

# Marian Studies

---

Volume 50 *Magnificat: Remembrance and Praise*

Article 16

---

1999

## Marian Studies--Liturgy

Thomas A. Thompson  
*University of Dayton*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian\\_studies](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies)



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Thompson, Thomas A. (1999) "Marian Studies--Liturgy," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 50, Article 16.  
Available at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian\\_studies/vol50/iss1/16](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol50/iss1/16)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marian Library Publications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marian Studies by an authorized editor of eCommons. For more information, please contact [mschlangen1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlangen1@udayton.edu), [ecommons@udayton.edu](mailto:ecommons@udayton.edu).

## MARIAN STUDIES—LITURGY

Thomas A. Thompson, S.M.\*

Conferences on liturgy during the first forty of the Mariological Society's existence were few and far between. (The situation changed in 1989). In its first decade—the 1950s—the Society's meetings, as reflected in the issues of *Marian Studies*, dealt almost exclusively with doctrinal topics. In the second decade—the 1960s—studies on Scripture, ecumenism, and new approaches to Marian doctrines prevailed. But liturgy—with the possible exception of the 1969 meeting—never appeared as the focus of a meeting in the first forty years of the Society's meetings. At the twenty-fifth anniversary meeting in 1974, in an address which contained a summary of the themes found in twenty-five years of the Society's meetings, Fr. Charles Neumann made no mention of the liturgy.

The reasons for this neglect of liturgy by Mariologists are not difficult to ascertain. Liturgy had little place in the post-Tridentine dogmatic theology from which Marian studies stemmed. The Dominican Melchior Cano (+1560), one of the initiators of "positive theology," omitted liturgy as a *locus* in his list of the *ten sources* which were the foundations for theological statements.<sup>1</sup> In the nineteenth century, Giovanni Perrone (1794-1876), advisor to Pius IX, included liturgy among "the general means which transmit the primitive dogmatic tradition to us and by which this can be surely known."<sup>2</sup> Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805-75), a pioneer of the liturgical movement, emphasized the Roman liturgy's dogmatic value over what he thought were the heretical tendencies of the Gallican liturgical books, and it was under his influence that the adage *Lex orandi, lex credendi* was introduced into the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (Dec. 8, 1854), and the liturgy was cited as one of the sources witnessing to the Immaculate Conception. After its use in *Ineffabilis Deus*, *Lex orandi, lex credendi* was cited in succeeding papal documents: *Quas primas* (instituting the feast of Christ the King), *Divino afflante Spiritu* (on the study of the bible), *Munificentissimus Deus* (defining the dogma of the Assumption).

The references in papal documents to liturgy as a source for doctrinal statements, in large measure, determined Mariologists' view toward the liturgy: the liturgy was a

\*Father Thompson is the director of the Marian Library and serves on the faculty of the International Marian Research Institute. He has been secretary of the Mariological Society of America and editor of *Marian Studies* since 1990.

<sup>1</sup>Holy Scripture, apostolic tradition, the magisterium of the universal Church, the councils, the magisterium of the Roman Church, the Fathers, the scholastics and canonists, natural reason, the philosophers, and history

<sup>2</sup>Cypriano Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1976), 554.

confirmation of the doctrinal positions defined by the magisterium. In a fine article on Mary and the liturgy (written for Juniper Carroll's three-volumed *Mariology*), Fr. Simeon Daly, O.S.B., stated that the purpose of his survey of references to Mary in the liturgy was "to find reflected in the Western liturgy evidence of the dogmatic truths we profess concerning our Lady."<sup>3</sup>

A larger view of the role of liturgy was stated by Pius XI in 1935; in a private audience to Dom B. Capelle, he asserted that the liturgy was the most important organ of the ordinary magisterium of the Church.<sup>4</sup> Pius XII, however, clarified that the liturgy did not determine the teaching of the magisterium: "The sacred liturgy does not at all indicate or establish the Catholic faith absolutely and by its own authority, but rather, being a profession of the heavenly truths which are subject to the supreme magisterium of the Church, it is able to furnish arguments and witnesses of great value for deciding a particular point of Christian doctrine." So in the preconciliar period, liturgy was considered an adjunct to doctrinal and sacramental theology, occasionally cited as a proof for a doctrinal formulation.<sup>5</sup>

