Jesus of "Now" that comes to us not the Jesus of "then."

Thus we see that when the western church developed its Eucharistic devotions, it did so with precise thought and consideration to what was being done and what it meant and it did not allow pious fantasy and imagination to dominate the development.

We have seen that the Church reserves the Sacrament mainly for the communion of the sick and dying. This is required by canon law, which insists that it be available for these times.¹⁶ It has also been seen that the Church allowed faithful Christians to reserve the sacrament in their own homes for the purpose of daily communion.¹⁷ This practice largely died out among the laity, and the sacrament was reserved almost exclusively by the clergy. It was usually kept in the locked sacristy to which the deacon held the key.¹⁸

In the west, however, the Eucharist was also reserved for symbolic purposes. It was the custom for a bishop to send a portion of the Eucharist to other bishops who consumed it at their own liturgies. ¹⁹ This was done to show that the bishops were of one faith, and therefore were “in communion.” That is, the Eucharist that each was celebrating was in fact the same Eucharist because they shared the same faith and were in the same body of Christ. The unity of the Church has always been closely linked to the Eucharist. St. Paul writes:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because it is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the same loaf. 1Cor. 10:16-17.

This same custom of sending the Eucharist was also used in Rome between the bishop and the presbyters of the various churches in the city when there could no longer be only the bishop celebrating because of the vast numbers of faithful. The bishop sent particles of his Eucharist to those priests who received it as a token that they celebrated the same Liturgy as he. In fact this Liturgy was an extension of the bishop's. ²⁰

The bishop himself also would place a bit of bread, which he had consecrated at a previous liturgy into the chalice, which he was consecrating at the time. This was to show that the Eucharists celebrated at different times were in fact the same Eucharist. ²¹

Both of these uses of the reserved sacrament are to show what we consider a very important aspect of the Eucharist; it is one. It is always the mystic banquet of the Kingdom with Christ Himself presiding -- outside of present time and place. It is a participation in the age to come.

The unity of the Church in Christ extends to all who participate in this mystic banquet, it extends throughout time to embrace all who have passed from this life and also those who are yet unborn. It completely transcends our temporal situation and laces us with Christ in His eternal Kingdom. All of this is pointed to by these two liturgical uses of the reserved Sacrament.

This use of the Sacrament is actually quite apart from the purpose of receiving it. It was used in a ritual way to emphasize a very important truth about the very nature of the Eucharist. It was used in a symbolic way to make clear the meaning of the actual celebration and reception of the Eucharist. It stems from the nature of the Eucharist, and its purpose is to manifest that nature. It is a revelatory and didactic use. It is part of the early Church's *Lex Orandi* which serves to present the faith of the Church.

The development of the actual devotions to the Blessed Sacrament as they are known in the western Church today began in the eleventh century, but the roots are in the identical principles as the practices noted above. Like many other usages in the Church, they developed as a response to a challenge to the accepted doctrine of the Church. The Church has always avoided defining any particular belief until it is challenged by heresy.

Everything from the development of the Nicene Creed to Palamite theology has been the result of specific dangers to the belief of the Church. In this case, it was largely a reaction to the ideas of Berengarius of Tours, which were popular and widespread at the time.

Berengarius' ideas had their origin in one Ratramnus of Corbie who wrote two centuries earlier. Ratramnus, writing according to a popular sentiment of his day, had published an essay on the sacrament of the Eucharist in which he placed emphasis on the mystical nature of Christ's presence in the sacrament and denied that the bread and wine became the historical body of Christ. His writings apparently did not acquire much notice until two centuries later when Berengarius brought them to the fore.

