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The Catholic Liturgy and the Mormon Temple

Marcus von Wellnitz

Most of the world's religions incorporate some form of ritual into their worship, be it merely the singing of a hymn in a meeting, the wearing of a particular attire, or kneeling at a certain time and place. The older the religion is, the more complex and numerous the ceremonies seem to be and the more they often resemble each other, indicating the probability of a common ancestral beginning in antiquity.¹

It is to be expected that Christianity shares in the ritualistic aspect of religion. The oldest Christian institution, the Catholic churches of the Roman and Eastern branches, have perpetuated much ancient ceremony into our time, while the modern revival groups and the Protestant offshoots have lost, or deliberately eliminated, a great part of that ritual and have simplified their services. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, being neither Catholic nor Protestant, claims a divine restoration of ancient modes and ordinances. The LDS Church has two different types of meetings, each of which specializes in a different element of liturgy. The ordinary chapel worship service, in the morning or in the evening, relates to the simplistic forms of earlier worship with a minimum of ceremony and formality, while the temple assembly, on the other hand, reestablishes the ancient order of solemn ritual. In that latter instance, then, accepting the fact of the Restoration, there should be some resemblances and connections between the ceremonial aspects of the Latter-day Saint ordinances and the Catholic traditions and practices.²

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¹See, for example, Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1977); Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1949).

²The LDS understanding is not concerned with a possible duplication and resemblance in the rituals but, instead, with the proper divine authority to validate and perform the ordinances.

Examination of the solemn liturgical customs in the Roman and the Eastern rites indicates dependence on the sacred ceremonies of the Jews and the early Christians, even though the Catholic ritual is said to have “undergone additions, deletions, and alterations, which have modified their character” over the centuries.³ In most aspects, the Roman liturgy is quite comprehensible to the Latter-day Saint who has attended the temple even though Catholic writers claim that their rites are an “incomprehensible ceremony” which most of the faithful “understand . . . as little as we should a ceremony of the Buddhist religion, or a rite of some Chinese sect.”⁴ But the fundamental components and core elements of the ancient ritual can be recognized and are often distinctly apparent, though the Catholic version has become, over almost two millennia, a combination service of many diverse sources with altered and sometimes barely noticeable ordinances of an inactive nature when compared to the model of the archetype.

The basic outline of the LDS religious services is related to a variety of factors, but it seems essentially Jewish in character. Except for the addition of the sacrament as a Christian derivation, the Sunday meetings in the chapel appear to affiliate in their basic form and purpose to the assembly in the synagogue with its prayers, singing, scriptural readings and exhortations. The temple service, however, retains its typical and ultimate objective. Mormons do not deny the dependence and association between their meetings and the Jewish rites and services, while the Catholic churches have throughout history often been somewhat hostile to the inevitable attempt to openly equate their liturgy to Jewish sources and practices.⁵ The evidence, however, is undeniable, and modern Catholic writers and theologians now admit freely to their Hebrew origins and refer proudly to Old Testament references and antecedents incorporated into their ceremonies and doctrines. Thus it is now quite obvious that “we must expect to find within the Church of early days many relics of Judaism.”⁶ Since “the first Christian society at Jerusalem began its existence as a group within the framework of the ancestral Jewish faith, . . . the background of early Christian worship must be sought in those two Jewish institutions of the temple and the

³Fernand Cabrol, *The Holy Sacrifice: A Simple Explanation of the Mass*, trans. C. M. Anthony [pseud.] (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1937), p. 2.

⁴Ibid., p. 1.

⁵See the excellent discussion by Hugh W. Nibley, “The Christian Envy of the Temple,” *When the Lights Went Out* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970).

⁶Reginald M. Woolley, *The Liturgy of the Primitive Church* (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1910), p. 26.

synagogue.”⁷ “Christian worship drew from Judaism,”⁸ yet the Catholic churches gave it all “a new meaning.”⁹

The fact that Christ and his disciples were deeply involved with the temple and the synagogue is substantiated by New Testament scriptures.¹⁰ It appears obvious that the early Christians not only had their Sunday services, either in a Jewish synagogue or a member’s domicile, but also that they still retained the periodic visit to the temple and saw no conflict in the dual nature of their worship.¹¹ Later, after the destruction of the temple by Titus in 70 A.D., its place in the activities of the early Christians was not simply left vacant but was immediately replaced by a substitute service of a ritualistic and ceremonial character with a new Christian essence. Thus two meetings of different forms and purposes were simultaneously offered in the infant church. The morning service still resembled very closely the less ceremonious meeting of the synagogue and could be favorably compared to the Mormon Sunday School and even the sacrament meeting, for it consisted entirely of prayers, lessons from the scriptures, and sermons on gospel living and theology.¹² Sometimes it was referred to as the service of the catechumen since unbaptized believers (our modern-day investigators) were permitted to attend. Since many of the early converts were of Jewish origin, in all likelihood they felt at home at this assembly for it was a “ceremony borrowed from the services of the synagogues.”¹³

The more formal meeting with its accompanying ritual patterned essentially after the temple was held in the evening. It was here that the sacramental nature with its promises and obligations was ceremoniously portrayed, although it had been altered to include some new Christian elements and characteristics. The climax of the meeting became the consecration and the distribution of the eucharist with its affiliated liturgy and symbolism. Only worthy and initiated members were allowed to participate in this rite. The holy and formal distinction of the temple service was therefore transferred

⁷Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1964), pp. 18–19.

⁸Ludwig Eisenhofer and Joseph Lechner, *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, trans. A. J. and E. F. Peeler (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1961), p. 5.

⁹Dom Jean de Puniet, *The Mass: Its Origin and History*, trans. the Benedictines of Stanbrook (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1931), p. 27.

¹⁰Christ even officiated in the synagogue (see Luke 4:16; John 18:20), and all the earlier converts were very much familiar with its structure (see Acts 2:46, 3:1, 13:13–14, 17:1–2, 18:4). Christians were originally considered as a mere Jewish sect (Acts 16:13, 19:9).

¹¹Acts 2:46.

¹²Justine Martyr *1 Apology* 67; Tertullian *De Animo* 9. Note the reliance on the synagogue, which began with the *Shemah Israel* and was then followed by prayers, lessons from the Law and the Prophets, and a sermon with exposition.

¹³Cabrol, *The Holy Sacrifice*, p. 46.

to this gathering, which then assumed the function and stature of the now-destroyed temple at Jerusalem.¹⁴

However, the division between the two meetings did not continue for long. Soon, perhaps for convenience, both services were combined and welded into one with the eucharistic portion taking precedence over the instructional part, usurping more and more time and importance until the sermons and exhortations were considerably diminished.¹⁵ Yet, as long as there were adult catechumens applying for membership, some scriptural readings and theological teachings continued to be given, usually in the initial part of the service, after which the nonmembers were excused when the more solemn and ritualistic portion of the liturgy for the baptized members commenced.¹⁶ There were then, in effect, two masses, the "*missa catechumenorum*" and the "*missa sacramentorum*."¹⁷ Later, when most of the people in Europe had converted to Catholic Christianity, the combination service was no longer considered necessary and it was almost completely dispensed with while the mass became the exclusive ceremonial liturgy. Interestingly, the Protestant reformers endeavored to reintroduce the sermonette and instructional element into their services. It gave the meeting once more a balance retrospective of the early Christian order. By including a lecture and not prolonging the meeting unduly, the ceremonial segment was curtailed and often moved to the beginning of the service, as is also the pattern in Mormon tradition. The eucharist, however, remains the climax and grand finale in the Catholic mass.

To rely on the institution of the temple too rigorously, however, was uncomfortable for the early church because it implied that Christianity was not original but owed its format to the Jewish heritage. On the other hand, to completely ignore the temple ritual suggested ignoring the apostolic favor it had enjoyed and indirectly admitted that something was lost or unjustifiably excluded from the earliest traditions. The most effective course to pursue was to incorporate the trimmings of the temple ritual into the mass in a different context. Following that *modus operandi*, the church retained the best of both options.¹⁸

¹⁴See Woolley, *Liturgy of the Primitive Church*, p. 34.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 35, 38, 39. See also Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 65, 67; Tertullian *De Animo* 9; Origen *Romans* 10:33; Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 245.

¹⁶Woolley, *Liturgy of the Primitive Church*, pp. 35ff.

¹⁷Ivo of Chartres *Epistula* 219; Woolley, *Liturgy of the Primitive Church*, pp. 33, 36.

¹⁸See, e.g., Hugh W. Nibley, "The Idea of the Temple in History," *Millennial Star* 120 (August 1958): 230; reprinted as *What Is a Temple?* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1963).

