

Summary Dissertation

Om voor Gods gelaat te staan.
Een *expositio missae*¹

To stand before the face of God.
An *expositio missae*

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The *expositio missae* presented in this book belongs to the theory of liturgy in the perspective of the study of spirituality, which examines the transformation of man in God. The study of spirituality distinguishes between (a) the 'form' that is absorbed into the self and (b) the 'transformation' that takes effect through the process of absorption.

In part 1 we explain the transformational model *missa* on the basis of the *ordo missae* as it was published in the *editio typica altera* (1975) of the *Missale Romanum*. We take the *ordo* of this ritual word by word. Our explanation not only relates to the text of the mass ritual, but it also interprets and analyzes the composition, structure and internal dynamics of the prescribed rites. The *ritus initiales*, discussed in chapter I, prepare the worshippers for the *communio* with God and with each other. For this an inner state is required that is not a natural concomitant of congregation. The opening rituals work on the attitudes of the worshippers in such a way that they break through their self-orientation in preparation of the events that are to follow: the people will receive the Lord in his Word and Body.

In the *Liturgia verbi*, which we discuss in chapter II, the principal moment appears to consist in the climactically arranged series of three Scripture readings. However, the effectuation of the word (*verbum*) involves more than just the *lectio*. In the ritual sequence of the *liturgia verbi* we recognize the first three moments of the *lectio divina*: (a) the *lectio* in lessons and Gospel, in which the Word of God comes to pass; (b) the *meditatio* in the homily in which the meaning of the Word of God is sought for and expounded; (c) the *oratio* in the intercession, where the people address God in universal prayer. In the *liturgia verbi* the dynamic of prayer becomes visible in the relationship between God and his people. In his Word (*verbum Domini*) God reaches out to his people, who do not remain unmoved, but let themselves be affected and in their turn reach out to God in heartfelt and outspoken gratitude (*Deo gratias*).

¹ Baarn: Gooi & Sticht, 1999, 319 p.; ISBN 90-304-0970-3.
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We analyze the three sections of the *liturgia eucharistica* in chapter III. In the *preparatio donorum* the gifts that will be offered up to God are prepared. With these gifts the people approach God. This requires the proper attitude to bring about mutual involvement, involvement in *communio*, between God and man. Thus in the *praeparatio donorum* not only bread and wine are converted into an oblation, but the people as well. As for the second section of the *liturgia eucharistica*, we have chosen the first *prex eucharistica* given, the *Canon Romanus*. Here the two aspects of *communio*, between men, and between men and God, are further unfolded. So are the attitudinal aspects of approach and reception. The aspect of reception will gradually take shape until in the *ritus communionis* it reaches a climax. In this third and last part of the *liturgia eucharistica* the *communio* between God and his people takes place on a ritual level. This *communio* is effected through, with and in Christ, who, eaten in the ritual of Communion, intercedes between God and his people with his own life. This is the moment of *contemplatio*, the mystical reception of the presence of God. This moment is the fourth and final step in the *lectio divina*.

The *ritus conclusionis*, explained in chapter IV, conclude the ritual *missa*. They pivot on the *dimissio*. This *dimissio* points to the application of the mass ritual, not as a logical consequence, but as its proper meaning. The import of the *missa* does not rest on the worshippers' experiences while it is going on, but on that which the *communio* makes us aware of: going the Way. In this final section of the ritual *missa* we recognize the moment that was called 'application' (*applicatio*) in the *lectio divina*, which was the sole purpose of the entire reading process. Accordingly, the structure of the ritual *missa* is parallel to that of the *lectio divina*: the *ritus initiales* as preparation, the two main sections of the *missa* as the actual reading procedure, the *ritus conclusionis* as application.

In the *missa*, seen as a transformational model, the process of the transformation of man in God takes place. In part 2 of our *expositio missae* we systematically examine the mutual involvement of God and his people, as it occurs in the *missa*. In the *missa*, God and people are presented as two opposite poles and take shape in their opposition.

In chapter I we show how God is addressed or referred to, implicitly and explicitly, directly and indirectly, unmistakably in a Scriptural manner. The other pole in the man-God relationship, the people, can be identified as well, as the Biblical people of God, among whom the different roles have been assigned. Between the two poles God-people mediation is required. In the *missa* there are several forms of mediation, all of them associated with *the* pre-eminent mediator, the Messiah, Gods Anointed, by Whom, through Whom and in Whom the people are transformed in *communio*, in God. Jesus mediates in two ways: (a) from God towards the people in the word that is heard in Holy Writ and in the shape of bread and wine; (b) from the people towards God, where his mediatorship is marked with texts chiefly deriving from Paul's Letter to the Romans and from the Letter to the Hebrews, and where the *per Christum* concludes the prayers. As an intermediary Christ has merged with the

mediation, like the people who, once transformed in God, are no longer 'people' but 'in God', and like God who is no longer God-in-himself, but has transformed to God-in-his-people.

In chapter II we examine the possible paths of prayer by which the people reach out to God. We encounter four moments: the approach of God; the recognition of God; the moving of God; the absorption-into-the-self of God. It appears that we can connect all these four devotional paths with the *sacrificium*. The approach of God is articulated in *sacrificium offerre*; the recognition of God in the expression *sacrificium laudis*; the moving of God becomes an advancing of grounds on which the people hope God will accept (*suscipiat*) their offering (*sacrificium*); the absorption-into-the-self of God comes to a head in the ritual taking of bread and wine, which have been offered to God as *sacrificium*.

In chapter III we explore further the connection between prayer and offering made in chapter II. Offering and prayer are essentially similar, in that both include the complete surrender of self by man, looking forward to the acceptance of this self-gift by God.

In chapter IV we examine the mystical perspective of the *missa*. First we look at the inner dynamics of the oblation in its aspect of *sacrum mysterium*. Here we come upon the limits of our examination, because we can not bring to light what can not be seen. We can only show the perspective that is opened by mysticism. The sacrificial character of the eucharist is clarified by Vaticanum II – confirming the findings of the Tridentinum – by means of the concepts *sacrificium eucharisticum* and *sacrificium crucis*. Although the two *sacrificia* differ in the way they are implemented, they agree in being one and the same (*una et eadem*) offering (*hostia*), which as such remains invisible because it is a *sacrum mysterium*. This *mysterium* makes up the *punctum tertium* to which the *sacrificium eucharisticum* and the *sacrificium crucis* are related. To approach this *mysterium*, we read in the Letter to the Hebrews how the *sacrificium crucis* may be understood as a mystical sacrifice, which is consummated in being secretly received by God. Similarly, the *sacrificium eucharisticum* may be considered the other way of offering the same mystical sacrifice.

In the *missa*, regarded as a mystical sacrifice, the *communio* of God and his people is characterized by the intimacy of the *vis-à-vis*, summarized in *stare in conspectu Dei*: to stand before the face of God.

(Translation by Drs. R. van der Hart.)

