

2012

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Russell Hardiman

University of Notre Dame Australia, rhardiman@westnet.com.au

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This article was originally published as:

Hardiman, R. (2012). Renewal and reform in the Liturgy: Fording the impasse. *Pastoral Liturgy*, 42 (2-3), 16-20.

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Renewal and Reform in the Liturgy

Fording the Impasse

By Russell Hardiman

Introduction

At roughly the same time as the First Fleet was sailing from European climes towards its momentous first landfall in the Great South Land in 1788, another event was taking place in Europe which would create its own waves and have an effect on the Church in our day. This was the Synod of Pistoia, convened in 1786. In this essay, I intend to move from two historical scenarios to the contemporary scene. Using a local historical perspective, which is roughly contemporaneous with the European development of Australia, I will outline some of the recommendations of the Synod of Pistoia in 1786. Most of those elements we would all readily see as normal and logical – yet they were all condemned just over 200 years ago. However, in the living experience of many of us we have seen these same elements approved and become standard practice in the Catholic Church notably in the Latin Rite. How did that capacity for the management of change happen in tangible ways, in visible processes that we can recognise, and how does this historical precedent give us insight and perhaps a necessary vision of hope and confidence in the way ahead to ford the impasse?

A second step will be to go back beyond the Synod of Pistoia to highlight why such intransigence to any reasonable reform had become institutionalised. This will lead us to look at some of the principles of the Council of Trent and the timeframes in which its process of reform and renewal was carried out.

The third step will be to indicate the factors and personalities which led to a new culture in which legislative change was initiated at the Papal Level, with pastoral goals in mind. Once the flood gates of legislative change were opened, the long held back trickle began to build momentum with the consequence of the major summit and source of change which was Vatican II itself.

The conclusions we can draw may not be at the immediate functional level of new directions or practices but rather at the level of insights into how the momentum for change was built up and communicated to the broader cross sections within the church.

In short, we can learn from our history because we have a history from which we can learn.

Attempts at Change and Reform

We can use an interesting example of what is called in Australia the “it’s time” factor – as in Gough Whitlam’s slogan leading to Australian Labor Party to Government in 1972. What happened the recommendations of the Synod of Pistoia in Italy in 1786? This Synod of Pistoia was simply a local diocesan synod in Italy, in a practice more common then than now.

To continue the Australian contextualisation, that was precisely the time when the decision had been made in London to initiate a new colony at Botany Bay, allegedly to overcome the issue of the overcrowding of the prisons and the hulks since the American War of Independence, but in fact with other geopolitical and economic objectives.

Recommendations of the Synod of Pistoia

- The obligation to give sermons;
- Translation of the Missal into the vernacular;
- Communion during Mass, not before or after;
- Reform of the Breviary;
- Revision of the hagiographies (lives of the Saints);
- Rejection of private masses, of the cult of the Sacred Heart and of indulgences;
- Strengthening of parish life;
- Education of youth;
- Residence obligations for parish priests;
- Equalisation of benefices;
- Concentration of Mass stipends for the benefit of poor priests;
- Norms to be established about parish bankruptcy;
- Study in Episcopal seminaries instead of monastic schools;
- Minimum age of 24 for religious profession;
- Abolition of the Inquisition.

Papal Authority

It is not hard to assert that many of these issues are both reasonable and have been brought into Church law in our own life-time. Yet, in the era of Pistoia, Pius VI, in 1794, condemned seven of the 85 propositions and the others were proscribed as offering multiple meanings in which they could be presented as false, rash, scandalous, near-heresy etc. The basis of rejection was the influence of Jansenism and Gallicanism in the era when the appeal to the authority of Rome called Ultramontanism was growing to be ascendent. The “it’s time” factor shows that, while condemned at one point, the issues were eventually accepted. How did that difference emerge?

Ironically, the pathway to changing the culture of opposition came about by a new generation of Italian scholars whose work brought about the re-birth of

liturgical studies, such as Cardinals Bona and Lamberini and especially the historian Ludovico Muratori. When the work of these pioneers was given firstly a monastic environment and then pastoral impetus, the changing scriptural and theological movements especially as regards ecclesiology and the recapture of a biblical theology of church as the Body of Christ, which was formulated from Tübingen in the 1870s. The gradual confluence of all these movements created a climate which allowed for a new legislative capacity that finally changed the status quo by then fixed for 350 years.

