Reforming the Liturgy 1947-2013

The reform of the Church's liturgy following the Second Vatican Council and expressed in the Dogmatic Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (On the Sacred Liturgy) [1] promulgated in 1963 was probably the single most visible manifestation of the deliberations of the Council Fathers and certainly had the most immediate impact on the lives of ordinary Catholics. It had a mixed reception: there were some who rejected it out of hand, while others enthusiastically wholeheartedly embraced it. But for most people it was a matter of liking some aspects and merely tolerating the rest. It was not, however a reform that came out of the blue. Liturgical Reform had been quietly talked about since the abrupt closing of the First Vatican Council in 1870, and the publication of the encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947) by Pope Pius XII gave it the Papal seal of approval. This document in particular paved the way for the reforms brought about in the Second Vatican Council and these initiatives will be looked at first before considering *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and its reception in England. Much of the personal reflection about the changes, which are included in the article are from people who live within the diocese of Middlesbrough and were collected by this author for a research project. However, they are representative of the general English experience of the implementation of the liturgical reforms asked for by the Council Fathers and carried out by the Hierarchy of English bishops.

The Movement for Reform and Mediator Dei (1947)

From the end of the nineteenth century in Europe there was a desire for reform of the Liturgy that was centred within the Benedictine Orders. Their concern was very much one of pastoral care and their hope was that reform would "restore the expressiveness and sanctifying power of the liturgy"[2] and so bring the laity back to full participation in, and understanding of, the Rites. There was support from St Pius X, who in his Moto Proprio *Tra le sollecitudini* (1903) saw active participation of the faithful in the liturgy as *the foremost and indispensable fount of true Christian spirit* that would lead to interior renewal in the Church. As a result, the movement began to move outwards from the Benedictine order into an international movement and in 1947 the Vatican took it under its own direction and Pope Pius XII wrote the encyclical *Mediator Dei,* which sealed his authority on the matter and reiterated the pastoral concern that underpinned the movement.

The encyclical *Mediator Dei* more than anything paved the way for the reforms of the liturgy that would be enacted a few years later at the Second Vatican Council. It was the first encyclical devoted specifically to the Liturgy and in it Pope Pius provided a complete

[1] Vatican II 'Sacrosanctum Concilium' (1963) Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy' in Flannery, A. (ed.) Vatican Council II The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Study Edition (New York 1992) 1-36.

[2] Bugnini, A., The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975 (Minnesota 1990) 6

and systematic theology of the Church's worship. Written in the immediate aftermath of the ravages of the Second World War and the ensuing descent of the Iron curtain of communism over Eastern Europe, Pope Pius XII felt that such a crisis of civilisation called for a revival of faith and therefore a revitalisation of the Church's worship.[3] The encyclical is divided into four sections with an introduction and conclusion. The first two sections are theological treatises: firstly on the nature and development of liturgy and secondly on the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice and worship in the Mass. He discusses the necessity and the means by which the individual comes into *vital contact with the sacrifice of the cross so that its merits ...should be imparted to [us]* (MD77) and then reiterates the teaching of St Pius X that we receive this by means of *our active and individual participation (*MD 78). The section concludes with an explanation of the merits of Eucharistic Adoration and the importance of Holy Communion encouraging Catholics to receive the sacrament frequently and devoutly in order to be *united to the Lord in the spirit of the most ardent charity* (MD 115-117). The third section of the encyclical is devoted to the Divine Office and the Liturgical year and although he recognises the practice of saying the Office is largely maintained by the religious communities he urges the practice of reciting Vespers on Sundays in parish churches asserting that it would keep Sundays holy and the people more closely united to the prayer of the whole Church (MD 150). The final section gives practical and pastoral instructions and in it Pope Pius encourages the use of legitimate devotions, but in their proper place though reminding the faithful that the liturgy is both prior to and of a higher order than devotions and their devotional life flows from the liturgy not vice versa.(MD 184) He also encouraged a more active role for the laity in the liturgy, for example by praising those who explained the "'Roman Missal" so that the faithful, united with the priest may pray together in the very words and sentiments of the Church'[4]. It also encouraged the use of 'Dialogue Masses': *They are also to be commended who strive to make the liturgy even in an external way a sacred act...in which all share...for instance, the whole congregation...either answer the priest in an orderly or fitting manner, or sing hymns suitable to the different parts of the Mass, or do both, or...in high Masses when they answer the prayers of the minister of Jesus Christ and also sing the liturgical chant.*[5] *(*MD 105)