If possible, the early church buildings were constructed in an east–west direction in the tradition of the temple at Jerusalem.¹⁹ The first LDS temples were also constructed along that orientation.²⁰ Entrance into the early churches was in the west while the holy place with the altar was positioned in the eastern part, denoting that a person who entered left the region of darkness, the temporal world, and proceeded forward to the region of light where the sun arose.²¹ In the fourth century Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem explained to his listeners the meaning of this peculiar conduct:

First of all, you entered into the ante-chamber of the baptistry, and there you stood facing the West and there you listened to instructions to stretch forth your hand and renounced Satan as if he were present. . . . I want to tell you why you stand facing the West. It is necessary since it is the region of darkness. . . . When you renounced Satan there is open the paradise of God which he placed in the East . . . and symbolically of this you turned from West to East, the region of light.²²

The earliest basilicas were divided into three parts: first, the atrium or forecourt; then the church proper with the area for the congregation; and, finally, set off by a barrier, the holy place for the altar and the officiating clergy.²³ Thus the church became a temple, because it is a place “where the Christians . . . perform a sacrifice,” writes a modern scholar. “The Christian sanctuary, insofar as it was a temple, recalled in some way the holy of holies, in the temple of Jerusalem.”²⁴ Constantine’s churches were equated to temples,²⁵ and the early fathers understood them as such.²⁶ The Byzantine liturgy prescribes even today that the clergy quote the fifth psalm upon entering the church: “I will enter into Thy house; I will bow in Thy holy temple.”²⁷

The Roman Catholics hesitate to actually apply the word *temple* to a church, but the early Jewish converts often referred to the church as the “House of God” (*Beth Eloheim*), or, literally translated, the

¹⁹Tertullian *Apologia* 10; *Adversus Valentinum* 3.

²⁰See N. B. Lundwall, *Temples of the Most High* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), p. 112.

²¹Joseph Rykwert, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 120, *Church Building* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), p. 27; Charles Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why”* (Oxford: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1901), pp. 22–23.

²²Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 19 [first lecture about the Ordinances]. 2, 4, 9.

²³John H. Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publishers Association, 1959), p. 83.

²⁴Rykwert, *Church Building*, pp. 7, 14.

²⁵Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. iv. 45.

²⁶E.g., Ambrose *Epistula* xx, n. 2.

²⁷Meletius M. Solovey, *The Byzantine Divine Liturgy—History and Commentary* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1970), p. 115.

“House of the gods.”²⁸ More often the church was called *Domus Dei* or *Dominicum*, or the “House of the Lord.”²⁹ The dedication of a church building was likewise observed as if it were indeed the holiest and most sacred structure. The altar and the walls were sprinkled with oil and wine, and a prayer was pronounced over all the vessels and items in the house.³⁰ It was done “to set them apart forever to the service of Almighty God, to separate them from profane use.”³¹

The first ritual a Catholic encounters is baptism. It is still an impressive ceremony even though most recipients currently are only infants. In the early centuries after Christ, however, it was an even more memorable and elaborate ordinance than today. The applicant was an adult and therefore ready to undergo intensive instructions before initiation into the church. Since baptisms were performed mostly at Eastertime, the candidate also attended the Paschal Vigil, a solemn ceremony to commemorate the light which proceeds out of the darkness.³² The baptism itself was not administered in the church building but in a separate building or annex called the baptistry.³³ Many of these special structures are still in existence, for example the baptistries at Nocera, Riez, Pisa, Naples, and Florence.³⁴ Sometimes the building was octagonal in shape, symbolizing the Jewish equivalent of baptism—the act of circumcision on the eighth day—and also symbolizing that Christ rose from the dead eight days after the Jewish sabbath, now called Sunday.³⁵ Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem left a thorough account of such a ceremony at his church in the fourth century:

As soon as you entered you took off your street tunic and this was a symbol of taking off the old person and his deeds. After having stripped you were naked, also imitating Christ who was naked on the cross . . . you were naked in the sight of all men but you were not ashamed. . . .

²⁸Eduard Syndicus, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 121, *Early Christian Art* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962), pp. 38ff. The suffix *heim* makes *Eloheim* technically plural, though not translated plural. However, if “literally” translated, “Beth Eloheim” would read “House of the gods,” perhaps suggesting that those who enter can become gods.

²⁹Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, pp. 106–107. The word *Dom* derives from *domus*; *basilica* comes from the Greek *basileus*—“king and kingdom.” Perhaps it is from this term that the Jehovah’s Witnesses call their meeting place Kingdom Hall.

³⁰The Gallican Rite is contained in the *Missale Francorum* 56–63. Other dedications are found in the *Reginensis* 1. 88, particularly in the prayer “Deus Sanctificationimis,” also in the *Ordo Romanus* 41. 1–31 in the section “Ordo quomodo ecclesia debeat.”

³¹Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 55.

³²Arthur McCormack, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 50, *Christian Initiation* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1969), pp. 54–60.

³³Irenee–Henri Dalmais, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 112, *Eastern Liturgies* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), p. 68; Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 135.

³⁴Syndicus, *Early Christian Art*, pp. 70–71.

³⁵Ambrose *Exposito in Evangelium secundam Lucam* 5. 49; *De Abrahamo* 2. xi. 79.

After these things you were shown the way to the font and each of you was asked if you believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, after you confessed that you went into the water three times.³⁶

Since the candidates appear very often to have been naked at the ceremony, different services were evidently held for men and for women.³⁷ A Catholic baptism in our day is essentially similar and equally formal in its performance. Inasmuch as the candidates are usually infants, the parents and godparents are more involved in the rite and are supplying the answers in place of the newborn during the short interview. This action signifies a strong idea of proxy performances in Catholic theology.³⁸ The first part of the service is similar to the interview prerequisite to Latter-day Saint baptism.

Priest: "What name do you give your child?"

Parents: —

Priest: "What do you ask of God's Church for —?"

Parents: "Baptism"

Priest: "You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty as Christian parents to bring him up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?"

Parents: "We do."

Priest (to godparents): "Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?"

Godparents: "We do."³⁹

Here, then, the solemnity of the occasion and the responsibility and consequences of the upcoming baptism are impressed upon the participants. After some prayer and ritual, the candidate is given another interview to ascertain his faith and understanding of church doctrine. Again the parents or godparents answer for the infant.

Priest: "Do you reject Satan?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "And all his works?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "And all his empty promises?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was

³⁶Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 20. 2, 4.

³⁷McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 63.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 70–71.

³⁹*The Rite of Baptism* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1970), pp. 3–4.

born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?"

Parents: "I do."

Priest: "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?"

Parents: "I do."⁴⁰

Then the baptism is performed as a symbol of "washing and purification."⁴¹ Today the font is no longer situated in the annex but in the church itself, yet never near the altar in the east but somewhere near the entrance, preferably in the western part of the building, "in the vestibule, to signify that the child is not yet fully a member of God's family."⁴²

However, the ordinance is not completed at this point. There are two anointings with consecrated oil during the rite of baptism—first, with the oil of catechumens; second, with the oil of chrism; each received a different form of consecration on Holy Thursday. During the anointing with consecrated oil the priest declares: "God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life." Then the ministrant anoints the child with the oil.⁴³ This ordinance was also performed anciently as evidenced again by Cyril of Jerusalem, who relates the significance and procedure as follows:

The oil is applied symbolically to your forehead and your other senses. . . . And you were first anointed on the forehead . . . then on your ears . . . then on the nostrils . . . afterwards on your breast.⁴⁴

He proceeds to mention the symbolism in this action:

Having been worthy of this holy anointing, you are now called Christians . . . because before this ordinance you had no right to that title but you were only proceeding on your way toward becoming Christians. . . . Having then become partakers with Christ; you can now be called Christs, or anointed ones.⁴⁵

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 9–10.

⁴¹McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 32.

⁴²Joseph E. Payne, *Together at Baptism* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1971), p. 15. See also the *Rituale Romanum* 2. i. 46.

⁴³*The Rite of Baptism*, p. 11.

⁴⁴Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 21. 3, 4.

⁴⁵Ibid., 5 and 1.

Since *Christ* (*Christos*) means anointed, Cyril suggests that we can all become little Christs by the ordinance of anointing. By this imitation the person is now also “a priest . . . and a prophet, . . . royal in nature,” as one theologian put it.⁴⁶ Oil is “the symbol of divine healing, the giving of strength and priestly power.”⁴⁷ “The body is washed so that the soul may be purified; the body is anointed so that the soul may be made holy,” wrote Tertullian.⁴⁸ He also associates it with the act of a ritual cleansing.⁴⁹ The oil is kept in special containers and is available to “cure, enlighten, pacify, and strengthen.”⁵⁰ A person may be anointed on thirty-six different places of the body in the Coptic rite.⁵¹ Touching various parts of the infant immediately after the baptism and anointing is still a ceremony of the modern Catholic rite; the priest touches the ears and the mouth of the child with his thumb, saying: “The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak. May he soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, and to praise the glory of God the Father.”⁵² The same ordinance in the sixth century employed the following monologue:

I sign your forehead. . . . I sign your eyes so that they may see the glory of God. I sign your ears so that you may hear the voice of the Lord. I sign your nostrils so that you may breathe the fragrance of Christ. I sign your lips so that you may speak the words of life. I sign your heart so that you may believe in the Holy Trinity. I sign your shoulders so that you may bear the yoke of Christ's service. . . . In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, so that you may live forever and ever [*“Saeculum saeculorum”*].⁵³

Finally, after the application of water and oil, the person is endowed with a new white garment since he is now considered reborn, a new being, and needs clothes. At the modern baptismal ceremony the priest presents the infant with a white dress and says: “You have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With

⁴⁶Payne, *Together at Baptism*, p. 37.

⁴⁷Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 208.

⁴⁸Tertullian *De Resurrectione* 8. Baptism, in Catholic teaching, symbolizes the negative aspect in that it remits sins but does nothing to elevate man; it merely makes him neutral in the eyes of God by eliminating the original sin. The anointing represents the positive aspect in that it sanctifies man and gives him standing before God (see McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 67).