The Era of Rigidity

The era of rigidity is synonymous with the Counter Reformation era after the Council of Trent (1545 - 1563). Trent did not set out to achieve a synthesis or integrated vision of the theology and mission of the Church; rather it tended to express things contrary to the assertions of the reformers. For our purposes here we shall simply list the years of publication of major books. These had been commissioned to the Holy Father by the Bishops at Trent. Working with the view to restore the Missal "in conformity with the original norms and rite laid down by the holy Fathers" (*ad pristinam sanctorum patrum normam ac ritum*). Ironically this appeal to the standards of practice in the early church was the same claim of the Protestant reformers, yet neither camp had access to the scholarship of recent centuries that could justifiably follow that principle.

The Form of Mass and Changes

The greatest and most consequential innovation of the Mass book of Pius V was the enactment, clearly expressed in the Bull of introduction, that this book was to be, from then on, the standard in every church and that no changes were to be made therein. Only churches which could demonstrate a two-hundred years' custom for their own usage, were permitted to retain that usage. This was the case with the ancient religious orders which since the eleventh century had produced their own variants of the Romano-Frankish Mass-liturgy and which have kept them, for the most part, till the present. The Norbertines and Dominicans are examples of orders who maintained their own *ordo* and calendar until Vatican II. Most dioceses also took advantage of this stipulation, among them – besides Milan and the remnant of the Mozarabic rite in Spain – Trier, Cologne, Liege, Braga and Lyons. Of these only the last two with Milan have kept their own rite until now.

The Two Hundred Year Rule

In spite of the primacy given to the Roman Missal the presumption was not to insist on absolute uniformity. There was still provision for pluriformity in the famous 200 year rule. This meant that unless approved from the very beginning by the Apostolic

See, or by custom or that the liturgical books used in a diocese were beyond 200 years old, then in every church the Roman order of the celebration of Mass was to be assiduously observed. At times it becomes obvious that many people do not know their own tradition; *pluriformity* was the standard before *uniformity* became technologically possible through the invention of printing.

Limitations of Trent's Principles and the Availability of Scholarship

In his classic study, *The Shape of Liturgy* Dom Gregory Dix (1945) wrote of the confusion in the Reformation's eras because of the lack of critico-historical liturgical scholarship.

The advantage of the Counter-reformation was that it conserved the text of a liturgy which dated in substance from long before the mediaeval development. With this it preserved those primitive statements which indicated the true solution of the mediaeval difficulty, even though it was a long while before the post Tridentine church made much use of them for that purpose. The protestants on the contrary discarded the whole text of the liturgy, and especially those elements in it which were a genuine monument of that primitive church they professed to restore. They introduced in its place forms which derived from and expressed the mediaeval tradition from which their own movement sprang ...

He went on to highlight how we are all products of our formation, with the strengths and weaknesses of that era.

These men, were, like most of us, very largely creatures of their own training. As one reads their works it is obvious that they were never able to clear their own minds of the late mediaeval scholastic and devotional outlook. This was the only mental world they had ever known, and its limitations were hardly even beginning to be revealed. [For example] The first known edition of [The Apologia] of Justin Martyr was only issued in 1551, of the liturgy of S. James in 1560, of the Apostolic Constitutions in 1563. Such documents might have made both sides aware that they were arguing from much too narrow a basis in taking the mediaeval Western tradition alone...

This same problem of too narrow a basis is obvious then as it is now, when newspaper advertisements for the Tridentine Mass emphasise the absurd claim "come and see the Mass as celebrated from the days of the Apostles".

It is the same frame of mind which made their contemporaries paint the centurion on Calvary in the early sixteenth century armour and S. Clement of Rome in a cope and mitre.

Fording the Impasse

In art this is harmless and even good interpretation. But in the vital doctrinal discussion, where accurate historical interpretation might have provided the only possible solution apart from schism is fatal. The lack of historical perspective, due to the mediaeval ignorance of history, was perhaps the greatest single contributory cause in the intellectual fields of the sixteenth century breakup of Western Christendom.