Some obviously felt that this difficult and as this correspondent to his local Catholic magazine in Hull commented: *From time to time during the course of the year the laity are urged to follow the Holy Mass with the aid of a missal and 'the pray the Mass'. [sic] Why then, do the clergy though perhaps unwittingly, do so much which discourages this admirable exercise being carried out? One of the chief objects to using a missal is the difficulty of following the Latin, as spoken by the priest. In other parts of the world...I have never experienced the same inaudibility as to be found in English churches. After all, only a small part of the Mass is said privately, the major part said for and on behalf of the*

[3] Pope Pius XII, Mediator Dei (1947) http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/P12MEDIA.HTM. Accessed 15.05.2026
[4] Op. cit. 105
[5] Op.cit.

people.[6] The correspondent wondered whether it was due to the need for speed, in which case he suggested a shorter sermon or notices. With several hourly masses on Sunday in the larger urban churches, speed was a consideration, but there was also the notion that the Mass was a private devotion of the priest at which the people were present but not fully involved.

Liturgical Reform 1948-1959

In 1948, a commission for liturgical reform was appointed in Rome and at its first meeting it was clear that not all the members including its President realised the importance of the issues it would be dealing with nor that its work would be long and demanding. A conservative estimate was that the revision of the Scriptures for liturgical use would take at least five years.[7] In 1951, the first fruit of the commission's work was the Restoration of the Easter Vigil ceremonies to their traditional place of nighttime culminating with the first Mass of Easter at midnight. In 1955, the remainder of the Holy Week liturgies were revised with the aim that the faithful would be able to take a more active role especially by using the vernacular to renew their baptismal promises at the Easter Vigil and partaking of communion at the Mass of the Last Supper on the evening of Holy Thursday. This was only possible by the decision made in 1954 to abbreviate the required Eucharistic fast before receiving communion from midnight to one hour for the laity and three hours for the priests. This particular decision had repercussions far wider than the Easter Triduum for it initiated a period of experimentation in the timing of Mass particularly for evening celebrations both for Sundays and weekdays, which were henceforth permitted by the Vatican. That such experimentation took place in the diocese of Middlesbrough is documented in the diocesan almanacs and the pages of the Hull Catholic Magazine. *In years gone by, Sunday was a day of rest for almost everybody, and night workers…unknown. Consequently, Sunday morning Mass was convenient for the majority of people. Alas, in this atomic age of 'progress,' Sunday to many people is fast becoming just another day and the army of night workers is growing yearly. These are the people, no doubt, the Holy Father had in mind when he gave his blessing to the rule permitting Evening Mass…I feel it would be much better for the night worker if he could go straight home to a well-earned rest and assist at Holy Mass in the evening refreshed and in comfor*t.[8]

Other changes in the Mass were occurring also. In 1955 the first use of vernacular language was permitted in the reading of the Epistle and Gospel. Dialogue masses, which had been common on the continent for several years and had gradually been appearing in England, were now permitted whereby the people answered the Mass

[6] Hull Catholic Magazine (HCM) (Sept-Oct 1956) 19.281
[7] Bugnini op. cit. 9
[8] HCM (May-June 1957) 11

instead of just the servers and also joined in with the Ordinary parts of the Mass such as the Gloria and Creed.[9] In 1960, the active participation of the people in the Mass was given Papal approval, by John XXIII, who had just become Pope: *The present Pope is most anxious that all of us take part more fully than ever before in our Mass and to do this, he has allowed ALL, repeat ALL, to answer the Mass as it is being said. The reason for this new privilege is that Mass is the Supreme worship of God in which all the faithful must take part together WITH the priest. It is not the individual act of the priest at the altar but the collective act of the WHOLE congregation. Too long the ordinary faithful have been silent observers at Mass…*[10] No longer was the Mass a private devotion of the priest at which the faithful were in attendance and in many cases making their own devotions. Masses were also beginning to be described differently, for example churches were introducing 'family masses' a low mass with English hymns being used, provided the bishop's approval had been obtained. For one priest, he was hopeful that this would encourage more meaningful participation for both the children and adults present as he was doubtful the 'mere repetition of Latin words by people who in many cases have no idea of their meaning, gives any real sense of community of worship so greatly to be desired[11]