⁴⁹Tertullian *De Baptismo* 7.

⁵⁰Robert Lesage, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 114, *Vestments and Church Furniture* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1960), p. 76.; Tertullian *De Baptismo* 7.

⁵¹Dalmais, *Eastern Liturgies*, p. 73.

⁵²*The Rite of Baptism*, p. 12.

⁵³McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 50; see also Louis Bouyer, *Christian Initiation* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960); M. E. Boissard, “I renounce Satan, his pomp and his works,” cited in D. George et. al., *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964).

your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven.”⁵⁴ The dress is also referred to as the “garment of righteousness” or the “robe of light.”⁵⁵ Ambrose compared the garment to a veil: “After these things, you have received white garments that it may be shown that you have put aside the cloak of sin and put on the chaste veils of innocence.”⁵⁶ Also Cyril of Jerusalem employed the white garments in his service of initiation: “But now, after having put away your old clothes and dressed in these white ones, you must always remain clothed in white.”⁵⁷ The initiate had to wear these particular garments for the rest of the day, and he also received a new name after this ordinance.⁵⁸

Likewise, when a person decides to join a monastery or convent, he or she leaves the former life behind and therefore symbolically sheds the old person and its clothes and receives a new vestment, indicative of the particular monastic order chosen. The ancient ceremony was quite elaborate and the recipient had to submit to a series of rites. “Certain interrogations were made and trials imposed and instructions given” before one was admitted into the priestly state.⁵⁹ The novice also accepts a new name, usually that of a Catholic saint, which is at times assigned while it can in other orders often be chosen by the individual. As has recently become evident again, a pope of the Roman Catholic Church also selects a new name for himself upon entering his new calling.

The Catholic baptismal ceremony is therefore an “initiation rite.”⁶⁰ The second Vatican Council proclaimed: “The baptized person, the regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.”⁶¹ The ordinance is even characterized as “a sealing . . . accomplished by the Holy Spirit at Baptism.”⁶² In some of the older churches there are sometimes special “anointing rooms.”⁶³ All of this seems very familiar to the Latter-day Saint.

In the Catholic rite a further anointing is applied at the time of confirmation. Here the godparent places his hand on the right

⁵⁴*The Rite of Baptism*, p. 11.

⁵⁵Dalmais, *Eastern Liturgies*, p. 72. It is also used as a garment in the burial of children under the age of seven because “we can be sure that they sleep in Jesus” (Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 190).

⁵⁶Ambrose *De Mysteriis* 7.

⁵⁷Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 22. 8.

⁵⁸McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, p. 65.

⁵⁹Ta Vita Pachomii 7. 22.

⁶⁰Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 338.

⁶¹*Constitution of the Church* 2. 10.

⁶²Bernard J. Cooke, *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), pp. 27–28.

⁶³Rykwert, *Church Building*, p. 22.

shoulder of the recipient, who is kneeling in the chapel near the altar. The bishop rests his right hand on the candidate's head while his thumb anoints the forehead of the person with oil. After the chrism he strikes the confirmant's cheek slightly.⁶⁴ This ritual "gives us the authority to act in the name of Christ and in the name of his Church. When we are confirmed we are authorized to do the same thing that Christ would do if he were here today."⁶⁵ In the Eastern church the oil is applied on the forehead, the eyes, ears, the nose, mouth, chest, the hands, and the feet, to cleanse them from sins committed through their use.⁶⁶ All these rites, it is taught, are "Christian sacraments of initiation,"⁶⁷ a "representation of a sacred reality by material signs."⁶⁸ After a long absence in the ritual and the theology, anointing the sick has also been revived in the Catholic Church, supplementing the extreme unction.⁶⁹ Here, too, the recipient has the oil applied on his eyes, ears, nose, mouth, the hands and the feet.⁷⁰

Upon entering a church building, a Catholic is confronted with a reenactment of the purification rite at baptism. Anciently, a basilica included an actual font with water in the atrium-court in front of the church building itself. Here the participants in the liturgy "were wont to wash themselves before entering the church."⁷¹ It is suggested that such a font was but a remnant of the old *impluvium* of a Roman villa.⁷² Yet nearly all temples in antiquity as well as Arab mosques even today incorporate a ceremonial washbasin near their entrances.⁷³ Rather than assuming that the atrium and font in a Catholic church are modeled after a Roman house, would it not be more fitting to suggest that the villa might be patterned after the basic elements of the sacred place of ordinances, the temple?

Later, these basins became smaller and less obvious and were modified into the water stoups near the doors of Catholic churches.⁷⁴ Their purpose is to "purify all creatures from the evil influences of

⁶⁴Fulton J. Sheen, *These Are the Sacraments* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962), pp. 40–41.

⁶⁵Payne, *Together at Baptism*, p. 49.

⁶⁶Francis J. Connell, *The Seven Sacraments—What They Are—What They Do!* (Glen Rock, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1966), p. 59.

⁶⁷Cooke, *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*, p. 23.

⁶⁸Bernard Piault, *What Is a Sacrament?*, vol. 49, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1963), p. 42. See also Clement *Stromata* 6. 15; John Chrysostom *Commentary on First Corinthians*; Justin Martyr condemned them as Satan's imitation of the real thing, *1 Apology* 66.

⁶⁹Francis Nicholas Halligan, *The Ministry of the Celebration of the Sacraments: Sacraments of Reconciliation* (New York: Alba House, 1973), 2: 195ff.

⁷⁰Sheen, *These Are the Sacraments*, pp. 99–101.

⁷¹Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 112. See also Paulinus of Nola *Epistulae* 32. 15.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³See Exodus 30:18.

⁷⁴Rykwert, *Church Building*, p. 23.

the devil and to protect them against everything which threatens their life, health, and possessions.”⁷⁵ They are definitely “connected with the Sunday custom of sprinkling the congregation with holy water . . . replaced on week-days by self-sprinkling.”⁷⁶ Thus a cleansing through water is necessary “before entering the presence of God.”⁷⁷ While the mass was restricted to Sundays in the first few centuries after Christ, it became subsequently a practice to provide services more than once a week and finally even daily. The synagogue meetings had been held just one time a week and the frequency of Christian worship seems to have been patterned after it. But by offering services at various times of the day, from sunrise to sunset, and at different days of the week, Christian meetings were imitating the temple ritual with its daily sacrifices.⁷⁸ It is also interesting to note the ancient practice of keeping men and women separated in the church just as they were kept to different locations in the temple at Jerusalem.⁷⁹ Women had either to stand on different sides of the aisle in the chapel or they were restricted to a balcony which overlooked the main assembly hall.⁸⁰ In addition, it was proper for women to conceal their heads with a veil or some kind of covering,⁸¹ a custom which has largely become obsolete in the United States but which is still quite prevalent in Catholic countries of South America and Europe.

As to the presentation of man’s history and progression, very little remains in the church rituals of today, either as a drama or a recitation. However, several now obscure remnants attest that early Catholicism was acquainted with the concept as part of the church ceremony. The atrium or forecourt of the pristine basilicas is redolent of the temple court and the garden, the *refrigerium* of traditions and in literature. The atrium of a church is described as a “private courtyard . . . with a well in the middle . . . a pretty little garden with pines and cypresses, known as a ‘paradise.’”⁸² Here, then, do we encounter the notion of the garden, the *paradiso*, an actual beautiful

⁷⁵Lesage, *Vestments and Church Furniture*, pp. 69–71. There are three types of blessed water for different occasions (p. 69).

⁷⁶Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 136. See also the *Liber Pontificalis* 1. 172, and the *Apostolic Constitution* 8. i. 29.

⁷⁷Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 307; also Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. 4. 40.

⁷⁸Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)* (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1961), p. 175; Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 235.

⁷⁹See Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Comp., reprint 1958), p. 48.

⁸⁰Rykwert, *Church Building*, p. 29.

⁸¹Wharton B. Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum, the Origin and Gradual Development of the Dress of Holy Ministry in the Church* (London: Rivingtons, 1868), p. xxv. See also Paul’s admonitions in 1 Corinthians 11.

⁸²Syndicus, *Early Christian Art*, p. 40.

and well-kept grove, a garden of Eden with “evergreen trees, a vine, and roses” before one enters the sacred structure of the temple which represents the holy place.⁸³

Not everyone could step into the chapel to witness services in the primitive church. The porter, a minor order of the priesthood, formerly “stood at the door to see that only worthy and reliable persons entered.”⁸⁴ A last remnant of the guardians to the holy place are the statues of angels, saints, sphinxes, and even of awful-looking beasts and creatures at the entrances to the hallowed sanctuaries of medieval times. They appear to remind the person seeking admission that he has to be clean in action and thought before presenting himself to deity and participating in the sacred ordinances.

A ceremony very much suggestive of a creation setting is the old Paschal Vigil of the Catholic ritual at Eastertime. Members and catechumens alike were permitted in attendance. It was considered to have been a general instruction period before the initiation of the latter and a “commemoration” for the already initiated. This ancient “festival of creation” recounted the passover or the *rite de passage* from birth to death, from one state of life to another.⁸⁵ It began with the congregation in complete darkness (“*et tenebrae erat super faciem abyssi*”). The “*lux Christi*” was struck from a flint-stone; then the ceremonial Paschal candle was lighted in the gloomy dark (“*fiat lux*”) and the candle passed among the participants who lighted their own candles from it in the midst of great joy and shouts of jubilation (*jubilare et exultare*). This celebration seems to symbolize the creation out of darkness as well as the coming of Christ as a light to illuminate the world which was in darkness. Associated with this rite was the reading of the creation story, the account of the flood, and the Israelite exodus out of Egypt, as parables of the progress of man, indicating birth and rebirth, hope and despair.⁸⁶ The vigil is particularly remarkable since it was performed immediately prior to the initiation of the catechumens and the sacrificial liturgy at the altar in the sanctuary of the basilica.

