

JOSEF A. JUNGSMANN SJ

In 1948 we meet the principal theoretician behind the liturgical revolution — indeed, its intellectual powerhouse — Josef Andreas Jungsmann SJ (1889–1975).

Jungsmann was ordained a diocesan priest, entered the Jesuits, and taught pastoral theology, catechetics and liturgy at the University of Innsbruck from 1925–38 and 1945–63. The Nazi occupation of Austria resulted in the closing of the Jesuit college, so Jungsmann resolved to use his free time to write a work explaining the Mass, the subject of much of his previous research, teaching and writing. He spent 1939–42 amassing a vast amount of research material on the sources, history and development of the prayers and ceremonies of the Mass, and in 1942, retired to the countryside to serve as a convent chaplain, a post that would allow him the free time to write his work.

The result, published in 1948, was Jungsmann’s two-volume, 1000-page work, *Missarum Solemnia*, known in English as *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*. It is a scholarly tour de force, with thicket of footnotes in tiny type, marshalling thousands of reference sources to advance the author’s arguments.

The book was received with wide acclaim, and thereafter established Jungsmann as *the* premier authority on matters liturgical, accorded immense authority by his contemporaries.²⁸ The left of the Liturgical Movement was ecstatic. Hans Reinhold, editor of *Orate Fratres*, saw *Mass of the Roman Rite* not merely as a historical work, but as one that could be used to advance proposals for future liturgical changes:

This book is an event! ... [T]here seems to be a great desire all over the world not only to get a better understanding [of the Mass], but also to raise claims for adaptation, as all periods have seen them. It is good to know whether or not such claims can be justified in the light of a sound tradition.²⁹

Indeed, the liturgist Balthasar Fischer said that Jungsmann’s *Mass of the Roman Rite*, probably more than any other book “prepared the way for the conciliar reform of the Liturgy.”³⁰ The book was “magisterial,” and “provided a scientific apparatus for future liturgical reform,”³¹ in which Jungsmann (as we shall see in the next chapter) will immediately have an opportunity to apply

28. See Alcuin Reid OSB, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius 2005), 164–5.

29. H.A. Reinhold, “Missarum Solemnia,” *Orate Fratres* 23 (1948–9), 126.

30. Quoted in Reid, 165n.

31. Kathleen Hughes RSCJ, “Meticulous Scholarship at the Service of a Living Liturgy,” in Joanne M. Pierce and Michael Downey, editors, *Source and Summit: Commemorating Josef A. Jungsmann SJ* (Collegetown MN: Liturgical Press 1999), 21.

his theories.

Two interrelated themes that Jungmann developed in his writings and lectures would have enormous influence on the course of the liturgical revolution as it slowly unfolded: (1) his “corruption theory,” which held that the Mass as it stood represented a departure from primitive liturgical ideals, and (2) “pastoral liturgy,” which advocated re-fashioning the Mass to meet the needs of contemporary man. It will therefore be worthwhile to take a closer look at both ideas.

1. Jungmann’s Corruption Theory. For Jungmann, the primitive era of the Church’s liturgy was the golden age, and most of the embellishments made to the Mass after the Peace of Constantine (313), especially those of the medieval and baroque periods, corrupted this ideal.

During this primitive era of the liturgy, according to Jungmann, “Christianity flourished and was vitally alive — because the great truths of Christianity were learned and were a living experience in the liturgy.”³² The liturgy then was “essentially *corporate worship*... [with] a close connection between altar and people, a fact constantly confirmed by greeting and response, address and assent.”³³

Five hundred years later in the Carolingian era (ca. 800), this was changed. The priest, says Jungmann:

consciously detaches himself from the congregation when the sacrifice proper begins, while the people only follow from a distance the external and visible action of the celebration in terms of its symbolic meaning.³⁴

Jungmann maintained that this change came about because of the Church’s two-century battle with Arianism (the heresy that denies the divinity of Our Lord) among the Teutonic peoples in Spain and Gaul. Beginning in the sixth century, he says, this prompted the introduction of anti-Arian formulas and concepts into the liturgy, and everything eventually went downhill from there.