Berengarius read and developed Ratramnus' thought. He claimed that the elements actually remain exactly what they were before the consecration without change. The change is in the minds and attitude of the faithful. After the consecration, the believers perceive the elements in the context of Christ's passion and death. ²³

Both Berengarius and Ratramnus were condemned for their teaching on the Eucharist at various councils in the mid-eleventh century. Nevertheless, their ideas were widespread, especially in France where Berengarius had been teaching. It was immediately then towards the end of the eleventh century in Normandy and Norman England that the first prescribed acts of adoration to the Sacrament appear. The Abbey of Bec added the Blessed Sacrament to its Palm Sunday procession and adored it during the procession. From there the use spread to Canterbury and St. Albans in England and Rouen in France. ²⁴ It is clear that by solemnly proceeding with the Sacrament and encouraging acts of adoration such as genuflecting directly towards the Sacrament, the clerical authorities were trying to instruct the people on the nature of the Sacrament itself. They were affirming visibly that the elements after the consecration were indeed Christ's Body and Blood, that these were what were received at communion and that it was not merely a conviction in the minds of hearts of the faithful. The didactic value of such prescribed, physical adoration was far more effective than a host of eloquent sermons. Rather than trying to convince the people by understanding they persuaded them to feel it by doing and acting. Indeed, it worked excellently and became enormously popular. Devotions to the Sacrament developed and increased throughout the Middle Ages.

It should be noted at this point that the Eucharist was not exposed or visible during these processions. The purpose was not to provide some kind of benefit from looking at the Sacrament itself. It was rather a rendering of honor to the Sacrament due to it as the presence of Christ Himself in order that it should be clear that the Church believes the Eucharist to be the very Body and Blood of Christ. The importance of viewing the Sacrament did not fully develop until the fourteenth century.

Similar to the older practice of using some of the reserved Sacrament to show the nature of the Eucharistic celebration the Church now used outward signs of honor to the reserved Sacrament to emphasize another aspect of the Eucharist. In so doing it was following a traditional means of teaching. When the Church wants to emphasize some aspect of its belief, it inserts it into the cultic action of the community. The insertion of Creed into the Liturgy to show fidelity to the faith of the Councils is one example ²⁵ and another are the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany which arose to emphasize Christ's humanity. ²⁶ Most effectively the solemn procession of Icons on the festival of Orthodoxy illustrates this principle. This was instituted against the defeated Iconoclasts to proclaim the Orthodox faith. The east had suffered much for the faith at the hands of iconoklastic heretics and now bore witness to that faith in a very visible way. In the same way, the west sought to publicly encourage proper belief in the Eucharist through visible and obvious means.

It is undoubtedly true that distortions, exaggerations and reductions have occurred in the western devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. But this has been a problem which had plagued all Christendom for centuries. No one can deny that during certain periods, devotion to icons was also carried to extremes. Such practices as chipping paint from an icon into the chalice, icons standing as baptismal and wedding sponsors, and acting as abbesses of monasteries are undoubtedly outside of normal piety, and not representative of the actual mind of the church, regardless of how widespread they might have been at one time. So in the west, when Eucharistic devotion got out of hand at certain times or in certain localities, it cannot be taken as reflecting the mind or faith of the Church. Nonetheless as we have seen, the western church took great care to see that this seldom happened.

THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

As it was stated earlier, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament must be considered in light of the Liturgy. And as we saw with regard to the Sacred Heart, the liturgy of the feast tends to be very clear about the teachings of the Church regarding the subject of the feast. Therefore, it is best to begin examination of the Blessed Sacrament devotions with the feast of that Sacrament.

This feast has its origin in the thirteenth century. One Saint Julians, a prioress near the city of Liege, requested the institutions of the feast by the local ordinary. He compiled in 1246 making it a local feast. Shortly after that, Pope Urban IV, who had been archdeacon in Liege, instituted the feast for the entire Church.¹ The feast is seen as an affirmation of the nature of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and a thanksgiving to God for it. It is recognized that Holy Thursday is most appropriate for such a feast except that this time at the end of Holy Week is overshadowed by the closeness of Good Friday. Therefore, it is celebrated immediately at the end of Paschaltide² which again points to something in the nature of the Sacrament. It is one of the primary ways Christ comes to us during this middle time, while we await His second and glorious coming. Therefore, the Eucharist is the theme of the feast very near the Ascension and Pentecost when Christ promises to be with us always and sends the Comforter.

Strictly speaking, such a feast is not paraliturgical since its entire expression is liturgical. It would be however a grave omission to speak of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament without mentioning its greatest expression and also one which is clearly expresses the western church's view on the nature of the Sacrament. All paraliturgical devotions, also, can be recognized here in a liturgical context. All are derived from the feast and find their meaning in the feast.