Notably during the Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo periods, the churches were transformed into distinctly unearthly places of glory. They became a mixture of imperial throne rooms and celestial “hall[s] of state.”⁸⁷ The best architects, sculptors, and painters were employed and no expense was spared to convert the church halls into

⁸³Ibid., p. 47. Note also the gardens around a Latter-day Saint temple, the “temple square.”

⁸⁴Connell, *The Seven Sacraments*, p. 153.

⁸⁵McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, pp. 55–58.

⁸⁶Ibid., pp. 58–60.

⁸⁷Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 93.



Angel Guardians at Church Entrance
Mannheim, Germany

Photos by Author

celestial embassies where the participants in the divine rites could feel themselves as though in heaven in the presence of the King of the World for a certain period of time before leaving again for the mortal sphere outside the building. "Nothing can be too good, too costly, too fair for the house of God."⁸⁸ The churches often resemble, and many indeed surpass, the grandeur and artistry of the celestial room in the older LDS temples. In our day and age, the idea of the church as a celestial court has been abandoned for a more simple and often outright drab style which symbolizes the dreariness of the world. Man has become a wanderer and sojourner in search of a heaven, and the church edifices depict the transitory nature of human life. They represent a "tent" in the pilgrimage of mankind on earth. The church is now the "*ecclesia peregrinans*."⁸⁹

Even the processions to different places within the church and outside remind us of the stages of life, the continual movement to a better and progressive state of being, a "pilgrimage through this vale of misery."⁹⁰ Banners are carried by the group, one exhibiting a lion, the other a dragon, denoting respectively Christ and Satan, who lead us through this existence according to whom we choose.⁹¹ During our earthly pilgrimage we should seek the right way, "following Christ . . . to our home of eternity."⁹²

Apparently the Catholic churches are aware of the differing stages of the temple representations by including these references to them in the church ritual. Even the introduction of music into the liturgy has its precedence in the temple and not in the synagogue. Though the LDS temple does not utilize musical performances in its ceremony, the great shrine in Jerusalem did employ the use of instrumentals, choral singing, orchestral renditions and probably even an organ.⁹³

Also, the ceremonial dress of the Catholic clergy during the performance of liturgical ordinances conforms very closely to the priestly vestments of temple service.⁹⁴ "The sacred dress was only worn by one who ministered at the altar," wrote Josephus; "he wore it on occasion of his entering the most holy place."⁹⁵ While other people who attended the Jewish rite at the temple also may have been

⁸⁸Joseph A. Dunney, *The Mass* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 348.

⁸⁹Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, pp. 93-94.

⁹⁰Walker, *The Ritual "Reason Why,"* p. 99.

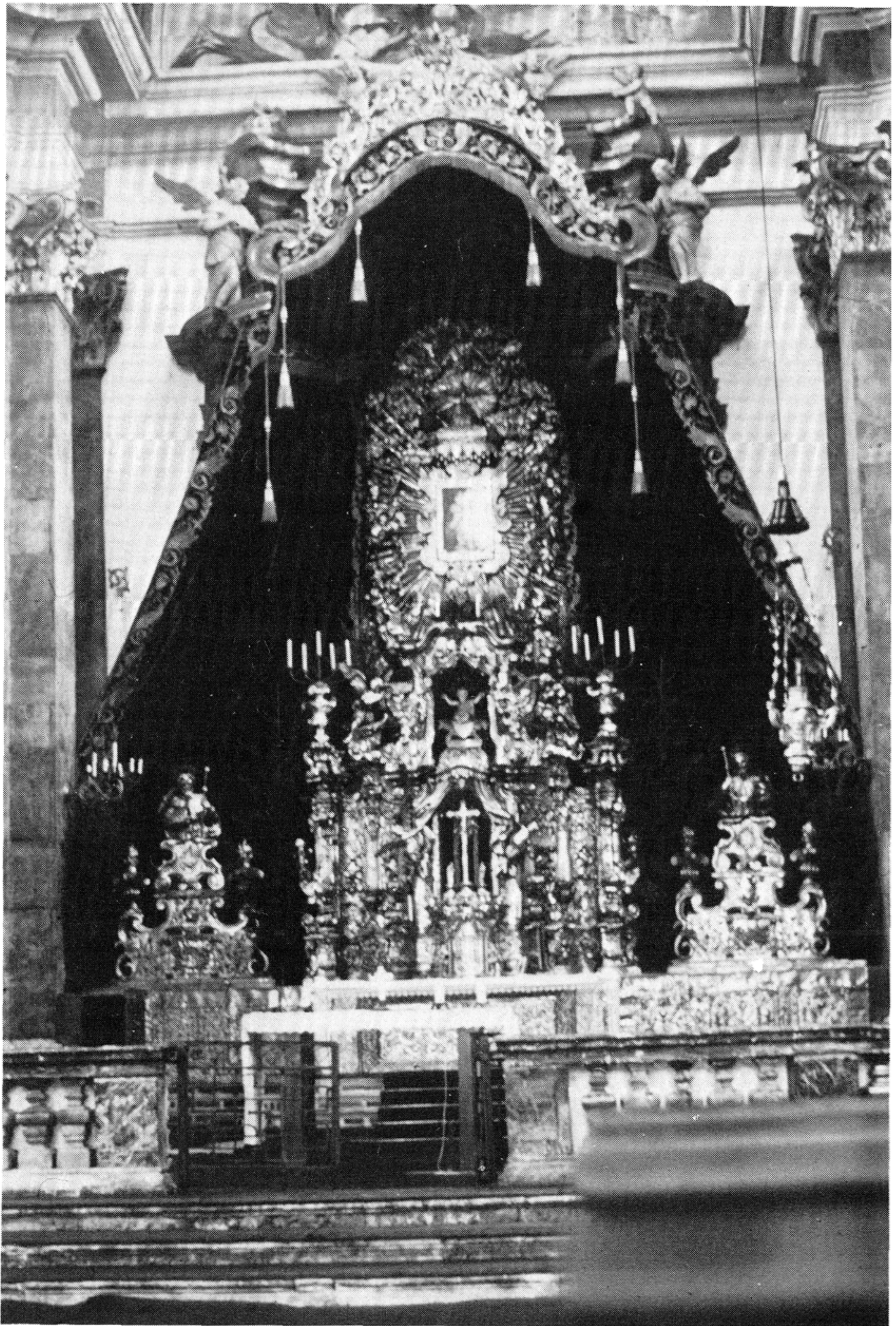
⁹¹Ibid., p. 101.

⁹²Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 200.

⁹³Edersheim, *The Temple*, pp. 76-81.

⁹⁴Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum*, pp. iv-v.

⁹⁵Josephus *The Jewish Wars* 5. v. 7.



Altar as Reception Throne of God
Innsbruck, Austria

arrayed in special clothes, it is only the priest and his immediate aids in the performance who are attired in the ritual habilaments. He wears the dress in proxy for the congregation before the Lord, and he also wears it because he represents God to the people in attendance. While officiating at the altar, "the priest in a sense leaves this earth and enters another world."⁹⁶ Since the other world, the celestial realm, was a region of purity and glory, the traditional color of the vestments has long been white. "We should conclude, without doubt, that the dress appropriate to the most solemn offices of the holy ministry, during the primitive age, was white. . . . Again and again, even in medieval writers, do we find recognition of white vestments as being the proper garb of Christian ministry."⁹⁷ The long white robe, the cassock, which was also worn by the choir, was used only in churches, but today it is not necessarily always white.⁹⁸ However, the alb is white and so is the surplice of the priest at the time of his ordination.⁹⁹ The pope's dress is said to "resemble those of the Roman Consuls, and the ancient diptychs represent the Pope in all the majesty of those great Roman and Byzantine dignitaries."¹⁰⁰ Eusebius addressed the bishops of Tyre: "You who are dressed in the sacred garment that reaches to the feet, adorned with the celestial crowns of glory."¹⁰¹ Reportedly, the bishops anciently "wore mitres or priestly caps, after the model of the Jewish priests" which were modeled like a turban or a bonnet.¹⁰² Jerome described the headdress of the priests: "The fourth of the vestments is a small round cap . . . much as though a sphere were to be divided through the centre, and one half thereof to be put upon the head. . . . It has no peak at the top, nor does it cover the whole head as far as the hair extends, but leaves about a third of the front part of the head uncovered. It is attached by a band onto the back of the head, so as not to be liable to fall off."¹⁰³

The *beretta* worn in the second millennium of Catholicism was "a square cap, with three corners or prominences rising from its crown, and having, for the most part, a tassel depending."¹⁰⁴ The headdress of the officiant is important "when performing official acts

⁹⁶Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 198.

⁹⁷Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum*, pp. xxxiii–xxxiv.

⁹⁸Lesage, *Vestments and Church Furniture*, pp. 97–98.