Here, taken from his highly influential 1947 article on the topic, is a sampler of Jungmann’s indictment of the resulting liturgical corruptions that occurred over the following millennium, during the medieval period:

32. “The Pastoral Idea in the History of the Liturgy,” in *The Assisi Papers: Proceedings from the First International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy, Assisi-Rome, September 18–22, 1956*, published as a supplement to *Worship* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press 1957), 25.

33. “The Defeat of Teutonic Arianism and the Revolution in Religious Culture in the Early Middle Ages,” in *Pastoral Liturgy* (London: Challoner 1962), 2. This is a revised and updated version of the original article, which first appeared in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 69 (1947), 36–99.

34. *Ibid.* 2–3.

the corporate character of public worship, so meaningful for early Christianity, begins to crumble at its foundations... [forms of Eucharistic piety] represented a deviation from the original meaning of the Sacrament... [liturgical life existed] in a mass-produced and decadent form... A more or less broad gulf separated clergy and laity... The people were devout and came to worship: but even when they were present at worship, it was still clerical worship.... [The Mass] was not a people's service in the old sense. At it the people were not much more than spectators... a growing estrangement from the people... Indeed, we might well say that it had become a lifeless civil act... [On the eve of the Reformation] there was a mighty façade, and behind it great emptiness. The liturgy is no longer understood in its sacramental depth.³⁵

To Jungmann's way of thinking the post-Tridentine, Baroque era fared no better:

[F]estivity becomes the chief characteristic of church worship, a festivity in which the bulk of the people do not take part, but rather have something presented to them...³⁶

Correspondingly, in the Eucharist, scarcely any attention is now paid to sacramental preparation for our Lord's sacrificial self-offering, a preparation effected through the interchange between priest and people, by reading, prayer, praise and thanksgiving, which is designed to create unity amongst the [holy people.] Instead, attention is concentrated exclusively on the Real Presence. This is the specific source of life for Baroque piety. The measure in which the sacramental Presence becomes central, is also the measure in which truly sacramental thinking fades out.³⁷

Though Jungmann concedes elsewhere that other elements in the liturgy which developed subsequently "in the same way as the original, or in a similar way... are derived from the inspiration and activity of the Holy Spirit,"³⁸ this emphasis on the Real Presence, he maintained, corrupted and obscured the ideal, and:

[S]omething like a Fog Curtain settled between and separated liturgy and people, through which the faithful could only dimly recognize what was happening at the altar... The most important means of the soul's ascent to God, the word of the liturgy itself, had become inaccessible to the people.³⁹

35. Ibid. 60, 63, 66, 66, 67, 67, 68, 69, 78.

36. Ibid. 82.

37. Ibid. 88.

38. *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great* (South Bend IN: University of Notre Dame Press 1959), 4–5.

39. "Pastoral Idea," 29–30.

And by the twentieth century, though the Mass in its essentials was the same building in which Christians were already living ten, fifteen or even eighteen centuries ago:

the structure has become more and more complicated, with constant remodeling and additions, and so the plan of the building has become obscured — so much so that we may no longer feel quite at home in it because we no longer understand it.⁴⁰

The effect upon the liturgy of fourth- and fifth-century battle against Arianism was, then, the original sin that led to a 1500-year period of corruption. So, the Fog Curtain descended.

2. Jungmann and “Pastoral Liturgy.” This state of affairs, in turn, becomes “the chief cause for the loss of pastoral liturgy,”⁴¹ the second main theme Jungmann would sound throughout his work.

Now, what exactly, is meant by *pastoral* liturgy? Dom Alcuin Reid distinguishes two senses of the term:

(1) *The people are enabled to understand and penetrate the richness of objective liturgical tradition.* The people’s liturgical appetites are “elevated.”