Being such a late feast, the Office and Mass were composed or edited at once, especially for this feast. It is not a result of ages of growth. Thomas Aquinas put it together at the request for the Pope Urban IV. He was extremely conscious of the role of the liturgy in expressing the faith, and this feast is a masterpiece of liturgical composition.

Rather than examine the service in its entirety, which would be far too lengthy, some quotations from it will serve to show what the western church believes it is doing in this feast.

From Matins:

Let us adore Christ the King, the Lord of nations, who gives marrow for the spirit to those who eat Him. ³

The reason for adoration is clear. It is because of the goodness of the Lord and the effect of His Sacrament. In the magnificent Matin hymn, the stanza *Panis Angelicus* stands out. The hymn itself traces the institution of the Sacrament on Holy Thursday and then theologizes:

The Bread of Angels become man's Bread; the Bread from Heaven puts an end to the types. What marvelous happening is this; the poor, the servant, the lowly feeds upon His Lord.

We ask you, Godhead three and one, to come to us even as we worship you. Guide us along your paths to our journey's end to the light in which You dwell. ⁴

Here we see very clearly just what the Sacrament is and what the goal of receiving it is. We will note that throughout the services of the feast, the emphasis in the text is upon the value and benefits of receiving the Sacrament, while the external rites emphasize the very presence of Christ. The two must not be seen apart from each other but together for the fulfillment of adoration must be communion. This was the age of the greatest proliferation of devotion to the gifts themselves, but at the same time this service was composed which places all importance on the benefits of receiving. Both go together, chronologically as well as ideally.

The antiphon at Nocturns recalls the consecration thanksgiving of the Didache:

Having grown by the fruit of grain and wine, the faithful rest in Christ's peace.

It is by the communion of the chalice in which God Himself is consumed not by the blood of calves that the Lord has brought us together. ⁵

Here is the ecclesiological value of the Eucharist; it is as St. Paul says that one bread and one cup make us one Body in Christ.

What men seek from food and drink is to do away with hunger, dispel thirst. But certainly, the only food or drink that will accomplish this is something that renders the partakers free from death and decay; this implies participation in the fellowship of the saints, where peace and fully perfect unity are to be found. In harmony with this as men of God grasped long before our time, our Lord Jesus Christ gave us His body and blood in the form of those things which are produced by the assimilation of many into one. For bread is made by the union of many grains of wheat, while wine results from the blending of many grapes. Finally, now Christ explains how His word is fulfilled, what it means to eat His flesh and drink His blood.

R. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, he abides in me and I in him.

V. There is no other nation so great, that has gods so close to it as our God is to us.
He abides in me and I in Him. ⁶

This is a quotation from a homily of St. Augustine which appears in Nocturns with the antiphon which immediately follows it. The homily is an excellent statement on the power of the Eucharist. The antiphon is magnificent and touching. "God is with us" in a very intimate way. It is the fulfillment of the prophecies, it is the fulfillment of the Incarnation.

The theme of the Incarnation is picked up by Thomas Aquinas in his own homilies which he includes in the Office. He also touches on Salvation and even theosis:

How inestimable a dignity the divine bounty has bestowed upon us Christians from the treasury of its infinite goodness! There neither is nor ever has been a people to whom the gods drew so near as our Lord and God draws near to us. Desiring that we be made partakers of His divinity, the only begotten Son of God has taken to Himself our nature, so that having become man, He would be enabled to make men godlike, whatever He assumed of our nature became instrumental in the work of our salvation. For on the altar of the Cross He immolated to the Father His own body as victim for our reconciliation and shed His blood both for our ransom and for our regeneration. And so, we were liberated from our wretched bondage, washed clean of all our sins. Moreover, in order that a remembrance of such great benefactions may always be with us, He left the faithful His body to be taken as food and His blood drink under the appearances of Bread and Wine. ⁷

This is one of three sermons included in the hours by St. Thomas. All speak well of God's entire economia and what the Eucharist represents in that entire scheme.

The hymn *Verbum Supernum* also recalls the Incarnation, the institution of the Sacrament and looks to eschatological fulfillment.