⁹⁹John O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies in the Eastern and Western Church* (New York: New Catholic Publication Society Co., 1885), p. 37; Connell, *The Seven Sacraments*, p. 146; see also 1 Samuel 2:18, Revelation 15:6. Christ himself was dressed in white (Luke 22:11).

¹⁰⁰Cabrol, *The Holy Sacrifice*, pp. 78–79.

¹⁰¹Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. 4.

¹⁰²Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum*, p. 188. For the Jewish priest, see Exodus 28:4.

¹⁰³*Letter to Fabiola*, quoted in Marriott, *Vestiarum Christianum*, pp. 13–14.

¹⁰⁴O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, pp. 52–53.

that are mainly authoritative in nature.”¹⁰⁵ Associated with the headcovering is the cutting of the priest’s hair at ordination, the tonsure, which is also ceremonious in character.¹⁰⁶ It is also important to note that the clergy, particularly monks and nuns, are buried in their vestments.¹⁰⁷ There are other items which are part of the ritual habiliments, such as the girdle attached to the cassock and the alb. It is long “like a sash” and represents “*promptitude* in executing the commands of God, *exactness* in religious observances, and *watchfulness* in regard to our eternal salvation.”¹⁰⁸ The stole is another article which belongs to the full raiment during the liturgy. It is worn over the shoulders or around the neck by the clergy, but on different sides, depending on the degree within the priesthood. The deacon, for example, wears it “over the left shoulder and fastened on the right side,”¹⁰⁹ while the priest and bishop “wear it crossed over his breast.”¹¹⁰ A special prayer is said while dressing with the stole: “Restore to me, O Lord! the Stole of immortality which I lost through the transgression of my first parents.”¹¹¹

Most of the changing of the dress takes place in a particular room, the *sacretarium*.¹¹² Yet, the priest still removes some parts of the robes during the ceremony itself and takes other items and puts them on while he is officiating.¹¹³ But not only the participants at the altar are instructed to don some special raiments. Jerome also encouraged visitors to the liturgy to wear new clothes for the occasion, though less ritualistic in character: “We, too, ought not to enter into the Holy of Holies in our everyday-garments, just such as we please, when they have become defiled from the use of ordinary life, but with a clean conscience and clean garments.”¹¹⁴ To wear new and unsoiled apparel is quite appropriate for anyone when entering the “house of God.” However, the priest, who participates actively in the ordinances, labors under a different code and must appear in ceremonial attire because he enters the area of the altar, the sanctuary and holy place in a Catholic church.

¹⁰⁵Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁶Connell, *The Seven Sacraments*, p. 147. Not only Catholic priests have their hair cut, but it was an ancient widespread custom among the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, as well as in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and India even today. Catholic priests in the United States do not have to be tonsured (p. 153).

¹⁰⁷See, e.g., *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann, 15 vols. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), 3: 72.

¹⁰⁸O’Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, pp. 39, 42–43 (italics in the original); Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 46. A good photograph can be seen in Sheen, *These Are the Sacraments*, p. 113.

¹¹⁰Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 42; Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 360.

¹¹¹O’Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, p. 47.

¹¹²Francois Amiot, *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, vol. 110, *History of the Mass* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1958), p. 22.

¹¹³Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 199; Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 169.

¹¹⁴Jerome *On Ezekiel* 44.

The reality of an altar in a chapel presents another suggestion that the liturgy of the mass and the associated ordinances are indeed an amalgamation of the ceremonies of places of worship and sacred ritual centers. The concept of an altar was not taken from the service in the synagogue for there was no altar there; it is an adaptation from the temple in Jerusalem, or from any temple for that matter. Originally, the pagans accused early Christians of not possessing a shrine with an altar in their meeting halls; an altar had been an integral part of most ancient religions and rituals.¹¹⁵ Could it be that the altar was therefore deliberately introduced into the church in order to give the church the appearance of a sacred sanctuary and thereby provide for Jewish and pagan converts a touch of nostalgic familiarity to facilitate their acceptance of Christianity? Earliest churches displayed only one altar, but the number of altars gradually increased in later centuries until some of the great cathedrals boasted a multiplicity of side-chapels, each with its own altar.¹¹⁶

Once the church had become a temple and the altar had been introduced, other related objects and practices were, of necessity, likewise taken in as a matter of course, among them incense and candles, which were standard features of the tabernacle and the holy sanctuary in Jerusalem.¹¹⁷ Candles on the altar were evidently a copy of the menorah. Candles usually number seven in a Catholic church, but there may be as few as only one pair, the acceptable minimum for the mass.¹¹⁸ Another adoption from an outside ritual was the veil which women were required to wear in church, notably at the altar for the wedding ceremony.¹¹⁹ Clement taught it this way: "And this further let the woman have: let her wholly cover her head. . . . And if thus with modesty, and with a veil, she covereth her own eyes, she shall neither be misled herself, nor shall she draw others, by the exposure of her face, into the dangerous path of sin. For this willeth the Word; seeing that it is meet for the woman that she pray with a covered head."¹²⁰

With the introduction of the altar in the church, the mixture of temple and synagogue became even more complete. Yet the altar was a structure of the outside court and not of the sacred temple interior, but the affiliation of both places was soon established. The locale of the altar in the church was converted into a sanctuary, and

¹¹⁵Minucius Felix *Octavius* 32.

¹¹⁶For the early Church, see Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. 4.

¹¹⁷Lesage, *Vestments and Church Furniture*, pp. 40ff., 59ff., 81ff.

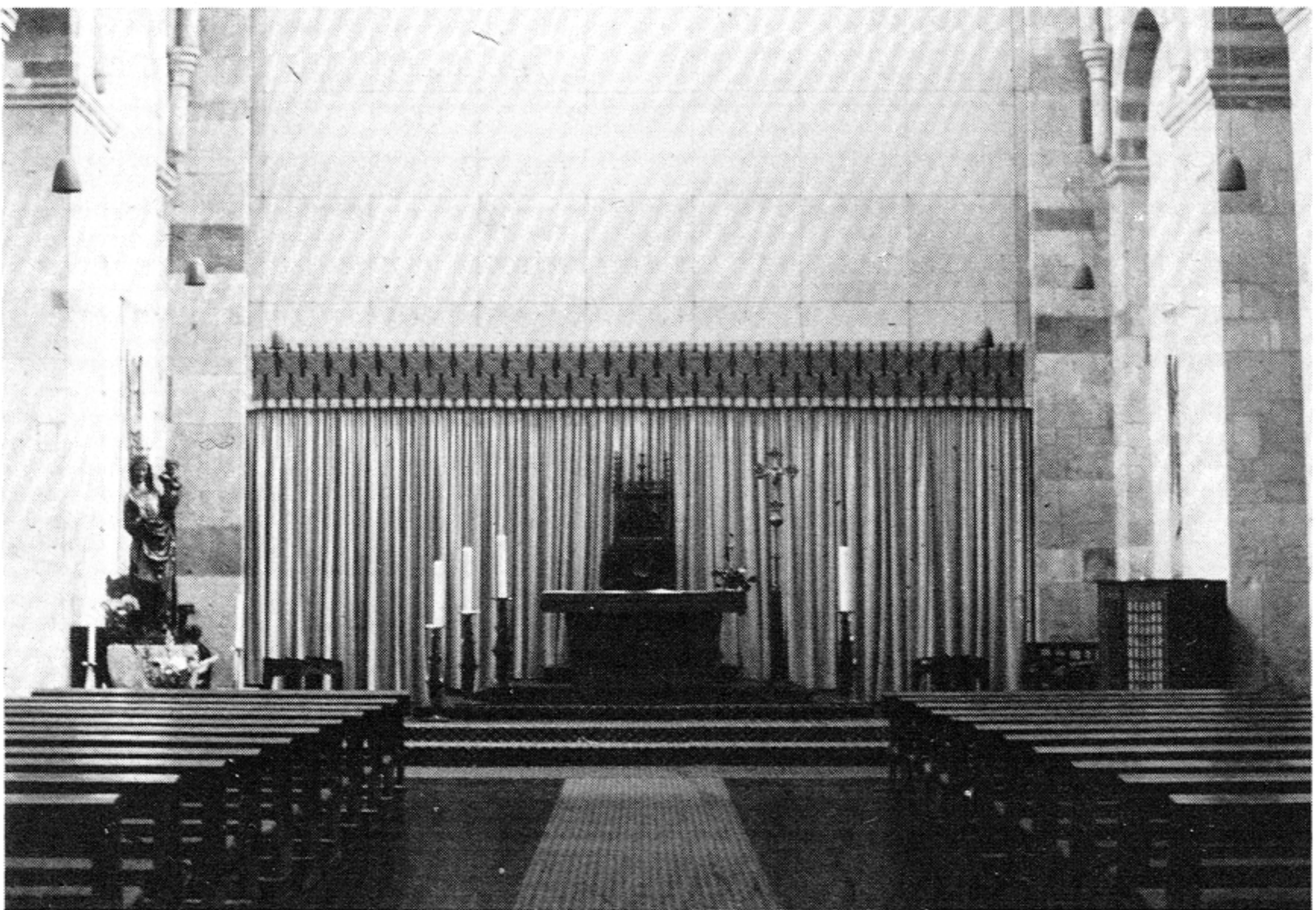
¹¹⁸Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, pp. 108–109.

¹¹⁹Dalmais, *Eastern Liturgies*, p. 116.