A second reason relatively few articles on liturgy appeared in the first forty years of the Society's existence can be found in the relation between the early twentieth-century, preconciliar "Marian movement" (of which the twentieth-century's Mariological societies formed a part) and the preconciliar liturgical movement.<sup>6</sup> On many issues, the liturgical movement seemed to be at variance with the Marian movement. The liturgical movement was perceived as having so strong a Christocentric orientation that the Virgin Mary and the saints were excluded. The liturgical movement proposed a biblical spirituality, and, in the preconciliar period, Marian devotions were not noted for their biblical orientation. Liturgists dealt primarily with the texts found in the liturgical books—the Missal and Breviary—and expressed a mild disdain for the "pious exercises," non-liturgical services, which were the vehicle for expressing much Marian devotion (rosary, devotions, novenas, processions). Lastly, the liturgical movement,

<sup>3</sup>Simeon Daly, "Mary in the Western Liturgy," in *Mariology*, ed. Juniper B. Carol (3 vols.; Milwaukee: Bruce, 1961), 1:245

<sup>4</sup>*Documenta Pontificia ad instaurationem liturgicam spectantia* (1903-1953) (Bibliotheca "Ephemerides Liturgicae," 6; Roma: Edizioni liturgiche, 1953), 70 (#25 Liturgia, Didascalia Ecclesiae).

Yves Congar reminds us that the liturgy is more than a mine of prooftexts for doctrinal assertions: "La souveraine valeur de la liturgie n'est pas de l'ordre d'un arsenal d'arguments, mais das le fait qu'elle est 'la didascalie de l'Église.' Elle incorpore et traduit au maximum le sens catholique des choses. Même lorsqu'elle traduit une réaction contre une hérésie, la liturgie exprime la foi de l'Église de façon particulièrement positive, intérieure, totale; elle met toujours en oeuvre tout le mystère chrétien. Elle dépasse la simple instruction et incorpore toute la sève éducatrice de la maternité de l'Église" (Y. Congar, *La Foi et la Théologie* [Tournai: Desclée, 1962], 146).

<sup>5</sup>Found in Kevin Irwin, *Liturgical Theology: A Primer* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 16.

<sup>6</sup>On the "Marian movement" and its relation with the movements in the Church, see René Laurentin, *The Question of Mary* (Techno, IL: Divine Word Publications, 1965), 33-51.

especially in the United States, was perceived as having an orientation toward social questions, a development which had not yet become part of the Marian movement.

Vatican II (1962–65) influenced both liturgy and Marian devotion, but the relation between Mary and liturgy was touched only briefly. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy made only one, but a most significant, reference to Mary (SC 103, in the section on the liturgical year). Only one article of Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium* made reference to liturgy: To promote Marian devotion, all the members of the Church were urged to foster devotion wholeheartedly, especially the liturgical devotion (*cultum, praesertim liturgicum*) to the Blessed Virgin (LG 67). And, along with the study of Scripture and the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, the study of the liturgy was recommended as a way of illuminating, under the direction of the Church's magisterium, "the duties and privileges of the Blessed Virgin which always refer to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity and devotion."<sup>7</sup>

Vatican II enhanced the status of liturgy. It was no longer looked upon as an adjunct to doctrinal theology, but as a "major" course, to be ranked among the principal subjects, "taught under its theological, historical, spiritual, pastoral and juridical aspects" (SC 16). In 1974, *Marialis cultus* was Paul VI's *magna charta* giving the guidelines for the development of Marian devotion. Its primary purpose was to promote "a dialogue on the place the Blessed Virgin Mary occupies in the Church's worship" (Intro.). *Marialis cultus* deepened the relation between Mary and the liturgy in its proposal that Mary be "the model for the Church at worship." It was not until the Mariological Society took note of *Marialis cultus* that articles on liturgy appeared in the programs.

Now, let us review the articles which did appear. In the first forty years of the Society's existence (until the 1989 meeting), there were—by one count—four articles which dealt with Mary and the liturgy. The first was in 1962, at a meeting dedicated to a study of Mary's virginity. Studies were presented on virginity in Judaism, in the New Testament, in the Church, and on the theological significance of Mary's virginity. Fr. Aelred Tegels, O.S.B. (St. John's, Collegeville, MN), was asked to speak on virginity in the liturgy. Fr. Tegels began by expressing mild surprise, coupled with satisfaction, that a liturgist had been asked to give a presentation at a theological seminar. "An invitation to prepare a paper on the subject of virginity in the liturgy, with a request for emphasis on its spiritual meaning and its theological significance, as I take it, is most encouraging evidence of the growing recognition in our time of liturgy as a *locus theologicus* in the full sense of that term. Until quite recently no one would have dreamed of making such demands on the liturgy. Theologians have, indeed, since the time of the Reformation, made use of the liturgy, but for the most part very sparingly, and almost exclusively for the purpose of documenting the existence of dogmas in Tradition. It is only in the past few decades, and more precisely since Pius XI, in a celebrated audience, characterized it as 'the most important organ of the ordinary magisterium of the Church,' that there has been any general attempt to utilize liturgy for the purpose of elaborating the positive content of dogmas."