Sacrosanctum Concilium 1963

Sacrosanctum Concilium or the Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was the first of the sixteen documents to be promulgated during the course of the Second Vatican Council. It was accepted by the Council Fathers on the sixtieth anniversary of *Tra le sollecitudini*, (22.11.63) and the date of its promulgation (04.12.63) was exactly four centuries from the day in 1563 when the Council of Trent, in an effort to conclude its work referred the proposed plan to effect liturgical reform to the Holy See where it languished until the twentieth century. Comprising of seven chapters and an introduction, the very first line of the Constitution sets out the four primary goals of the Council which are an invigoration of a Christian life, modernisation of Church institutions, promotion of unity among Christians and the drawing of all humanity into the Church.(SC1) It then identifies the liturgy, and especially the Eucharist as the main means of achieving those goals for it *is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.* (SC2).

Chapter One, which is the longest, is a treatise on the theological foundations for liturgical reform: identifying the Church as Christ's Mystical Body and its liturgy as "*the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows"*(SC10). It also points out that a spiritual life is not only about participation in the liturgy but advocates a deep personal payer life (SC12) and

[9] HCM (May-June1957) 11.299
[10] HCM (Dec-Jan 1960)
[11] HCM (April-May 1960)

"highly commends" the use of popular devotions provided they are in accord with the church's law and norms.(SC13) The second part of the chapter emphasises that the faithful should be led to take a "fully conscious and active participation" in liturgical celebrations, "which is their right and duty by virtue of their baptism" and this must be the aim in all reform. (SC14)The chapter concludes by laying down some norms for the revisions so the faithful "*be enabled to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community*. (SC21). This included a greater use of Scripture and although the use of Latin was preserved as it was presumed that was the norm for Mass in the Latin Rite, there was provision for a wider use of the vernacular to allow for better understanding on the part of the laity, though only with permission of the local bishops. Perhaps the most unexpected norm however was one that represented a momentous departure from the practice of centuries during which the Church demanded that all worship within the Latin Rite should show "rigid uniformity" (SC37). It was recognised by the Council Fathers that this was no longer appropriate for social, cultural and religious conditions had radically changed in the world especially with the opening up of developing third world countries whose national expression and cultural habitus was tightly bound up with deeply rooted usages and customs. For this reason the Constitution states "*Provision shall also be made…for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples, especially in mission lands provided the substantial unity of the Roman Rite is preserved; this should be borne in mind when rites are drawn up and rubrics devised"* (SC38). As Annibale Bugnini, a *peritus* (expert) at the Council and later Secretary of the Consilium[12] set up to implement the Constitution points out, the principle of unity not uniformity is used throughout the document and gives new meaning to the word "unity" and new vigour to the word "Catholicity" Both remain as inviolable characteristics of liturgical prayer and of the post conciliar Church.[13]

Chapter Two focuses on the Eucharist and again emphasises that the faithful should participate actively and consciously in the Mass rather than being "strangers or silent spectators" (SC48). To help with this a richer use of Scripture was mandated with more portions of the Bible used over a cycle of prescribed years. The Rite was to be simplified by removing those elements that had accumulated over time without genuine purpose and teaching given that its two part structure – the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are equally important as both provide the living presence of Christ and form one unified act of worship. (SC56) Homilies, which in many places had become limited to Sunday High Mass were made compulsory at all Sunday Masses and days of obligation (SC52) and the Prayer of the Faithful was restored on the same occasions (SC53). Finally, what was described as "that more perfect form of participation in the

[12] The Consilium later became part of the Congregation for Divine Worship
[13] Bugnini, A. Op.cit.43

Mass" the more frequent reception of Holy Communion was strongly commended (SC55).