The heavenly Word came forth and yet did not leave the Father's right hand. He went out to His work and came to His Life's evening.

When He was about to be given over by a disciple to His enemies unto death, He first gave Himself over to His disciples as the food of Life.

He gave them His flesh and blood under two species for it to be the food of the whole man, who is of twofold nature.

By His birth He became man's companion; at this supper He became man's food; in His death He became man's price; in His kingdom He becomes man's prize.

Saving victim, opening wide heaven's gate, wars and enemies press hard upon us; give us strength, bring us help.

Everlasting praise be to the Lord, one and three. May He give us everlasting life in the land where dwells our Father. Amen. ⁸

Observe how the whole Christ is there in all His saving action. This is not a reduction or a partial emphasis by any means. The Sacrament is seen as it fits into the entire scheme of salvation not as an entity in and of itself.

In the Mass of the feast, we find the sequence, which is a long hymn of very short verses giving praise and thanks to God for the Sacrament.

... See today before us laid the living and life-giving Bread. (Panis vivus et vitalis) theme for praise and joy profound.

... Lo! upon the altar lies hidden deep from human eyes bread of angels from the made the food of mortal man.

... Jesus, Shepherd of the sheep! Thou thy flock in safety keep living Bread! Thy life supply strengthen us, or else we die fill us celestial Grace. ⁹

Other stanzas trace the institution of the Sacrament and also the effects of receiving it. Those quoted best explain the meaning of the feast itself. The thanksgiving, the meditation on the Eucharist itself, and prayer.

The actual ceremonial of the feast is what people are most familiar with and the event that comes to mind when one thinks of this feast.

From the time of the communion of the Mass, the Sacrament is placed in a monstrance and exposed to view. After the Mass, it is carried in procession either within the Church or outside, especially in Catholic countries. This procession can become an elaborate affair with thousands participating and observing. The procession ends with Benediction with the Sacrament and may be followed by a period of exposition. ¹⁰

It had been mentioned that the first procession with the Sacrament was held on Palm Sunday during the Eleventh Century. ¹¹ This had been in response to the popularity of Berengarius heresy. There is a striking similarity between this procession of the Sacrament and the Eastern procession of icons on the first Sunday in Lent. Both are ceremonial affirmations of the faith of the Church in response to a widespread heresy. The Sunday of Orthodoxy was arranged and written to affirm the Church's belief in Christ's presence in the Sacrament, and the Service of Corpus Christi was instituted and written to affirm and teach the Church's faith in the Eucharist and the nature of salvation in general. St. Thomas used the feast as a didactic opportunity to teach much about the faith as a whole.

We have seen what the west church affirms in the texts of the liturgy. The regulations concerning the external forms are also carefully thought out to preserve the proper perspective on the nature of the Sacrament. The original feast did not include the now popular procession and exposition. These are later developments. At first it was only the regular services of the Church with their excellent texts. The idea of the procession with the Sacraments which had been carried out at other times of the year such as Palm Sunday was transferred to this feast. This procession would have to have been with the sacrament exposed as today, however, by the 15th century, the Sacrament was exposed which according to King, accounts for the growth in the popularity of the custom. ¹²

It has been stated that the purpose of the Sacrament is that it be consumed. This is evident also in the texts of Corpus Christi itself. The idea is followed even in this case. Two hosts are consecrated at the Mass of the day, one especially for the procession and exposition. Yet it would seem that this Host is treated as an extended part of the priest's communion. In the procession and benedictions, only the priest who celebrated is supposed to carry it and bless with it, ¹³ and it is he who consumes it after the ceremonies during a later Mass. In a sense it is similar to the practice of reservation of the Sacrament from one liturgy to the next, symbolically, during the first centuries in Rome. Ideally also, the procession is to take place immediately at the end of the liturgy of the Mass. ¹⁴ This is to maintain the connection with the Mass of which it is an extension.