<sup>7</sup>A last minute intervention from the Marianum was responsible for the insertion of "liturgy" as a *locus* of study of the Virgin Mary (*La Vierge dans la prière de l'Église* [Tours: Mame, 1968], 231).

Fr. Tegel's paper dealt with the "Commons" of virgins, as found in the earliest sacramentaries, and its influence on Marian liturgical texts. "It is of the greatest importance to note that fact that the Mass liturgy of Marian feasts, for the earliest periods, was very largely borrowed from the liturgy of virgins, the suggested feasts for the consecration of virgins." The paper also made noteworthy observations on the relation between liturgy and theology: "Liturgy, in general, is praise, not theology. As often as not, a doctrine is presupposed rather than expressed, and when it is expressed, the form of expression is more commonly that of poetry or drama than that of scientific theological exposition."

The 1968 meeting featured three presentations on Mary and the liturgy. The first, "Our Lady in the Early Latin Liturgy," by Ambrose Agius, O.S.B., was a survey of the earliest Marian feasts of the Roman liturgy. It was not the liturgy which gave rise to Marian devotion, rather devotion was *sensus fidelium* which preceded the liturgical expression. In a "Profile of Marian Devotion on the Parochial Level," Fr. Joseph E. Mantton, C.Ss.R., spoke of the sharp drop-off of traditional Marian devotions (novenas, May and October devotions) which had already occurred, and, in response to the quandary of pastors, gave an assessment for these changes. (Although the words "liturgical devotion" appeared in the title of a conference by the Reformed theologian, Arthur C. Cochrane, "The Theological Basis of Liturgical Devotion to Mary Re-examined," the study was centered on the Christologies of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner and the theological legitimacy for invocation to Mary.) The last major presentation at the 1968 meeting, by the Orthodox theologian Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, dealt—all too briefly—with the four main expressions of Marian devotion in the Byzantine liturgy: prayers, feasts, iconography, devotions. Not only does the Byzantine liturgy recognize Mary as the dwelling place of God, but it applies to her the entire symbolism of the temple and its various parts. The Virgin Mary stands as the representative of humanity and creation in their entirety. She is icon of the Church our mother, the bride of Christ.

After the 1968 meeting, there were no presentations on liturgy until the 1989 meeting. That year the title of the program was "*Marialis Cultus*: A Fifteen Year Perspective." My presentation, "The Virgin Mary in the Liturgy: 1963-1988," attempted to show the points of contact between the Constitution on the Liturgy and the chapter eight of *Lumen gentium*, the initial reaction of some Marian traditionalists to the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, and the new level of integration proposed by *Marialis cultus*—Mary in the liturgy, rather than Mary and the liturgy. Sister Martha Garcia's "Mary in the Liturgy of the Hours" commented on the psalms used on Marian feasts, the hymns, the Marian texts of the Office of Readings. In "Marian Devotions: In and Beyond *Marialis cultus*," Stanley A. Parmisano, O.P., began with an assessment of the way in which the liturgical reforms had influenced Marian devotion. He lamented that some fundamentalist interpretations of Scripture and a *sola Scriptura* outlook were preventing a renewal of Marian devotion.

After the 1989 meeting, the Board of Directors decided upon a three-year series of meetings to study the Virgin Mary's participation in the mystery of Christ celebrated throughout the liturgical year. The calendar was I. Advent-Christmas-Epiphany (1990); II. Lent-Easter-Pentecost (1991); III. Ordinary Time (1992). Each program was to include a study of the Scriptures of the season, an analysis of the liturgical texts, and a "theological commentary relating the liturgical themes to contemporary concerns." The project was undertaken as assistance to homilists and teachers.