Chapter Three considered other Sacraments and Sacramentals and proposed the restoration of the Catechumenate for Adults, (SC64) and Extreme Unction was renamed as the Sacrament of the Sick (SC73). All the Rites considered in this chapter, which together could be considered to be Rites of Passage were to be revised to take out those elements that had crept in and whose meaning were no longer clear in the modern world. But the most important change was to mandate the use of the vernacular throughout these rites because it is "*of the highest importance that the faithful should easily understand the sacramental signs*" although the Mass in which most were set would be according to permitted local practice (SC59). Chapter Four discusses the Divine Office, which outlines the Church's ancient tradition of ceaseless daily prayer which is said by priests and religious to intercede for the whole world. Chapter Five is dedicated to the Liturgical Year and calls for its revision to ensure the primary feasts are appropriately prioritised and adapting it so it could be easily understood and observed by modern congregations. Chapters Six and Seven concern the use of Music and Art in the liturgy directing that they promote faithfulness and lift hearts towards prayer. Vernacular musical styles and a wider range of instruments were permitted in limited circumstances (SC119-20) while new norms for the construction of church buildings and altars were requested together with the proper ordering of sacred images vestments and other embellishments (SC128).

After the promulgation of the Constitution, it was announced that the norms would not take effect until the first Sunday of Lent (February 16th) 1964. In his closing address to the session Pope Paul warned that no attempt should be made to introduce private changes or unusual rites nor should anybody take to themselves the right to arbitrarily interpret the Constitution before proper and authoritative instructions were published. He requested that the Consilium urgently produce a document indicating those norms that be immediately applied such as the homily becoming an indispensable part of the Mass and the competence of national episcopal conferences in regard to the use of the vernacular with decisions made through secret ballots and requiring a two-thirds majority.[14] Although the task of reforming the Liturgy in line with the Constitution was huge, it was hoped by the Church authorities that it would be completed within five years.

The implementation of Sacrosanctum Concilium 1964-1975

The fact that the norms of Vatican II were implemented over a long period of time is nowhere clearer than in the changes to the Mass that occurred between 1964 and 1975 including new emphases in the theology of the Church and understanding of the Mass

[14] Conferences voting on such matters had to include abbots, and prelates nullius , apostolic administrators, and vicars apostolic. Coadjutors and auxiliary bishops might be invited with consent of the members.

and the revised rituals and practices that they led to.[15] By stating that one of the aims of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was to imbue the Rites of the Liturgy with "a new vigour to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times" (SC4) it clearly implies that the rites as they currently stood were not really achieving this purpose and this can be seen in England. Implementation of the changes to the Mass in many dioceses were very much a formal process with little preparation given to either the priests or the laity. It was handicapped by the manner in which the Catholic Church in England regarded the education of its faithful. From 1850 onwards the main concern of the bishops had been the provision of schools as the primary vehicle for passing on the faith through rote learning of the catechism, which would be so ingrained in the memory it needed no further reminder, and a religious education syllabus that followed a similar programme. By the time a child left school, it would have all the knowledge about Catholicism that it was considered necessary to know. As a result, the opportunities for adults to develop their faith were traditionally few and far between; homilies were devotional in tone and devotional concerns were also a traditional hallmark of the Bishops' Pastoral Letters issued each Lent and Advent that unfailingly were admonitions on how to have a holy Lent or Advent by keeping the precepts of the Church in regard to fasting and abstinence and the avoidance of sin. The result was that for many their Catholicism was cultural rather than a life choice and attending Mass was the fulfilling of an obligation demanded of them rather than an occasion of real joy.

The first fruits of the changes to the Mass brought about by the Council concerned homilies in 1964 as noted by the bishop of Middlesbrough to his priests:
From the first Sunday of Lent a homily is ordered at all public masses on Sunday and Holydays of Obligation and must not be omitted.[16] For many priests in England, homilies were only preached at the High Mass and were devotional in content concerned with holiness and the example set by the saints. Many owned books of homilies, which covered the year and were repeated each year. It was not the sort of homily envisaged in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* which should *draw its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources, and its character should be that of a proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ, ever made present and active within us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy*. (SC35(2) It was recognised by the Council Fathers that seminaries had failed to adequately educate their students in such matters and therefore equip them to educate their people in their turn. Articles 14-17 of the Constitution mandated changes in seminary formation and religious houses to begin as soon as possible and in Article 18 requested that priests already "*working in the Lord's*

[15] See Harris A., Transformations in English Catholic Spirituality and Popular Religion 1945-1980 (Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis University of Oxford 2008) for a full discussion of the theology and its effect on Christology, Mariology and the cult of saints).320
[16] Middlesbrough Diocesan Archive (MDA) File Ad Clera 1/Bishop Brunner Correspondence. Letter 04.02.1964

vineyard" should be offered the necessary formation to enable them carry out the Council's precepts.