Processions themselves are an ancient way of showing honor to someone and also a sign of joy. The Church has processions of relics, statues, or icons to show honor to these things (that is, to their antitypes) and to rejoice in them. This is exactly the case with the Sacrament. By proceeding with it the Church expresses joy and thanksgiving for the gift of the Eucharist, as well as showing honor due to the Sacrament as Christ's presence in a unique way. In the intent the context of the liturgy and the offices of the day as well as the Church's entire teaching on the Eucharist prevent any general reduction to a superstitious worshipping of the elements.

The idea of exposing the Sacrament is a later idea. It seems to have originated around the end of the 13th century in the countries of Northern Europe. ¹⁵ Many writers believe that the need to look upon the Sacrament arose from a lessening of communions at the time - - the people replacing reception with mere gazing. Partly that may be true, but these were also the times when relics were quite popular. Expositions of relics drew large crowds (and turned in a good deal of money). Perhaps during the late Middle Ages, it was a part of the culture of the north to need visual contact occasionally with that which was held in reverence. ¹⁶ It is true that even now political figures must take care to be seen often in order to keep the people happy. Humans need to *see*. Apophatic theology was never a popular piety anywhere.

In the east, there is certainly much opportunity for visual contemplation of the divine – through icons primarily. It is interesting to note that the parallels between devotion of icons in various forms in the east are often identical with devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in the west. The procession of icons on Orthodoxy Sunday has already been noted. Of striking interest is the watching over the Epitaphios during Holy Week. In the west, after the stripping of the Altar on Holy Thursday night, the reserved Sacrament is also removed to some other place outside of the main sanctuary. It is the custom to watch at this “Altar of Repose” until midnight of Thursday. This altar is usually extravagantly decorated with flowers, reminiscent of a funeral home. In actual practice and piety, it is nearly identical with the eastern watching over the Epitaphios. The atmosphere is strikingly identical. Historically this is even truer. The Holy Thursday watching is all that is left of a rite from the Middle Ages of ritually “burying” some of the reserved Sacrament, placing it in a special Easter Sepulchre and keeping watch there until the Easter resurrection service at which time the Sacrament, often exposed, would be joyously brought out of the “sepulchre” and taken to the altar. ¹⁷ This almost exactly parallel to our Eastern rite of the Epitaphios. Some Uniates have seen the connection and when they set out the epitaphios, they also set the reserved Eucharist in a chalice on top of it! This is a logical connection of the two rites.

Gregory Dix feels that the reason that veneration of the reserved Sacrament never grew important in popular piety in the east is that the Iconostas with closed doors prevented the tabernacle from being seen. ¹⁸ In his view, the possibility of visual contact or lack of it was the determining factor in the development of "Eucharistic Piety." There is some psychological connection between visual contact and communication. People look at someone they are talking to even to the point that some will concentrate on a loudspeaker when it is used for an announcement. For this reason, many people claim that icons help them to pray. It is more natural to have some visual focus in communicating. As such, the Eucharist can be psychologically very powerful, especially when seen as the physical way Our Lord comes to us in the time between His two comings. In the mind of the pious believer, nothing is so good a focus for his prayers to his Lord. One must note that most devotions to the Sacrament are addressed to Christ Himself present, not to the Sacrament as such.

At the end of a period of exposition, the feast of Corpus Christi ends with a "Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament." In this service, the congregation present is blessed with the sign of the cross made with the Sacrament. This act is customary in communing sick from the reserved Sacrament also. The rubrics prescribe that after communing the sick, all present be blessed with the pyx, containing the Sacrament. ¹⁹ In this context, it seems quite as natural as the blessing Orthodox receive during the Liturgy after communion, when the gifts are removed to the table of prothesis. It is also again very similar and even parallel to the rites of the east at the leave-taking of any feast. At the elevation of the cross, for example, the hymns to the Cross are sung, the Cross is censed, and then it is taken up from the center of the church and the people are blessed with it. Also at the leave-taking of any other feast, the same is done with the appropriate icon. Here, this is the leave-taking of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament. The Sacrament, like the Cross or Icon was exposed in the Church for veneration. The Hymns of the feast are sung, the Sacrament is censed, and the people are blessed with it. This is the logical leave-taking of the feast.