At the first meeting (1990), devoted to the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany season, Fr. Bernard Lazor studied the Scriptures of the season within the context of the mystery of Christ which they reflected. Fr. John Melloh, S.M., analyzed the origins and the translations of the celebrant's orations (opening prayer, prayer over the gifts, communion prayer) for the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8) and for Mary, Mother of God (January 1), and the 4th Sunday of Advent. Also studied were the prayers from the Rotulus of Ravenna, which now appear in the Sacramentary for December 17-23, the last and an intensive Marian period of the Advent season. Fr. Fred Jelly provided the theological commentary. "Such reflections," he said, "more directly the result of systematics than of biblical or liturgical theology, will attempt to share some ideas that should be helpful to the preacher and teacher of the Christian faith in their ministry of showing Mary's unique role of disposing us in the contemporary Church to come closer to Christ in our call to faithful discipleship today."

At the 1991 program (Chicago) on Mary in Lent-Easter-Pentecost seasons, Fr. Bert Buby spoke first of the Scriptures used during the Lent-Easter-Pentecost season which referred explicitly to Mary—John 19:25-27 and Acts 1:12-14—and then of the texts for the Annunciation, St. Joseph the Worker, and the Visitation. Fr. Larry Choate, O.S.M., spoke of the liturgical prayers, especially of the Lenten Masses in the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. His concluding reflections included an evaluation of the *Collection's* materials for the Lenten season; the *Collection* has gathered "elements of tradition, devotion, and contemporary scholarship in such a way as to offer what for many may be surprising insights . . . and also themes of the season (discipleship, reconciliation, initiation, evangelization) all presented in a Marian context." But, he noted that prayer texts do not move beyond the theological image of personal need nor relate the mystery being celebrated to realities outside the walls of the sacred space. Since votive Masses were currently prohibited during Lent, he offered suggestions for their use. In "Memory and Mission: A Theological Reflection on Mary in the Paschal Mysteries," Fr. Johann Roten, S.M., spoke first of how the Bible and the liturgy serve to broaden the "unidimensional image of Mary," and then of the Marian dimension of the Paschal mysteries.

The last of the three meetings of Mary and the liturgy took place in Houston, 1992: "Mary in Ordinary Time." Monsignor James Turro commented on the Scriptural readings for the feasts of Mary which occur during Ordinary Time—the Assumption, the Nativity of Mary, and readings from the Commons of the Virgin Mary. Fr. J. Michael Joncas studied the euchological texts for the Assumption, Visitation, Birth of Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of the Rosary, and Presentation of Mary and four optional memorials. He examined the origins of the texts, the principal symbols and references, as well as the translations. He concluded with the hope that the examination of the prayer texts for the Marian feasts would "unlock the spiritual riches of the liturgy for all who venerate the Mother of God in the Roman Catholic liturgical prayer." Fr. Walter Brennan spoke of the need for the inculturation of Marian devotion in "Theological Reflection: From *Marialis Cultus* to Mission—A New Challenge in Liturgy, Devotions, and Popular Religion."

An evaluation of the three-year program would indicate the need for a more precise and coordinated focus for the presentations. Although areas were assigned to the speakers, the challenge of what to select was still great, and individual speakers responded in different ways. Unfortunately, the directions given the speakers failed to

indicate how the feasts of the Sanctoral Cycle (for example, the Annunciation falls in Lent) should be handled and what part the *Collection of the Masses of the Blessed Virgin* would play in the presentation. Another weakness, noted by Fr. Jelly, was the separation of the Scriptural and liturgical texts from the theological reflections which were to flow from them. The theological reflections from contemporary experience were handled differently by the three presenters.

At the 1994 program on "Religious Education," several talks were relevant to liturgy. Msgr. Francis Mannion's "The Marian Formation of Christians" called for "a creative traditionalism, a dynamic orthodoxy, and an imaginative conservatism," in the restoration of the Marian elements in liturgy, catechesis, and devotional life. Fr. Johann Roten's "Popular Religion and Marian Images" analyzed the Marian images used in liturgy and devotion. My own article, "The Popular Marian Hymn," was a survey of the development of the Marian hymn in the past fifty years and the influence which the liturgical reforms have had on hymnody.

If the Mariological Society devoted little attention to the Marian hymn in its first forty years, some progress has occurred in the last ten years. And there are many areas left for study. Mary as exemplar and model of Christian worship is a theme with many pastoral applications. The moral, ethical, and social implications of liturgy need to be applied to Marian devotion, and the distinctive traits of a lived Marian spirituality should be developed. A consciousness of the presence and the role of Mary in the liturgy, together with her role in the Communion of Saints, could enlarge our liturgical horizons. The inculturation of Marian devotion and liturgy offers many possibilities for study. Lastly, liturgy is more than a study of texts: the ritual symbolism of Marian liturgy and devotions provides a large field for further investigation.