¹²⁰Quoted in Marriott, *Vestiarium Christianum*, p. xxv.



Altar with Cherubim on Both Sides (Like the Ark of the Covenant)
Rome, Italy



Veil behind the Altar
Cologne, Germany

the purpose and function of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies was transferred to the altar. With the real temple in Jerusalem destroyed and the Catholic church as its self-appointed successor, the site of the church altar now symbolized the most holy place, the *sanc-tum sanctorum*.¹²¹ This was dramatically emphasized by Renaissance and Baroque architects who often surrounded the altar with statues of angels representing the cherubim of the Lord's presence on the ark of the covenant.¹²² They were to protect the most sacred structure and also act as witnesses to the ordinances performed and the vows and oaths taken in their presence.¹²³

Finally, the veil which separated the holiest and its ark from the remainder of the room was also adopted. In its Catholic version, a barrier was erected between the altar and the rest of the church where the faithful gathered to witness the liturgical rites. "The sanctuary is called the holy place (haikal)," and it is "cut off from the nave by a lattice screen."¹²⁴ John Chrysostom mentions veils which covered the sanctuary during the consecration of the sacramental emblems in his day, and a poem by St. Paulinus of Nola commenced with the line "Veiled are the holy altars."¹²⁵ In the Eastern rites of Catholicism the altar is "concealed behind a solid screen."¹²⁶ Sometimes it is a "curtain which hides the altar during the anaphora."¹²⁷ Almost all churches in the early centuries possessed a "network Partition" which separated the altar from the rest of the church, and also the side-altars were "veiled in by a screen."¹²⁸ In the later church the veils and screens were gradually removed or converted into a balustrade, an ornamented enclosure with a gate, called the *cancelli*.¹²⁹ Still, the unordained were normally not permitted to enter the altar sanctuary, and even kings and emperors were barred except for certain occasions such as their coronations.¹³⁰ "Early altars used to be covered with a canopy, supported by columns, and known as the ciborium. . . . From the roof of the ciborium veils of rich stuff were suspended."¹³¹ Thus the altar also appears as the throne of God, the mercy seat, covered by a royal canopy as over a king's throne from which he ruled

¹²¹Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 129; see also Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 10. 4.

¹²²Exodus 25:18-19.

¹²³John Moschus *Pratum Spirituale* 4. 10.

¹²⁴Dalmals, *Eastern Liturgies*, p. 59.

¹²⁵Quoted in Dunney, *The Mass*, pp. 127-28.

¹²⁶Rykwert, *Church Building*, p. 56.

¹²⁷Amoit, *History of the Mass*, p. 77, fn. 2.

¹²⁸O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, frontispiece and [p. iii], explanation f.

¹²⁹Walker, *The Ritual "Reason Why,"* p. 23, and Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, pp. 110-11.

¹³⁰Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 111.

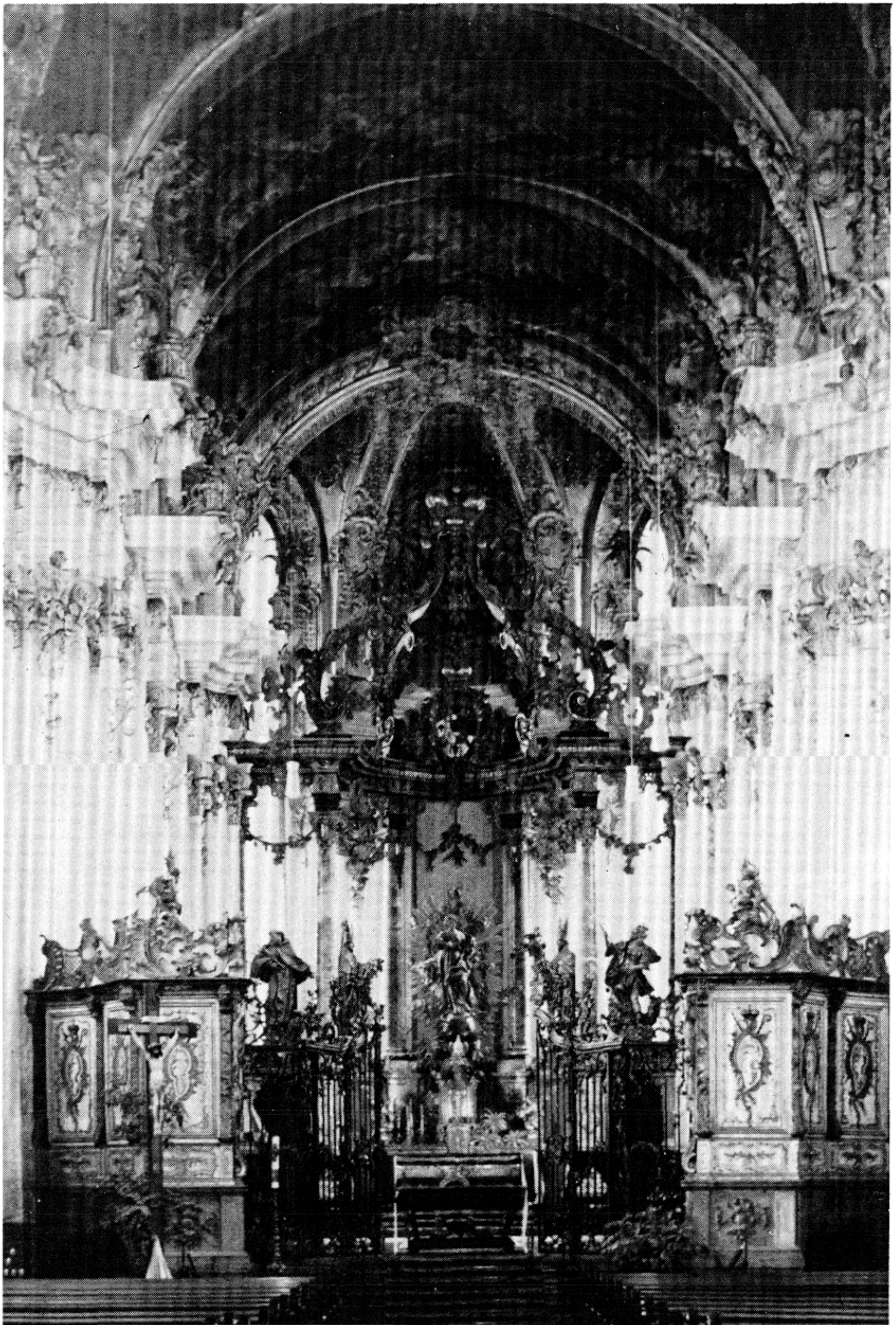
¹³¹Dunney, *The Mass*, pp. 126-27.



Partition between the High Altar (Holist) and the Congregation
Marburg, Germany



Altar as the Throne of God with Canopy and Crown
Fulda, Germany



Partition with Gate between the High Altar and the Congregation
Trier, Germany



All-Seeing Eye over Church Entrance Watching Who Enters
Wurzburg, Germany

his domain.¹³² Near the altar, furthermore, stand the chairs of the presiding authorities of the ceremonies in the sanctuary.¹³³

Some of the Renaissance and Baroque churches exhibit another interesting symbol above the altar on the ceiling. It is the all-seeing eye of God, either painted or sculptured as a real eye, often surrounded by a triangle, or less obviously represented as a circle from which rays emit, or even as a round window through which light pierces down into the sanctuary. Here then is apparently a further attempt to impress upon the participants in the ritual the notion that the Lord is ever-present and observes all things, particularly the actions and vows at the altar. Adding this symbolic ornamentation became appropriate during the Renaissance because the altar at that time was customarily erected onto the back wall of the nave, a practice which did not exist in the early centuries A.D. At that time the altar stood in such a position that the priest could face the congregation during the celebration of the liturgy.¹³⁴

¹³²Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 123.

¹³³Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 23.

¹³⁴Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 181; Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, pp. 124–25. The altar has been moved away from the wall in our time by the Second Vatican Council which decreed that, if possible, the altar should be closer to the people so that they may watch the proceedings of the Mass.



All-Seeing Eye in a Triangle on Top of the Pulpit
Düsseldorf, Germany

The Catholic mass evolved around the altar, which was the central place of worship and ritual in the church. It was literally the ark of the covenant where covenants and vows were made to God.¹³⁵ Prominent among these are the marriage promises, "ratified by the ring, the kiss, and the handclasp of the couple" as they "laid their joined hands on the gospel book."¹³⁶ However, the altar is also a replacement for the altar of sacrifice in the temple court at Jerusalem and comparable to the sacrament table in the Mormon chapel because it symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ and, at the same time, the sacrifice of the individual participant which he is willing to make for Christ.¹³⁷ Since the altar is placed a few steps higher than the rest of the church, it may be properly called the "'Mount' of sacrifice."¹³⁸ Because animal sacrifices were no longer performed in the Christian ritual, the altar became known as the place of "spiritual sacrifices."¹³⁹ It is the location of Christ's sacrificial death and, also, at the same time, the place of his triumphant return to life and conquest over death.¹⁴⁰ The mass, as part of the liturgy, becomes therefore another initiation,¹⁴¹ "the re-enactment of the work of our salvation under a symbolic veil."¹⁴² During the figurative sacrifice, "we place ourselves on the altar," writes a Catholic theologian, and "when we stand at the altar . . . it is our duty to transform our hearts. . . . We proclaim in symbolic fashion . . . that our whole day will be God's."¹⁴³

Since the mass is indeed another initiation, the celebrants are obliged to go through a further cleansing ceremony before commencing the liturgy, as would be expected before an initiation. The priest washes his hands in a short rite known as the *lavabo*.¹⁴⁴ Anciently it was even done before reciting the prayers.¹⁴⁵ A somewhat obscure but purely recognizable mode of purification is also required by the faithful who enter the church to watch the mass and receive communion. He has already been cleansed at baptism, but since the mass represents a renewal of the initiation, he needs to wash himself again and he does so by applying some water from the basin at the entrance

¹³⁵Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 126.