In September 1964, the Consilium in Rome issued further guidance on implementing the norms of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* with the instruction that it was the responsibility of the relevant territorial episcopal conference to decide the time and circumstances in which they were put into effect.[17] *Inter Oecumentici* had as part of its overall purpose, the simplification of the Liturgy to fulfil the request in SC34 that services manifested a "noble simplicity" (IE36). Therefore, elements of ritual felt to be unnecessary were removed. The parts of the Mass particular to the people were allowed to be in the vernacular so as well as the readings and prayer of the faithful , the chants of the Ordinary of the Mass such as the Gloria, the antiphons and the Lord's Prayer were included as well as the invitation to communion (Ecce Agnus Dei…). Similar rules applied for the other Sacraments. The design of new churches or the reordering of old ones introduced the concept of the free-standing altar in a central position and celebration facing the people (versus populum). National and diocesan liturgical commissions were to be established to help the bishops implement the Constitution and consulting with other regions using the same language in matters of translation to the vernacular. However, only the Holy See had the authority to approve and confirm any decisions and *acta* of territorial authorities and this needed to be obtained before they were promulgated and implemented.

The bishops of England and Wales chose the First Sunday in Advent 1964 to implement the first wave of reforms with differing enthusiasm. Bishop Dwyer of Leeds addressing the third session of the Vatican Council was apprehensive and that the Constitution "*had launched a movement that will uproot all kinds of of age-old habits, cut psychological and emotional ties, shake to the foundations the ways of thoughts of three to four million Catholics- all this so the emphasis on the individual's personal concern will give place to an emphasis on communal responsibility"* [18] This was from a man who was the first director of the English Liturgical Commission and also a member of the Consilium. The Archbishop of Westminster and the bishop of Brentwood both ordered that churches in their dioceses with two Sunday Masses should offer one in Latin, but Bishop Brunner of Middlesbrough used his Advent Pastoral Letter to give some explanation, reassurance and guidance regarding the introduction of some parts of the Mass changing to English, and attempted to capture the flavour of the Pentecostal ethos that invoked the Council *"We ask you to welcome these changes wholeheartedly. Try to remember that you are taking part in the beginning of a great revival within the Church. This is a privilege which many Catholics of the past would envy you"*.[19] On a pastoral note, where dioceses had

[17] Sacred Congregation of Rites, Inter Oecumenici (September 1964) article 10
[18] The Tablet 1964c: 1245 quoted Bullivant, S Mass Exodus (Oxford 2019) 150/309
[19] MDA File Pastoral Letters/Bishop Brunner. Pastoral Letter 05.11.1964 1.

large numbers of immigrant families such as Irish or Polish permission was given for a local bishop to permit liturgical celebrations in other languages provided the version used had 'been approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority for that language'.[20] For the thoughtful, the change to the vernacular symbolised a change in how they thought of the Mass as this Middlesbrough parishioner explained: "*Latin was a sacred language, belonging to the priest and so the Mass was his as well. For me, the change to English helped me see the Mass wasn't just a devotion of the priest that we attended but something encouraging more involvement and participation"* But for others the full and active participation asked for in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* meant 'confusion or even distress' for some people, which merited consideration. Used to going to Mass and having its action flowing around them as they carried out their own devotions, it was plainly a shock for some to have to concentrate on the Eucharistic action but as Bishop Brunner pointed out the changes were meant only for their good – to help them to understand better the actions, prayers, readings and indeed the whole purpose and meaning of the Mass, to make it a more fervent act of adoration to the Father in union with the Son and with each other. "I*t will help them to see that we are not simply individuals who come to worship God but that we are all members of God's family, the people of God".*[21] Confusion was not helped by the fact that some experimentation with the liturgy of the Mass was being attempted by more adventurous priests. This had come to the notice of the bishop for in the same letter of February 1964 cited above, he drew their attention to Article 22 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that reserved all decisions concerning the regulation of the Liturgy to the Apostolic See and in some cases conceded to individual bishop's conferences *"Therefore no other person, not even a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority"*.