Taken as a whole, the feast can be seen to closely parallel the eastern feast of the Cross. In this feast, the east rejoices in, gives thanksgiving for and honors and even prays directly to the Cross. In an exact parallel, the west rejoices in, gives thanksgiving for and honors the Eucharist as Christ's gift of Himself. Both feasts are strongly soteriological, remembering many of the same points of Christ's saving act, and both tend to make reference to the temporal salvation from enemies. Finally both feasts share many of the same outward rituals.

EXPOSITION

In addition to the exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at the feast of Corpus Christi, it is customary at other times of the year also. One of the best-known and formerly very popular of these is what is known as the "Forty Hours Prayer" or "Forty Hours Supplication." This, like the feast of Corpus Christi, has a very distinct liturgical expression and is in fact a repetition and extension of the feast of Corpus Christi. It apparently came about first in Milan in something of its present form around the mid-16th century and from there spread to Rome and by act of Clement VIII, near the end of the 16th century it was established for the whole of the western church. ¹ Its beginning in Milan are linked to a period of plague and civil strife and Clement's institution of it as Rome was also motivated by trouble in the church. ² The prayer was apparently originally a public supplication for peace and public well-being. As such its beginning are rather similar to the eastern devotion to the Theotokos known as the Paraclesis, which is "a petition to the Theotokos, said at

every catastrophe and affliction”³ It apparently also had its beginnings as a prayer in times of trouble and civil danger. In the east, for such times, the church chose to do *molieben* services to a particular saint, especially if a miraculous icon was available or famous relic. Also possible would be the use of a canon or an *akathist*. The west chooses to turn to Christ Himself and to focus that prayer on His presence in the Blessed Sacrament. It is merely a different expression of the identical phenomenon.

The origins of this prayer are also linked to the Holy Week watching at the sepulcher described earlier. It was originally celebrated at the beginning of Lent just before Ash Wednesday, but gradually lost its connection with Holy Week altogether and became a general devotion as it is now.⁴

The prayer starts off with a votive mass of the Blessed Sacrament, which is in fact the Mass of Corpus Christi. Therefore the prayer starts off with the texts of Corpus Christi proclaiming again the nature of the Church’s belief regarding the Sacrament. Immediately after the Mass, there is a procession and exposition exactly as at Corpus Christi, except that it does not end that day but does on for somewhat more than two days. On the second day there is celebrated a votive Mass for peace. This recalls the beginning of the devotion in times of trouble. Votive masses are those in which the moveable propers, such as prayers, collects, and lectionary are chosen for a particular theme. In other words, one is able to choose a particular commemoration rather than take the one assigned in the calendar for any particular day; with the exception of certain major feast days which must always be observed.

After the second day Mass, the exposition continues until the third day when again the Mass of the Blessed Sacrament is sung and the exposition is ended with Benediction.

Again, we see that this devotion is more to be described as “liturgical” than “paraliturgical.” These two major liturgical commemorations focusing on the Sacrament should serve to set the tone for any other relationship with the Sacrament. Their didactic content, so rich in the faith and understanding of the Church, set out exactly what the understanding of the Sacrament should be even when receiving it throughout the year.

Finally we come to what are known as private visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Again, I believe, attention should be drawn to the fact that in the west since the early Middle Ages, the reserved Sacrament has been a very obvious feature in most western churches. In the east, this has not been the case since the introduction of curtains and iconostases. As we have noted before, the visible presence of the tabernacle became a focus for private prayer as the icon did in the east. Therefore, when one enters a western church for private prayer, he is always aware of the presence of the reserved Sacrament. Almost invariably these are taken from the services of Corpus Christi and therefore tend to reenforce the Church’s teaching and understanding concerning the Sacrament. Sometimes, however, these are composed by other pious individuals who are not so precise in their doctrinal and theological overtones.

One idea which is well-represented in such manuals is that Jesus’ humility in offering Himself in the Sacrament. While offering Himself to us, He is ignored and rejected by those who fail to discern Him or to receive Him. Quite a bit of literature has been written about this theme which, not too serious as it begins, has been carried to

ghastly extremes. One can see that to think on all that God in Christ has done for mankind, and then to see how we fail to receive and thank Him for all of that is certainly a good, pious exercise. To carry it further, however, and lament about “Jesus abandoned in the tabernacle” or to pray to “Jesus, Divine Prisoner”⁵ is shocking. One must always be careful, however, not to identify, what one finds in various devotional manuals with the teachings of the Roman Church. If this were so, our Orthodox Church would be seen to believe some rather odd things also.