¹³⁶Dalmis, *Eastern Liturgies*, pp. 117, 120.

¹³⁷Cooke, *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*, p. 138.

¹³⁸Walker, *The Ritual "Reason Why,"* p. 23.

¹³⁹McCormack, *Christian Initiation*, pp. 117, 122ff.

¹⁴⁰The canopy over the altar is the *ciborium*, from *kiborion* Greek and *Keber* in Hebrew, both signifying a tomb (Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 123).

¹⁴¹Halligan, *Sacraments of Reconciliation*, p. v (Foreword); O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, p. 1, from *myesis*, an initiation ordinance or *massah*, a debt or obligation. It is also referred to as a *teleion*, a ritual of perfection (p. 3).

¹⁴²Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 212.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 217, 219.

¹⁴⁴O'Brien, *History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies*, pp. 178-79; Amiot, *History of the Mass*, pp. 67-68; Tertullian *De Oratione* 13; Clement *Stromata* 4. 22.

¹⁴⁵Tertullian *De Oratione* 13.

to the church to various places on his body. Now he is pure and may enter the temple and receive the sacramental ordinances.

As previously noted, the candidate for the ritual of baptism was interviewed to determine his worthiness and preparation. Such a “*scrutinium*” was “a search deep into the soul” of the applicant.¹⁴⁶ This same sort of interview naturally becomes necessary again before one participates in the mass, which is another initiation. But at this time it is the person who needs to “interview” himself and determine his own worthiness before he attends the mass and communes at the altar. If he has committed any transgressions, the application of the sacrament of penance ideally should precede his reception of the eucharist. No one with grave sins on his conscience should go to Holy Communion without previously confessing his sins.¹⁴⁷ If he therefore feels he has any unconfessed items troubling his soul, a Catholic needs to appear before his priest and be absolved and declared worthy again to renew his vows at the altar.¹⁴⁸ He can even be excluded from communion if he is not deemed ready to share the sacrifice.¹⁴⁹ The Catholic Church, then, insists on some form of interview before participation in the ordinances in the sanctuary. “Frequency of Communion thus depend[s] on the frequency of confession.”¹⁵⁰ But, a Catholic is not necessarily required to attend the confessional interview if he is going to communion very frequently, such as daily, unless he has committed some grave sin since the last communion. However, he must submit himself to confession at least once a year.¹⁵¹ The activity in the confession booth could be representative of a symbolic veil scene, for the candidate appears before God, who alone can forgive sins and who is represented by the priest; he meets with him in solitude for a personal examination and audience, separated only by a curtain or screen. The occasion for the meeting differs, but the ritualistic conditions are proper and familiar.

It is the priest who performs most prominently during the mass since he represents at once God and the congregation. The recent trend, however, has been to involve the people much more than hitherto. The Second Vatican Council of the early 1960s suggested a greater participation in the mass on the part of the congregation. “The Church earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. . . . They should take part in the sacred action conscious of

¹⁴⁶Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 440.

¹⁴⁷Cooke, *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁸Dalmis, *Eastern Liturgies*, pp. 97ff.

¹⁴⁹Halligan, *Sacraments of Reconciliation*, pp. 127ff.

¹⁵⁰Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 373.

¹⁵¹Connell, *The Seven Sacraments*, pp. 114–15.

what they are doing with devotion and full collaboration. . . . Each person present at the assembly of worshipers must do his part well. The Master of Ceremonies directs all those in the sanctuary, tactfully reminding them to fulfill their roles properly.”¹⁵²

The involvement, though, is limited to some physical movements and vocal responses to the presentation by the officiant at the altar. “Sometime[s] ye sing, sometime[s] ye read, sometime[s] ye hear; sometime[s] ye sit, sometime[s] ye stand, sometime[s] ye incline, sometime[s] ye kneel,” an ancient theologian wrote.¹⁵³ During the instructions and most of the readings the congregation sits,¹⁵⁴ while at other times it is the ritual to stand.¹⁵⁵ “It is a universal custom to rise and remain standing in the presence of superiors, so that to pray standing is an outward sign of respect towards God.”¹⁵⁶ Kneeling is also observed; its symbolic meaning denotes humility, pleading, seeking for help and even an admission of guilt.¹⁵⁷ At a modern mass, the congregation stands at least six times during the presentation and kneels no less than three times.¹⁵⁸ It is also proper to bow one’s head, particularly when the choir sings the *Gloria Patri* or when approaching and departing from the altar.¹⁵⁹

The vocal participation involves primarily responses and affirmations at specific stages throughout the liturgic ceremony. “They did not merely listen to the prayers of the priest in silence but ratified them by acclamations,” as has been recorded.¹⁶⁰ As in most meetings of the Christian denominations, the Catholic also responds with an “Amen” at the conclusion of a prayer,¹⁶¹ but there are yet more responses involved which occur after other recitations by officiants. After the *Nobis Quoque Peccatoribus*, “the great act of thanksgiving comes to a close as we agree by saying ‘Amen.’ ”¹⁶² Likewise, at the *Gloria Tibi Domine* and some other prayers an “Amen” is required

¹⁵²James D. Walker, *Commentator's Lectionary* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965), Preface.

¹⁵³Walker, *The Ritual "Reason Why,"* p. 83.

¹⁵⁴Ibid. See also Luke 4:20; John 8:2; Acts 20:9; 1 Corinthians 14:30; Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 67; *Apostolic Constitution* 8. 6. 2.

¹⁵⁵See Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:11; Psalms 134:2; 1 Kings 1:26; Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 67; *Apostolic Constitution* 8. 10. 22; Council of Nicaea *Canon* 20.

¹⁵⁶Eisenhofer and Lechner, *Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, p. 85; Tertullian *De Oratione* 23.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 85–86; Tertullian *De Oratione* 23; *Apostolic Constitution* 8. 6. 8; 3 Kings 8:54, 19:8; Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:41; Matthew 20:36; Acts 9:40. Prostration, done at the time of priestly ordination, shows the deepest humiliation (p. 87); see also Genesis 17:3 and Joshua 5:14.

¹⁵⁸See Walker, *Commentator's Lectionary*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹Walker, *The Ritual "Reason Why,"* pp. 74–75. It is now common to genuflect when passing the altar.

¹⁶⁰Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 170.

¹⁶¹Amiot, *History of the Mass*, p. 104.

¹⁶²Walker, *Commentator's Lectionary*, p. 8.

by the congregation, and following the *Dominus Vobiscum*, it is even a sentinel response when they answer with “*Et cum spiritu tuo.*”¹⁶³

The priest, however, is more actively involved in the liturgy, and his actions at the altar are therefore far more pronounced and elaborate in nature. He genuflects and bows his head several times during the mass.¹⁶⁴ At certain stages he prays facing the east.¹⁶⁵ At other times, he turns toward the congregation and he looks due west. Symbolically, the priest represents the people when he turns to the east, toward God, and he represents the Lord when he faces the faithful in the church.¹⁶⁶ When several ministrants participate in the mass they, at times, “stand around the altar, even if not all can individually touch the table of the altar.”¹⁶⁷

However, some of the most ritualistic actions of the priest are performed with his hands, often completely unnoticed by the casual observer. He touches his body, marking special parts of it by the sign of the cross and he also taps his breast repeatedly.¹⁶⁸ Most obvious are his raised hands at the *Memento*, the *Communicantes*, the *Nobis Quoque Peccatoribus*, and the *Te Igitur*.¹⁶⁹ At the *Secreta* before the consecration of the emblems, as well as for the *Oremus*, the *Prefatus*, the *Canon*, and the *Pater Noster*, he also “stands with his hands upraised . . . facing east, and originally the faithful, too, stood facing east and with arms lifted up.”¹⁷⁰ In our day it is perhaps a little unusual to address and petition the Lord in our worship services by this method, but “as a rule the ancients prayed standing and mostly with upraised hands.”¹⁷¹ Before a “higher being” it was most important that the faithful “stood with hands uplifted and facing east . . . with eyes fixed in the direction of the rising sun.”¹⁷²

Hardly visible are the different positions of the priest’s fingers during the ceremony of the eucharistic consecration, particularly when touching and elevating the host.¹⁷³ The host symbolized the

¹⁶³Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 248; Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 45.

¹⁶⁴See L. Kuenzel, *A Manual of the Ceremonies of Low Mass* (New York: Frederick Pustet Co., 1938); Pierre Journel, *The Rite of Concelebration of the Mass and of Communion under Both Species* (New York: Desclee Company, 1967), p. 192.

¹⁶⁵Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 194.

¹⁶⁶Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* pp. 116–17.

¹⁶⁷Journel, *Concelebration*, p. 84.

¹⁶⁸See Kuenzel, *Ceremonies of Low Mass*.