By 1967 only the canon of the Mass was still in Latin, although it was now said audibly. However, in Advent of that year its language too was changed to English, following an indult from the Holy See. Meanwhile the Liturgical Commission or Consilium in Rome had composed three new Eucharistic Prayers and Prefaces for use in the Mass alongside the traditional Canon. Their use in England was not authorised until Lent 1969 when a suitable translation had been prepared by the International Committee for English in the Liturgy (ICEL). The instructions for use of the different prayers indicated that some variety in where and how the Mass was celebrated, for example the use of the second Eucharistic Prayer was recommended for house Masses as it was 'hardly solemn enough for Sunday use'. [22] In Middlesbrough, the priests were exhorted to give instruction and explanation to the people about the new prayers, ideally in groups though it was admitted that '*comparatively few will be able or willing to form study groups for intensive and detailed instruction though every parish ought to have some such groups*. [23] Otherwise,

[20] Inter Oecumenici' §41 in Flannery, A. (ed.) Vatican Council II The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents New Revised Study Edition (New York 1992).322

[21] Ibid 4

[22] MDA. File Ad Clera 1/McClean Correspondence. Letter 2/69 (7.02.1969).

[23] Ibid

the homily was to be used to answer two questions 'Why are we to have new Eucharistic prayers? What is there special about them? Detailed notes were given and it is hard to resist the impression that they were as much to educate the priests as the people. A new Lectionary for the Mass was prepared and came into use from the First Sunday of Advent 1970 and embodied the desire in Sacrosanctum Concilium for a greater use of Scripture (SC24). Instead of a lectionary where the readings were repeated every year, the new Lectionary followed a three year cycle. In this way the range of biblical material was greatly expanded and rather than the previous pattern of an Epistle and Gospel, each Sunday had readings from the Old Testament, a Psalm and the New Testament followed by a Gospel reading, each year being given to one of the three Synoptic Gospels with readings from the Gospel of St John interspersed over the whole cycle especially in Year B which was centred on the shortest Gospel, St Mark. The weekday Lectionary was a two year cycle with one reading from either the Old or New Testament, a Psalm and a Gospel.

Another early change was the restoration of the 'prayer of the faithful' in the Mass. By this prayer in which the people are to take part, intercession will be made for Holy Church, for the civil authorities, for those oppressed by various needs, for all mankind, and for the salvation of the entire world.[24] That some priests considered laymen (for the Sanctuary area was still forbidden to women) were not capable of leading the prayers is clear from a memorandum to the priests in 1966 from the bishops which also highlights the difficulty some priests were having. "It has been brought to the attention of the Hierarchy that many parishes use the same intentions in the Bidding Prayer on nearly every occasion. They ask that you change them frequently, using the various intentions in the appropriate sections and remind you that there is permission given also for parish priests to compose suitable short intentions for themselves. These should be written down beforehand and not composed at the altar". That there was a role for the laity in reading and leading the bidding prayers was emphasised by another note in the same year. Competent laymen exercise a genuine liturgical function in reading the Epistle and the Petitions of the Bidding Prayer… The Constitution declares the liturgy to be of its nature hierarchic and communal. In practice this means that the celebrant will allow others to perform those offices which are not strictly reserved to himself.

One thing that did not alter immediately was the reception of Communion on the tongue. It had been decided by the English Bishops in 1972 after a period of experimentation and consultation not to seek an indult for the new practice, and this held until 1976 when the indult was sought and granted for those who wished to receive in the hand. Another change that was taken slowly was the giving of the chalice to the laity.[25] At first this change in the reception of the Eucharistic species was limited in its use to occasions

[24] SC §53.333

[25] SC §57and §55.

'determined by the Apostolic See'.[26] Hastings points out that this particular change was symbolically important because 'on no point had Rome been more intransigent in the past in its reaction to Protestant insistence'.[27] However, it was an important part of the 'active participation' of the laity desired by *Sacrosanctum Concilium* together with receiving communion in the hand and receiving a host which had been consecrated at the mass attended rather than from the tabernacle.[28] A third change that was slow to be introduced was the greeting of the peace. It was not until 1971 that permission was given for its general use, and this was only after a period of experimentation within small groups, which began in 1969.