And so followed four centuries of centralisation and uniformity which have become the litmus of orthodoxy as regards the definition of the Roman Rite and the adherence to the rubrics. Such uniformity was only able to be achieved through the technological advancement which was the benefit of the printing press. Beyond the technology, the medieval culture of theocracy emphasised the compenetration of church and state in the way the Church saw itself as the new incarnation as the Holy Roman Empire. One is reminded of the marvelous insight of John Reilly SJ lecturing to the priests of my diocese. He remarked on the role Rome undertook in the vacuum following the collapse of the Roman Empire which has resulted many times in history in Rome's inability to resist the temptation of falling back into the sins of the empire's pagan past namely centralisation, uniformity, and control. It was in the era of rigidity that many pioneers were able to work towards a consensus that eventually changed the matrix of rigidity.

Consensus Building: Liturgical Biblical and Catechetical Movements, New Ecclesiology

Ed Campion says that we can learn from history because we have a history from which to learn. Continuing the Australian contextual motif, in 1829 – the very year of the founding of the Swan River Colony – Dom Prosper Gueranger was developing his dream to buy an abandoned monastery from Revolution times, where together with his brother and companions he was to re-establish the monastic life at the famous Solesmes Monastery. In the context of the Enlightenment and the search for classical models and the return to origins, Solesmes became renowned as the centre for the restoration of Gregorian Chant and the arbiter of interpretation as to its notation. It was subsequently to become the Mother House of an extended network of Benedictine monasteries which spread through Belgium, Holland, Germany and so to the United States to Collegeville. Gueranger was renowned also for his *Institutions liturgiques* and his multiple volumes on the liturgical year. With the first band of clergy at Fremantle in 1846, one of the Benedictine members was Leanne Fontaine who was a novice from Solesmes. His letters to Gueranger, from Southampton and Cape Town, give indications of his liturgical convictions as he wrote to his Abbot requesting further copies of his meditations on the liturgical

year. Unfortunately Fontaine was involved in a gun accident and never recovered his mind. The Australian liturgical movement took a long time to develop!

We can pass briefly over the developments over the 19th century which gradually saw the impetus of the liturgical movement grow, not only through the network of monasteries, but also in issues of social justice and the dream of ecumenical unity. Eventually it also led to levels of acceptance by the formal authorities of the Church.

The election of Pope Pius X in 1903 as successor to Leo XIII saw his first statement dealing with the role of music in encouraging active participation in liturgical celebrations. It says something about Pius X's unique perspective that Leo XIII had written seven encyclicals on the Rosary, yet by *Motu Proprio*, a document issued through his own authority, not through the specific Congregation for Rites, Pius X gave his document the title *Tra le sollecitudini*, writing in Italian not in Latin, to emphasise his concerns that:

"Chief among the anxieties of the Pastoral Office ... [is] where the Christian people assemble ... to join the common prayer of the Church in the public and solemn liturgical offices".

This was followed by a decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council in 1905 encouraging the daily reception of communion and a decree the Sacred Congregation of Sacraments in 1910 reducing the age for communion to the age of discretion. To take the big picture view of things these pastoral initiatives of Pius X, they have meant that in about 50 years of the 20th century the Latin Rite achieved a practice of frequent and even regular reception of communion by the vast majority of participants which has not attained by the Orthodox in nearly a thousand years nor the Reformed traditions in four centuries.

In the same decade at the Catholic Congress of Malines, the official name of the Episcopal See of Brussels, another new direction for the liturgical movement was launched by Dom Lambert Beauduin OSB. Formerly a diocesan priest, he was concerned to emphasise the need for a profound pastoral and parish grounded emphasis, instead the monastic ethos that had been the trend of the liturgical movement to this time. His call that the goal of active participation in liturgy was to share in the worship of the Church where the work of redemption was continued. This key principle arose from the fruits of baptism which incorporates all the baptised into worship which is the very nature of the Church. This was eventually to be the foundation of the Vatican II reform. Beauduin also echoed Pius X's call for the restoration of Gregorian Chants and the centering of the Christian life on the Liturgy. He went further and called for the translation of the Roman Missal into the vernacular, which was radical in his day, for translations of the Missal had only been removed from the Index of Forbidden Books in 1897.

There is hope for institutional change in the lessons of history. The impact of the liturgical movement in its origins gives us encouragement now for the continued struggle and a renewed vision for the objectives of the pioneers.