¹⁶⁹Journel, *Concelebration*, pp. 116, 118.

¹⁷⁰Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, pp. 246–47.

¹⁷¹Dunney, *The Mass*, p. 17. See also Amiot, *History of the Mass*, p. 82; Exodus 17:11, 9:29; Psalms 27:2, 62:5, 133:2; Luke 24:50; Isaiah 1:15; Tertullian *De Oratione* 14; Clement 1 *Epistle to Corinthians* 29. Anchises does so in Vergil’s *Aeneid* 2. 688 when he prays to Jupiter.

¹⁷²Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 172.

¹⁷³Kuenzel, *Ceremonies of Low Mass*, pp. 133, 137. For a photograph see the picture of Cardinal Sheen in Henri Daniel-Rops, *This Is the Mass* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1958), pp. 105, 109, 113, 117, 121.

Lord, and his emblems can evidently not be handled unless the fingers have assumed an extraordinarily odd pose. In the fourth century Cyril of Jerusalem discussed some of these rituals:

When approaching [the altar] therefore, do not come with your wrists extended or your fingers spread, but from your left hand as a throne for the right so as to receive a king. After having hollowed your palm, receive the body of Christ and say Amen over it. . . . Come also close to the cup of his blood but do not stretch forth your hands; instead, bow forward and say in reverence and worship Amen.¹⁷⁴

The altar prayers in the Catholic mass are also very familiar to an LDS observer. A wide variety of subjects is included in the petitions for special consideration by the Lord. "Intercessions were offered for people, for kings, and for other needs."¹⁷⁵ Augustine mentioned the "peace of the world, the church, kings, the army, the city, the needy, the old and weary, sailors, prisoners, slaves, the sick, the dead, the weather, good crops and harvests," etc.¹⁷⁶ Since most of the items remembered pertain to worldly and physical needs, they were apparently included to display tolerance toward nonmembers who were concerned about these favors. Also, the inclusion of the emperors and the army is thought to have been done to appease the organs of state in a time when the early Christians were still heavily persecuted.¹⁷⁷ This general prayer for the church and the world, the so-called *Communis Oratio*, was offered antiphonally, so that the congregation repeated what the priest uttered.¹⁷⁸ Again, Bishop Cyril left a short instruction concerning this supplication:

We ask God for the common peace in the church, for the welfare of the world, for kings, for soldiers and for allies, for the sick and for the afflicted, and, in one word, for all those who are in need of help, we all pray and offer this ordinance. We also remember those who have died before us, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs.¹⁷⁹

Cyril, then, includes in his commemoration the departed leaders of the church as well as the relatives and friends who have died. Remembrance of the dead is therefore another important aspect of the week-day mass in the Catholic faith.¹⁸⁰ During the *Memento*, the priest

¹⁷⁴Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 23. 21–22.

¹⁷⁵G. G. Willis, *Essays in Early Roman Literature* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), pp. 5ff. See also Ambrose *De Sacramentis* 5. v. 14.

¹⁷⁶Augustine *Sermons* 49. 8. See also 1 Timothy 2:1–2; Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 1. 17; Tertullian *Apology* 30.

¹⁷⁷Woolley, *Liturgy of the Primitive Church*, p. 32.

¹⁷⁸Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 305.

¹⁷⁹Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lectures* 23. 8–9.

¹⁸⁰Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, pp. 41ff.

asks a choice blessing on the departed saints and other important persons who have died.¹⁸¹ “Formerly the names of those to be prayed for in the Liturgy were written on tablets, or parchments, which, from being folded twice, were called diptychs.”¹⁸² This little booklet or scroll was often referred to in the Eastern rite as the “book of the living and the dead” since it contained the names of persons who were seriously ill and requested a special consideration during the prayer at the altar.¹⁸³ At first, the names were read aloud, but it seems to have taken a long time to read each individual name. Therefore, “the register of names was laid on the altar and merely a reference introduced into the Memento.”¹⁸⁴ Though this ceremony is no longer fully included in the mass, it used to be one of the last remnants of some kind of work for the dead in the Catholic ritual. The place of these prayers has perhaps been preempted by the special mass, called the Requiem, celebrated exclusively for departed relatives.

Following the apex of the liturgy, which is the consecration of the eucharist, the faithful step forward to receive the emblem.¹⁸⁵ Partaking of the sacrament itself occurs for Mormons in a chapel service; however, for Catholics, it can properly be changed to the temple sanctuary since the sacrificial altar was a function of the temple ritual in Jerusalem. The consumption of the animal flesh by the priest after the sacrifice was necessary in Judaism; the ritual had its significance in the notion of an atonement.¹⁸⁶ Even the distribution of the sacrificial emblem to the group is done in symbolic fashion in the Catholic chapel. While the more modern churches do not necessarily any longer exhibit the barrier around the altar, the older structures still do. The recipient of the eucharist kneels at the one side of the railing and the priest, who represents the Lord, stands on the other. This symbolizes, once more, God’s distributing his special grace and sanctification to his children behind the partition. It is, as a matter of fact, the only interaction between the officiant and the recipient.¹⁸⁷

Another physical connection used to be among the ministrants in the sanctuary and among the people in the assembly. This was the highly ritual “kiss of peace” which used to occur immediately prior

¹⁸¹Amiot, *History of the Mass*, pp. 83–84, 106–108.

¹⁸²Walker, *The Ritual “Reason Why,”* p. 127.

¹⁸³Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 396.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., p. 399. See also Hugh W. Nibley, “The Early Christian Prayer Circle,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 19 (Fall 1978): 41–78.

¹⁸⁵Catholics receive only the wafer at communion. The priest partakes of the wine in proxy for the congregation.

¹⁸⁶Edersheim, *The Temple*, pp. 105ff.

¹⁸⁷It is interesting to note the order of distribution of the eucharist during the communion. “The leader (bishop or priest) of the assembly was the first to receive” (Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 490).

to the communion with God: "The priest . . . imparts it to the deacon, the deacon to the subdeacon and the latter to the rest of the clergy. . . . [Until the eighth century] all present took part in the rite, men and women separately."¹⁸⁸ But again, the ordinance has not persisted into our time, for in the thirteenth century while the embrace continued the kiss was eliminated.¹⁸⁹ It represents the acceptance of the person as a fellow initiate and his welcome into the community.¹⁹⁰ Today, only a "slight embrace" remains and often it is not more than a handshake. However, the basic notion of a physical contact near the altar has come from antiquity as a sacred rite.

The ceremonial entry into the church and to the altar in the sanctuary is also acted out in the ritual of the opening of the Holy Door, the Porta Santa at St. Peter in Rome and other carefully selected churches.¹⁹¹ This rite is executed only every twenty-five years and represents the entry of the children of God into the presence of the Lord. Medieval medals struck for the occasion often show Christ on one side of the portal and the pope or the people on the other.¹⁹² The pope knocks three times with a golden hammer, upon which the door is opened by the masons and he may enter through it and proceed to the sanctuary. The remainder of the clergy and the people then follow after him. A prayer said by Pope Clement VIII during the rite in 1600 demonstrates clearly that the ceremony does indeed portray entry into the temple of God: "Open unto me the gates of justice, when I am entered I will praise my Lord. I will enter, O Lord, into Thy house. I will adore Thee in Thy fear in Thy temple."¹⁹³

That the Lord is concealed behind some kind of barrier is borne out by many paintings and stelae from churches and cemeteries in the early centuries of Christianity. God is never completely visible but only his arm can be seen as it is stretched out from behind a veil, a curtain, a cloud, or a screen, such as in the churches of Nola, SS. Cosa e Damiano in Milan, San Apollinare in Classe, Parezo in Istria, and others.¹⁹⁴ Even though the correct interpretation may elude the modern churchgoer, it is evidently an ancient symbol of great significance and transcendent reality.

¹⁸⁸Amiot, *History of the Mass*, p. 121. See also Romans 16:16; Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 65.

¹⁸⁹Amiot, *History of the Mass*, p. 121; Jungmann, *Mass of the Roman Rite*, p. 483.

¹⁹⁰Miller, *Fundamentals of the Liturgy*, p. 449.

¹⁹¹Herbert Thurston, *The Holy Year of Jubilee* (London: Sands & Co., 1900), pp. 284, 406. This door is compared to the King's Gate or the Holy Gate or even the Golden Gate in Jerusalem.

¹⁹²Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁹³Ibid., pp. 221, 244. For a picture of Pope Paul VI performing this ceremony in 1975, see *The Pope Speaks*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1975), p. 179.

¹⁹⁴Syndicus, *Early Christian Art*, pp. 138-42. For a picture, see J. G. Davies, *The Early Christian Church* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1965), illus. 10.



Representation of the Lord's Hand from behind a Cloud over Church Entrance
Düsseldorf, Germany

Various ordinances and rituals in the Catholic liturgy, then, derive from the temple and have been adopted by the church in a new context. "Rome has not abolished the rites of the Temple, however, but simply taken them over, every particle of the ancient ordinances and imagery having been absorbed by the Christian sacraments."¹⁹⁵ For the perceptive Latter-day Saint, parallels are obvious and relationships apparent. Indeed, resemblances in form and purpose point to the probability of a common source and common origin, providing an interesting support to LDS claims of a divine restoration of certain eternal truths apparently known and practiced anciently by former-day saints.

¹⁹⁵Nibley, "The Christian Envy," p. 72.