A more active participation in the Mass meant that, if at all possible, there should be congregational music. In parishes such as St Charles Borromeo in Hull where there was a choir, it needed 'to put away…figured and polyphonic music' used at High Mass and instead assume a new role in leading the 'congregation in singing the praises of God'.[29] For the priest concerned this was a happy development and he, together with his choirmaster had looked for ways to fulfil Article 118 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that stated *"Religious singing by the faithful is to be intelligently fostered so that…the voices of the faithful may be heard in conformity with the norms and requirements of the rubrics"*.[30] As a result by the summer of 1965 there were three Masses being used that could be sung by the whole congregation; a People's Mass written by Dom Gregory Murray, the Missa de Angelis and an adaptation for congregational use of a four part Mass that had originally been written for the choir of St Charles. Not all churches were as fortunate as St Charles, however. Although the ideal nationally was to provide a full sung Low Mass in every parish, it was also admitted that this would be difficult in many places. However, it was suggested the introduction of a recessional hymn after every Sunday Mass was an immediate first step to be followed by a gradual introduction of hymns at other points in the Mass in order to establish 'the experience of singing…as a normal part of assisting at Mass'. The lack of an organ was to be no impediment as the priest could lead the singing and schools could be also involved both in learning new hymns and providing the leadership in singing them at Mass. With little experience of singing hymns at Mass, there was a need for Catholic writers to produce suitable repertoire as well as utilising hymns from other denominations provided they fitted Catholic theology. With programmes such as the BBC's Songs of Praise, there was a growing awareness among Catholics of this wider repertoire, but that is not to say they enjoyed singing them as parishioners in this Hull parish were told: *"With the arrival of our new curate…an all-out effort is being made to tackle the problem of our non-sung Liturgy…whether you can sing*

[26] Ibid., § 55.
[27] Hastings, A., A History of English Christianity 1920-1985 (paperback edition London 1987) 526.
[28] SC §14.325
[29] HCM (June July 1965) 19.
[30] SC §118.

like a lark or not does not really matter – but do your best to take part in the singing of the Common of the Mass or of the hymns sung during Mass".[31] New hymnals began to appear that ranged from the traditional catholic hymnal to folk hymnals and many priests experimented with different types of music at different Masses. At times this meant moving away from the usual organ accompaniment and instead using more "modern" instruments such as guitars to lead the music. For some people it seemed as though the depths had been plunged but others enjoyed the more upbeat styles. But of all the changes in the Mass, it did appear as though music was the element that caused the strongest feeling.

There were, however, other aspects of the changes brought about in the wake of the Council that affected the devotional lives of Catholics outside the Mass and in some cases creating a strong feeling of loss. Despite Article 13 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that encouraged the use of suitable popular devotions, the emphasis on the Mass as being the place where the family gathered together to share in the Eucharistic meal, gave a renewed prominence to its centrality in Catholic devotion.[32] With the advent of evening Masses especially, there were less opportunities for many of the devotions that hitherto had played an important part in the life of a parish. Another factor in the demise of many traditional devotions was the increased opportunities for a social life outside the Church, with cinemas, and dance halls, for example being inexpensive ways of spending an evening in the company of friends who were not necessarily Catholic. A list of church organisations present in the diocese of Middlesbrough in 1977 for example is notable for the absence of any guilds and sodalities such as the Children of Mary or the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, although more social organisations such as the Catenians or the Knights of St Columba were still in existence. One of its priests writing in 1976 addressed this problem: "'*Things are not the same any more Father, the church has changed' we must have all heard or expressed such sentiments over the last couple of years. In tones of sorrow and disappointment people mourn the passing of such devotions as Stations of the Cross, Rosary, Benediction, etc. But…the essentials do not change…maybe things haven't changed as much as people. Yes, various devotions are disappearing, but where does the fault lie? Their disappearance is in large measure due to the fact that the very people who bemoan their passing will not come to church to support them"*.[33] With the loss of opportunity being provided for many traditional devotions, Catholics began to discover new ways of praying such as holding prayer vigils. In the light of the Council decrees, there was also a change in the appearance of churches. Many of the statues disappeared, which some felt gave the churches a plain and utilitarian feel. It was the reordering of the Sanctuary that was necessary, which provided the most obvious change, however. Mass was now the action of a people who

[31] HCM (February 1969) 12.

[32] See Harris, Transformations p80, 101-110.

