

Concelebration as a Point of View for Research concerning an Adequate Expression of Contemporary Theology in a Specific Liturgical Ceremony *

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A well-known proverb in liturgical science is undoubtedly *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*, which means that liturgy is an important *locus theologicus*. The way religious people are acting ritually, automatically reveals the contents of their belief. The *lex orandi* is therefore an interesting source for the *lex credendi*. The question presents itself whether this is also true in the opposite direction. In fact, the way people belief has also consequences for the way they celebrate liturgy. In other words, a ritual action reflects e certain theology. This means that a contemporary liturgy always should have to be an expression of current religious belief.

Unfortunately, that is not usually the case. Many of our roman catholic rituals are at odds with a contemporary way of believing. Certain liturgical actions don't appeal anymore, just because people are not able to recognise themselves in these rituals. The reason is that some of our ritual practices reflect an obsolete theology which doesn't fit anymore. Such rituals don't work because they cannot express adequately the actual belief. The Second Vatican Council however wanted the Church to be right up to date. Therefore it remains to be seen whether the liturgical renewal of the Council has anticipated the changes in the actual religious and theological perception. Couldn't it be possible that there is a certain discrepancy between the liturgy and a contemporary way of theologising?

To deal with this matter, we have concentrated on the rite of the eucharistic concelebration, what can be defined as 'a collective eucharistic presidency'. This rite functions as a test case for the question whether our liturgical activities are adjusted to a contemporary way of theological thinking. We have examined whether this rite is able to reflect an actual way of believing. More specifically we have investigated whether the rite of concelebration as a liturgical practice is or can be an adequate mode of expression for a contemporary theology upon the eucharistic community and its liturgical minister.

We started our research by examining the historical evolution of the rite of concelebration (part 1). Important conclusions here are that during the first centuries concelebration has always been a sign of the unity of the local church gathered around the bishop. At the same time it was a sign of hospitality and of community between different churches. In those times concelebration was always silent, which means that the concelebrating priests did not recite the prayers together with the presiding bishop. From the end of the 7th century onwards, a form of 'spoken' concelebration came into existence, which means that the concelebrating priests recite the eucharistic prayer, at least the words of institution, together with the presiding minister. This form of concelebration remained until it disappeared at the end of the 12th century and took

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place only by exception during the consecration of a bishop and the ordination of a priest.

The Second Vatican Council has extended the use of concelebration to a larger number of situations. In our research we have discussed this at length (part 2). We have examined the motives for this extension as they were brought forward during the period of the Liturgical Movement (chapter 1), as well as the treatment of the rite of concelebration during the several stages of the Council (chapter 2). We have also given a presentation of the rite of concelebration worked out by the Council (*Ritus servandus in concelebratione Missae*, 1965; afterwards included in the General Introduction to the Roman Missal of 1970 and 1975) (chapter 3). Conclusions here are that the extension of the rite of concelebration is mainly influenced by practical concerns (e.g. the dissatisfaction about the private masses). The theological motive for the extension was to be said that this rite was a good expression of the unity among priests. The concelebration as a sign of the unity of the whole celebrating community, just like it was during the first centuries, was but a second motive. The Council also opted for a spoken concelebration, which is in contradiction with the liturgical practice of the first centuries. A concelebration among priests themselves in the absence of a bishop also became possible, while in the past concelebration had always been a rite in attendance of the bishop. Therefore, saying that the Second Vatican Council, by extending the rite of concelebration, restored a time-honoured liturgical practice (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 57) is only partly true. According to content and form, the rite of concelebration elaborated by the Council is undoubtedly a new creation.

The central question of our research is whether this new rite really is an adequate expression of a contemporary theology of the eucharistic community and its minister like it has been developed since Vatican II (part 3). In order to answer this question, we have tried to draw up such a contemporary theology (chapter 1). We have characterised the eucharistic minister as the 'sacrament of the ecclesial Christ'. Faithful to the impulses of the Council, we have tried to surpass the compromising character of the Council by making an explicit choice for an ecclesial ministerial theology. It remains to be seen whether the rite of concelebration can be fit into such a theology. Is the rite of concelebration an expression of our actual thinking about the eucharistic community and its minister? Based upon a critical analysis of the rite of concelebration (chapter 2) (e.g. what is the impression people get from a concelebrated Eucharist?; by what motives are priests inspired to concelebrate?; what is the influence of concelebration upon the theology of the eucharistic prayer?; ...), we came to the conclusion that the answer to that question has to be rather negative. The rite of concelebration reflects a strong sacerdotal, clerical and predominantly christological ministerial theology. In that way, the gap between the minister and the participants is widening. In stead of a sign of the unity, the rite of concelebration is becoming a sign of division, that is to say the division between those who have been ordained and those who have not been ordained. In that way, this rite doesn't express the actual theology. Concelebration symbolises an obsolete, almost preconiliar vision upon the liturgical minister. The rite of concelebration is not consistent with the actual thinking about community and ministry. Therefore it is a typical example of a rite reflecting a discrepancy between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*.

A logical question is whether this rite is still convenient in our times (part 4). We think that concelebration should be used as seldom as possible. This rite gives the impression to be a kind of display of ministerial power. Priests who don't have to preside should participate just like the faithful (*modo laicorum*). On the other hand,

within a contemporary liturgical and ministerial theology, the rite of concelebration still offers some opportunities to function as a real *locus theologicus* (chapter 1). However this is only possible when the rite recovers its original meaning as a sign of unity of the local community and as a sign of hospitality. In our research, we entered at length into the advisability, the possibility and the requirements of such forms of concelebration. It is obvious that the actual rite will have to undergo some changes so that concelebration can be really a sign of *communio* and no longer a sign of clerical display of power. In our dissertation we have presented some proposals to revise the actual rite in the light of a reassessment of its original meaning (chapter 2).

“Do this in remembrance of Me”: A social dimension of the Eucharist with a special reference to the Indian Christian communities*

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The Second Vatican Council both in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) and the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) emphasised the meaningful celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The renewal in the liturgical movement that focussed on active participation has also brought the Eucharist celebration to the *centre* of the Christian experience. Since then, more changes have taken place in the theology of Eucharist than in the previous five hundred years. This is evident, in practical terms, in the rediscovery of life-oriented sacramental celebrations. However, for most people, ‘worship’ is one thing and living ‘morally’ is another. One should never neglect the unity between worship and life, or in any way dichotomize the two. In recent years, the cry of the marginalised has challenged the Church to adopt a more authentic liturgical practice so as to lead the participants towards a greater authenticity in every aspect of their life. In a more specific way, it has challenged the Indian Church to be a voice for the voiceless, not only in its documents but also in its celebrations and day-to-day life.

Our study, divided into four chapters, argues the intrinsic relationship between the Eucharistic celebration and the concern for the issues affecting the community. Establishing our research within the context of the shift in the development of the theology of the Eucharist, Chapter One critically examines this historical shift. In the second chapter, we analyse the importance of *anamnesis* and *epiclesis* in the Roman as well as in the Lutheran, Anglican and Methodist Eucharistic prayers. Our study reveals that the *anamnesis* (remembrance) of the death of Jesus could not be considered alone but its meaning belongs within the totality of his words and deeds. In the *epiclesis*, the main thrust is the prayer for the Spirit to come not only upon the gifts that they may be changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus, but also on those who partake of this bread and cup, so that they may truly become one body in Christ. This is the basis for Christian unity. The reconstruction of the meaning of *anamnesis* and *epiclesis* in the Eucharistic prayers offers a challenge to the believing community to move from a

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