

Congregation. The new *Ritus* does not constitute new law. There is nothing in it which is not already contained in the Acts of the Holy See. All its regulations, certainly all the new ones, are based on authentic decrees, and many of them seem to be couched in the very words of the decrees. But existing legislation is here codified and authoritatively set before us by our Bishops, whose right and sacred duty it is to watch over everything connected with the worship of the Most Holy Sacrament. The plea of ignorance in good faith can no longer be alleged in palliation for breaches of the law.

The *Ritus* is drawn up in the form of a ceremonial for Benediction, of which the first five paragraphs describe the preparation for the service. A Preface, styled 'Praemonenda,' gives the Bishops' general directions on the manner in which it is to be observed. As it is written for the most part in the terse, legal phraseology of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, some comment is called for on the more important points in which it differs from the old *Ritus*.

I. The most noticeable change concerns the construction of altars. (1) *A permanent throne of exposition may not be built over the tabernacle.* Of course, permanent thrones were never contemplated by the rubrics. The throne consists essentially of a small canopy with dorsal and base, specially designed to receive the monstrance during solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. By the nature of its function, therefore, it is a temporary structure, part of the preparation of the altar for the occasion of Exposition. When there is no Exposition, it is just as slovenly to leave the throne in position as it is to leave altar cards, missal, and lighted candles on the altar after the Masses for the day are ended. Nevertheless, outside of Rome and of places where sound tradition persists, a tacit toleration existed for the gratification of nuns and of Gothic architects, who found in permanent thrones an opportunity to indulge in more of the ornamental pinnacles they love. Apparently the new prohibition is restricted to permanent thrones on the tabernacle, and it would seem, in consequence, that their erection behind the tabernacle is still tolerated. The *Ritus* does, indeed, say that 'the throne should be used only for Exposition, and should be removed afterwards.' But a broad interpretation, based on the original decree (S.C.R. 27 May, 1911, *Westmonasterien*), would limit this direction to the case of thrones on the tabernacle, or would regard it as a statement of the general principle.

(2) *The altar cross may never be placed in the throne, nor in any structure specially designed for Exposition.* This prohibition is dictated by a desire to preserve the true meaning of the throne. The essential element in the throne is the canopy, and it is intended to be a special sign of honor to the Blessed Sacrament. But if the altar cross be placed under the canopy, it is given a mark of honor due to the Blessed Sacrament alone, and the 'throne of Exposition' at once loses all its significance. The legislation of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on this point is very strong. But it has been flagrantly disregarded, chiefly on account of the custom of building permanent thrones on the tabernacle. A projecting bracket in front of the throne to receive the cross is a specious device which does not overcome the difficulty; for to all appearance the canopy still forms a graceful ornament for the cross, and while this appearance exists the cross is still receiving a mark of honor that really belongs to the Blessed Sacrament alone. Here we have the reason why the Sacred Congregation of Rites insists on the unqualified prohibition of permanent thrones on the tabernacle.

What is to be done in churches where permanent thrones on the tabernacle already exist? The obvious thing is to do away with the banner articles. As the Bishops state in the 'Praemonenda': 'Potius curet ut ea quae obstant amoveantur, et magis locus ritui quam ritus loco accommodetur.' To remedy the defect, however, is often a matter of considerable difficulty and expense. In such cases the Bishop should be consulted. But, wherever possible, the necessary alterations will certainly be made; for a permanent

throne on the tabernacle, or an altar cross standing in the throne, will henceforward be offensive to the eyes of the least-instructed person entering the church. With regard to new altars, there can be no question. The Bishops' instructions are quite definite: 'Studeant pariter qui nova altaria vel tabernacula construunt ut hodiernae Ecclesiae disciplinae et adprobatis ritibus potiusquam antiquis quibusdam et obsoletis legibus aptentur.'

II. A great point in the new *Ritus* is that it makes the true structure of the Benediction service stand out clearly. The service consists of three parts: first, the action of exposing the Blessed Sacrament; then the period of exposition with devotions; and, lastly, the action of terminating the exposition. Confusion often arises from ignorance of what precisely constitutes each of these parts.

The first part consists essentially of placing the monstrance in the throne and of offering incense. During these actions the general law of the Church does not order any hymns or prayers; and many authorities hold that they are best done in silence. In some places, one or other of an appointed list of motets in honor of the Blessed Sacrament is sung. But in England the Bishops have laid down the rule that the *O Salutaris* must invariably be sung, because this is our English custom. This rule does not apply to the beginning of every Benediction service, but to the beginning of every Exposition. Thus in places where there is Exposition all day, the *O Salutaris* should be sung, and the Blessed Sacrament should be incensed at the moment of exposing the Blessed Sacrament in the morning; but at the evening Benediction the *O Salutaris* need not be sung, and incense must not be used until the *Genitori*.

The last part of the Benediction service, often called the 'Reposition,' brings the Exposition to an end. It consists of the *Tantum Ergo*, with incensation at the *Genitori*, the verse *Panem de caelo*, the prayer *Deus qui nobis*, and the Blessing. Having reference only to the Blessed Sacrament, this portion of the rite, from the beginning of the *Tantum Ergo* to the end of the Blessing, bears a liturgical character, and forms one solid liturgical block, unalterable apart from Roman legislation. For this reason it is forbidden to add any prayer, even an *oratio imperata*, to the *Deus qui nobis*. The only additional element that is permitted is the recitation of the Divine Praises after the Blessing.

Since, then, the *O Salutaris* and the *Tantum Ergo* mark the extreme points of the Benediction service, the period of Exposition, during which devotions before the Blessed Sacrament should come, obviously lies between these points. Therefore dedications, acts of reparation, *orationes imperatae*, etc., intended to be said before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, must follow the *O Salutaris* or precede the *Tantum Ergo*. Thus the custom that has prevailed in many places of reciting certain prayers after the Blessing is contrary to the essential structure of a service with Exposition; for at the Blessing, the Exposition is already over. In the new *Ritus* there is a rubric before the 'Prayer for England,' ordering it to be said 'after the *O Salutaris* or before the *Tantum Ergo* at latest.'

Except on days when certain prayers are ordered by ecclesiastical authority, there is no necessity to insert anything between the *O Salutaris* and the *Tantum Ergo*. The Litany of Loretto does not form an integral part of Benediction; and, according to the new regulations, the 'Prayer for England' need only be said at the principal Benediction on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

III. Several of the purely ceremonial details call for notice. (1) Profound bows are never made by persons who are kneeling. On every occasion when the old *Ritus* ordered a *profunda inclinatio*—e.g., before rising to put incense into the thurible—only a moderate inclination of head and shoulders is now to be made.

(2) On several occasions both deacon and celebrant were ordered by the old *Ritus* to genuflect on both knees on the predella. In the new *Ritus* they are always told to genuflect only on one knee. This is only the application of the principle