Some of the lessons we can learn include:

- An appreciation of the ambivalence of the Roman swings;
- To understand the strategies/outreach/tactics of the liturgical movement;
- To integrate the vision, hope, theology, pastoral insight and social justice connections of the pioneers;
- To alleviate the problems inherent in the lack of a theological underpinning of practices of worship;
- To know our tradition, to know the rites, the full rites;
- Courage in the journey still to be made.

Growing Impact of the Liturgical Movement

After 70 years of progression the liturgical movement had finally been given a form of approval through Papal legislative action with the statements of Pius X. The liturgical movement itself took on a new focus with the incorporation of the primacy of the pastoral dimension through the vision of Beauduin. The high profile legislative change and the pastoral focus were like the tip of the iceberg, with many facets and aspects not so obvious below the surface. Either side of Vatican II were some changes of such a serendipitous nature that they underline the importance of pastoral sensitivity arising from grass roots experience in papal ministry. John XXIII introduced the name of St Joseph into the Roman Canon almost overnight to support a bishop recently released from prison in the Communist era. Paul VI, after visiting Roman parishes in Lent, found how schizoid was the practice of an Italian dialogue to the Preface, and Latin preface, an Italian Holy Holy, and then reverting to Latin for the rest of the Eucharistic Prayer. Likewise, almost overnight, came a modification of the principles of the Constitution on the Liturgy that presumed the Eucharistic Prayer was totally the celebrant's prayer now the use of the vernacular in the Canon of the Mass was to be allowed.

The pastoral era set new goals whose objectives are still serviceable today. These include:

- The theology of the Mystical Body of Christ, head and members in worship;
- Active participation in the liturgy is achieved in praying the Mass;
- Liturgy as the most influential school of faith;
- If liturgy is to be intelligible then vernacular language is a must;
- Availability of missals in Latin/vernacular translations;

- Connection with social justice reform issues; and
- Influence of ecumenical interests.

By way of conclusion to ground the historical meanderings, allow me to offer an opinion that may help to summarise some of the issues raised and which may set the context for specific questions and issues arising from Gerard Moore's paper elsewhere in this volume. In general I would affirm that the best illustration of the theological goals of Vatican II is expressed in §2 of the Liturgy Constitution:

Through the liturgy, especially the divine Eucharistic sacrifice, "the work of our redemption is exercised". The liturgy is thus the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and real nature of the church.

In my opinion the most consistent illustration of this ideal is not in Sunday Masses, not in School Masses, not in Youth Masses, but in funeral Masses. I would suggest that this is true because on these occasions the true role of the assembly is more often achieved. The family are more likely to own their capacity to contribute in personalising the occasion; the majority are there because they consciously choose to be present; they assemble at some conscious level of solidarity with and for the bereaved. With this complex of positives the shared roles of presider and the assembly seem to come together without the millstone of so many other occasions when so many literally sit back, and at the back, waiting to be entertained. Many non-Catholics too, can acknowledge Catholics do good funerals.

Such occasions are a challenge to reflect on what is the role and function of liturgical worship and what is the ministry of the presider and others. So often we presume that there is a consensus about the nature of prayer, the function of music, the image of God we worship whereas in fact all the elements can be interpreted in many ways. People's expectations flow from their personal concepts but we rarely elaborate on what is commonly held and understood. The patterns of worship over centuries have varied considerably but some are inclined to assume that what they prefer was what Jesus mandated, whereas others would claim that Jesus did not celebrate the Passover correctly!

The immensity of the change occurring with Vatican II and after has only begun to be interpreted now. The rapidity of change and the breadth of issues impacting on people's previous experience and personal model of faith had many negative repercussions. This was certainly not alleviated entirely by the level of formation in explaining the change. The lack of preparation, in fact became a lack of implementation. As Tom Talley puts it "too many community have already been brought to despair by the discovery that,

having rearranged the sanctuary and instituted and offertory procession, they still don't love one another".

The need for renewed formation or effort and education at all levels, not just clergy, is as real now as forty years ago. What passed for formation then was often lectures on what were the new rubrics with little effort at the theology and spirituality of church worship, in the epochs when the experience of the church when worship was most profound. With the proposed programmes of formation allied with the release of the Third Edition of the Roman Missal maybe there will be the opportunity for a response like the disciples at Emmaus that empowered them to know there could be the chance of "once more again with feeling".

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