(2) *Objective liturgical tradition is altered to suit the perceived needs of the people so that its rites “speak to them.”* The liturgy is reduced and restricted to what reformers think people will grasp immediately.⁴²

Since those of us who suffered through the era immediately following Vatican II will think of *pastoral* as a generic modernist buzzword,⁴³ we will need to expand a bit on Reid’s distinction.

The first sense of *pastoral* respects the nature of the Catholic liturgy. The purpose of the liturgy is, first and foremost, the *worship of God*.

The good pastor takes the traditional liturgy as it is, performs it correctly and as solemnly as possible, explains it to his flock (in sermons and articles), promotes various modes of participation in it for his faithful (serving, choir, congregational singing, church decoration, use of the missal, children’s Masses, participation in various blessing rites), and generally, regards whatever he must do for the sacred liturgy as the primary function of his priestly apostolate. All this, obviously, is praiseworthy, and indeed, *pastoral liturgy* in this

40. *Early Liturgy*, 2.

41. K. Hughes, 27.

42. *Organic Development*, 227–9. See also 305–6.

43. A “pastoral” bishop tolerated heresy, utterly crazy liturgical abuses, “proportionalist” moral theology, and, above all, the promotion of the idea that contraception was not sinful. In the United States, at least, church historians may one day find a statistical correlation between a Vatican II-era bishop’s perceived “pastoral” qualities and the dollar amounts his diocese later paid out in legal settlements. Whenever someone appeals to *pastoral*, I reach for my pistol...

sense should be the priestly ideal.

The second sense of *pastoral*, however — altering the liturgy to suit perceived needs of the people — is the sense in which Jungmann uses it. Here, the primary purpose of the liturgy is *care of the people*.

Thus, Jungmann entitles one of his essays “Pastoral Care — Key to the History of the Liturgy.”⁴⁴ Having tipped his biretta to the idea that “the liturgy is the life of the Church as it is turned towards God,” he says that the multiplicity of forms in the liturgy is explained by “the care of the hierarchy for the Church as the community of the faithful... This care was decisive in the shaping of public worship. It accounts for everything.”⁴⁵

Note the word — *everything*. Care of the people is the lens through which one must view the history of the liturgy, and it is the standard against which everything in the liturgy must be measured. Thus Jungmann says:

The liturgy would take them further [than appearing before God], it would lead the faithful to full consciousness of their Christianity... We can understand therefore, how for centuries a Christian pastoral care was possible [which] allowed a flourishing Christianity to live — because the great truths of Christianity were kept alive in and through the liturgy... The liturgy was designed to be a guide of the faithful to Christian prayer... For centuries, the liturgy, actively celebrated, has been the most important form of pastoral care. This was especially true of those centuries in which the liturgy was being created.⁴⁶

And after all this, of course, it is inevitable that Jungmann sounds the theme of the corruption theory, and finally, laments a liturgy that has become “rigid.”⁴⁷

So, *pastoral liturgy* in this second sense is liturgy that is “flexible,” rather than “rigid,” because its primary purpose is *care of the people*. Hence, the liturgy may — indeed must — accommodate itself to the perceived needs of the people, because in our own day:

the faithful in an especial manner need that same guidance by the liturgy which was the privileged lot of the Christians of the first centuries. Today the rigidity is beginning to lessen.⁴⁸

44. In *Pastoral Liturgy*, 368–81.

45. “Pastoral Care,” 369.

46. “Pastoral Care,” 373, 375–6, 377, 380.

47. “Pastoral Care,” 380. “[A] veil became drawn between the liturgy and the people, a veil through which the faithful could only dimly see what was happening at the altar... The greatest of all vehicles of the soul’s ascent to God, the words of the liturgy became inaccessible to the people. The prayers and chants through which the sacred action worked itself out became but sounds which touched only the outward ear. The liturgy became a mere sequence of mysterious words and ceremonies which had to be performed in accordance with set rules, while the people followed in holy awe. In the end, the liturgy itself became rigid.”

48. “Pastoral Idea,” 30.