Therefore, for an individual, while praying in Church to specifically honor the presence of Christ in the Eucharist does not seem to be an abuse. Indeed, something would seem to be necessarily due to Christ there present. Many Orthodox believe that the reverence they make while passing the Royal Doors is directed to the reserved Sacrament. It is possible that this is due to western influence, but as was noted at the very beginning of this discussion, from earliest times it was felt both in the east and the west that a certain reverence and honor was due to the reserved Sacrament.

In the Orthodox East, it is said that reverence paid to relics or icons reverts to the antetype and that honor paid to a saint is indirectly paid to Christ because the saint is a manifestation of Christ’s life and presence in the world. Reverence to the cross is also reverence to Christ and His savings passion and resurrection. Certainly, reverence to the Sacrament cannot be less possible than this. In a sense it is the direct presence of the Antetype. As the hymn of Corpus Christi puts it: “The Bread of Heaven puts an end to types.”⁶ Honor paid to Christ’s presence does not need to “revert” anywhere. God is the ultimate - - the final goal.

As already stated, also, to meditate on the Eucharist, is to meditate on the fullness of salvation and the meaning of the Church. All is brought together in the Eucharist, all is present in the Eucharist, all is fulfilled in the Eucharist. We have no richer source for our piety than the Eucharist.

It has been claimed by some that Eucharistic devotion tends to be antithetical to reception of communion. This is not so, to hold one exclusively over the other is a reduction and a distortion. Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical letter, “Mysterium Fidei” treats both together, encouraging both veneration and reception of the sacrament as one reality. If one truly venerates Christ’s presence, he will surely desire to unite himself to it. True devotion to the Sacrament is only fulfilled in communion.

Devotion to the Sacrament can, therefore, be seen as a form of preparation for communion, constructing the faithful on the nature and meaning of the Sacrament, and exciting them to desire it. Nowadays, especially with our Orthodox return to more frequent communion, our people need to be taught about the Sacrament in a way that will not again frighten them away from the chalice. Perhaps a revival of sincere devotion to the Sacrament will both instruct and inspire our people to frequent and meaningful communion.

INDULGENCES

I cannot attempt here to investigate the entire Roman Catholic doctrine of Indulgences. I only wish to comment briefly on the doctrine as it affects the practice of devotions. It does, indeed have an effect because the trend since the 17th or 18th centuries has been to grant indulgences mostly for performing devotions. Therefore,

the practice of devotions has become linked in the popular mind with the gaining of indulgences.

According to the Apostolic Constitution on Indulgences published by Pope Paul VI in 1967, the Church from earliest times has believed such that indulgences grow out of that faith. He claims that it has always been believed by the faithful that sin brings punishment which must be expiated either on earth or in purgatory. Christ, he says has acquired infinite expiation for all the faithful. He does not explain why this is not available to all the faithful except through indulgences and grants of the Church. He then shows that the Christian Church is a unified body of believers, each united inseparably to the other. Because of this unity, Christians can work for their own and their brothers' salvation and for the expiation of their own and their brothers' sins. This is not necessarily a wrong idea, except for that recurring idea of expiation. We do not accept this basic presupposition which is the basis of the entire doctrine. The idea that for our sins we have been sentenced to so much suffering as a punishment and that we need to work it off somehow in this world or the next is really very odd in light of Salvation in Christ. If any penalty was to be paid, then Christ paid it for us. We may need purification either in this world or the next, but we couldn't pay the price for our sins in any event. If we could, what is the need of Christ?

Anyway, this is the Roman presupposition. Working from this Pope Paul says:

The Church, aware of these truths ever since its origins, formulated and undertook various ways of applying the fruits of the Lord's redemption to the individual faithful and of leading them to cooperate in the salvation of their brothers, so that the entire Body of the Church might be prepared in justice and sanctity for the complete realization of the Kingdom of God, when He will be all things to all men. ¹

In other words, the Church worked out an “ecomania” keeping in mind the general good of the Church and the salvation of the members. The Bishops, he states, decided how penitential matters would be handled and what penances would be assigned. The Church, through its bishops also decides how the “Merits of Christ” would be applied to cover the sins of all.