[33] HCM (December 1976) 11.

were in the words of St Paul (Romans 6:3-4) members of a common baptismal priesthood in Christ Jesus, a theme that was enlarged upon in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. As a result, the priest was now expected to pray the Canon of the Mass *versus populum* that is facing the people instead of facing the altar and acting as the mediator between the faithful and God. This concept was further symbolised in the architecture of the Church where the priest in the sanctuary facing the altar was offering Mass for the people who were behind him and separated by altar rails. It radically changed the priest–faithful relationship for when the priest had his back to the people he is celebrating for the people, facing the people he is celebrating with the people. As a result, altars either needed moving or temporary altars set up in the sanctuary, but new churches would be designed with westward facing altars. The minimum requirements were an altar that was free standing, a lectern and a presidential chair. The altar was the focal point of the church and reserved for the liturgy of the Eucharist. The addition of a lectern emphasised the renewed emphasis on the Liturgy of the Word and the Presidential chair, the role of the priest in presiding over the liturgy of the Word. The use of temporary free-standing altars was encouraged to allow the priest and people to experience the nature of a re-ordered sanctuary, so that they would be better equipped to decide later upon the permanent re-ordering, which required the consent of the bishop.

Another change brought in in the wake of the Council caused real grief to some people, and that was the Moto Propio *Mysterii Pachalis II* that came into effect on January 1st 1970 implementing the Council's norms on revising the liturgical year and the calendar of saints. Suddenly well-loved saints such as St Christopher were no longer included because of the relative sparseness of authentic biographical detail about them and in parishes who found their saintly dedication was no longer in the calendar such as the much-used St Philomena there was devastation as well as a new name to get used to. Nicknamed "Paul's Purge" the protests that erupted in the press continued for several weeks.

Following the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* the Consilium in Rome worked for several years to carry out the liturgical reforms that were desired by the Council that would help Catholics better understand and participate more fully in the Church's ceremonial life. Its first fruit was a new rite for the baptism of Infants published in May 1969 and the others followed over the course of the next three years with English translations following soon after. In March 1970 a new Roman Missal was published replacing the Tridentine Missal that had been in use since 1570. It became known as the Missal of Paul VI and was authorised for use in its English translation from Advent 1969. Its drawback was that it used the translations for the Ordinary parts of the Mass approved for use only in the British Isles, while the authorities in Rome wanted all English-speaking countries to use the same form. As a result, a further change took place in 1975 to bring the British Isles into line with the rest of the English-speaking world. In the year 2000,

Pope John Paul II ordered a revision of the Missal, which led to calls for a new English translation to be produced that would reflect the richer prose of the Latin rather the somewhat utilitarian language of the 1970's translation. The new translation came into use on the first Sunday of Advent 2011, although attendees at the Mass for the Beatification of John Henry Newman by Pope Benedict XVI during his 2010 visit to Britain had an early experience of it. In 2024 the lectionary transitioned from the older Jerusalem Bible and Grail Psalms to the English Standard Version – Catholic edition (ESV-CE) and the Abbey Psalms.

Conclusion

There are questions in the English Catholic Church as to whether the hope expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* for an invigorated church was fulfilled or led to a decline in English Catholic practice. It is initially a question about the process of reform, which of necessity was a drawn out process. The Consilium in Rome worked to a principle they called gradualism believing that it was better for the faithful to be introduced gradually to the new Rites as by and large the Church in most areas of the world was not ready for a sudden complete change in the liturgy. They believed a period was needed during which the principles of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* could be assimilated in a concrete manner through a gradual process of renewal.[34] Stephen Bullivant in his book "Mass Exodus" disagrees, feeling that the decade of constant change brought uncertainty and the loss of stability to many people and was therefore a major factor to the decline in Mass attendance experienced in the English Catholic Church.[35] Perhaps it was more a case that being in a country that takes its identity from the Protestant Reformation and where the folk memory of Penal times and religious persecution is not far below the surface, the English Church was not prepared for the reform *Sacrosanctum Concilium* asked of it and could do no more than enact the letter of reform as a seed. But it needs to be borne in mind that in the history of the Church the fruits of its Councils are played out in centuries rather than decades; with westward migration the English Church in 2013 (the fiftieth anniversary of the Council) was already very different from the church in 1963 and in places the seed could be said to be showing small signs of growth.

Dr Margaret Turnham

Further Reading

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Alana Harris, *Faith in the Family* (Manchester 2013)

[34] Bugnini op. cit. 100
[35] Bullivant S. Mass Exodus (OUP 2009)

Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985* (paperback edition London 1987)
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M H Turnham, *Catholic Faith and Practice in England 1779-1992* (Woodbridge 2015)