It would seem that the doctrine of indulgences is a legalistic variation of our practice of *economia*. The Romans, however, have added this very legal, judicial, penalty-oriented superstructure onto the whole enterprise. The Roman Church then went on to decide ways of parceling out these “Merits of Christ.” It is quite well-known that during the late Middle Ages they were sold for money. Pope Paul VI makes mention of this and condemns it as well as the misapplication of indulgences when they did not serve the upbuilding of the Church.

As existing today, the faithful can get indulgences, which are applicable to the dead, mostly for performing acts of devotion. Therefore, almost everything we have examined in this paper has had various indulgences attached to it. Usually one must perform the specific act in connection with a sacramental confession and communion in order to gain the full indulgences. Thus, we see people communing not to commune with God, but in order to validate an indulgence; and performing acts of devotion not out of devotion, but to acquire an indulgence. Many fine prayers and devotions can be completely distorted in people's minds by this practice.

The Rosary is a practical example of this. Many pray the Rosary not to pray and commune with God, but rather in order to buy some benefit for themselves or others. Thus, they lose the real value of the prayer. If a person were always on the watch for indulgences, he could collect them from almost every act of piety and worship and would, in fact, lose the real meaning and value of his entire spiritual life. Every sign of the cross is indulgence, the Magnificat as we sing it every morning at matins is indulgence, as is the recitation of the Creed, a visit to a cemetery, or the hymn that we sing at Compline, "Beneath Thy Compassion" and many, many more. The entire spiritual life is overlaid with this "indulgence value," "What can I get for doing this or praying that?"

This is where most pastoral objection to special devotions lies. Most of the devotions which we have looked at are so connected in the people's minds with the various indulgenced benefits that this becomes the motive for performing them. It is rare to find someone who prays these good and valuable devotions only out of true piety or appreciation for the spiritual beauty of it. This is the tragedy of devotions that they have become items of trade in a spiritual marketplace rather than means to come to God. The real value is overlooked in the haste to cash in on the indulgence value. Where the devotion can be separated from the indulgences, the real treasures of the devotions of the Church will again be seen.

CONCLUSION

Having looked at each of these various devotions in its historical development and in actual practice and meaning, we see that some are really very good and serve to express well the Orthodox faith. Such devotions as the Rosary, the Angelus, and the Way of the Cross are strictly Biblical and Orthodox. There is really no reason why these should be suppressed or condemned when they are found among our people.

Others, such as the Sacred Heart, are questionable in modern practice and perhaps some pastoral guidance is necessary to ensure that they are practiced in an Orthodox way. Nevertheless, such things have potential as helps and guides to find the way to Christ and God.

Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is, as we have seen, the most foreign to historical Orthodoxy, but is in fact in no way alien to the spirit of Orthodoxy. Indeed, there may be a need for an increased awareness of the sanctity and uniqueness of the Sacrament today, and the problem of how to accomplish that without hurting frequent communion may well be to foster increased devotion to the Sacrament.

Many people deride devotions as detracting from the liturgical life of the Church or replacing it. This cannot be. All devotions are only to fill that area of private prayer which is part of the Christian life. As such, they prepare for the public, liturgical life. All of them are fulfilled in the public liturgy. This is especially true of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. All devotion finds fulfillment in Christian action. If one loves God and prays to Him, he will follow by acting according to God's will. To do otherwise is to prove that true love of God does not exist there. St. John writes:

He who says, "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his words, in him truly love for God is perfected. I John 2: 4-5.

Therefore, inasmuch as a devotion is a true expression of piety and love of God, it will be accompanied by true liturgical piety and true Christian charity. The Christian life is an Organic whole. It does not exist in parts here and there, nor is it a buffet to be chosen from. A way of life is total. You cannot have two ways of life. The Christian prays as a Christian, worships as a Christian and lives as a Christian.

NOTES

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