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Contemplation and liturgy: The experience of St. Mary Magdalene De' Pazzi (Florence, 1566-1607)

ABSTRACT

The article endeavours to draw some comparison between the experience of St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, the 16th-century Italian Carmelite mystic, and the renewal of the Liturgy proposed by the Second Vatican Council, in the Constitution on the Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium, 1963. This reform called for the full, active, and conscious participation of all the faithful, and it showed the unity there must be between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the experience of the Italian mystic, the Word that was proclaimed in the Liturgy, particularly in the Eucharist, captured her whole attention, in mind and heart, when meditated upon when she had received Holy Communion. Revelation contained in the proclamation of the Word became the content of her encounter with God, leading to that moment when her encounter took her beyond words and concepts into intimate union with God.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the second paragraph of Benedict XVI's apostolic exhortation, *Sacramentum caritatis*, we read:

In the sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus shows us in particular the *truth about the love* which is the very essence of God. It is this evangelical truth which challenges each of us and our whole being. For this reason, the



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Church, which finds in the Eucharist the very centre of her life, is constantly concerned to proclaim to all, *opportune importune* (cf. 2 *Tim* 4:2), that God is love. (4) Precisely because Christ has become for us the food of truth, the Church turns to every man and woman, inviting them freely to accept God's gift.

It is not difficult to associate the experience of St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi with the Liturgy of the Church. While, for a long time, people might have mentioned that they knew hardly anything about this saint, the work of many scholars,¹ over the past four decades, means that we now have a wealth of information and opinions to help us grasp the significance of her life and teaching. In addition, her works, edited from the manuscripts in seven volumes, have recently been republished in modern Italian (Monari 2016). This will open the way for future translations of her works in popular language.

Because of all this work, it is now possible to see in her not the strange and unusual ecstatic, as portrayed in her earlier biographies, but rather the woman who grew in holiness, through her suffering and her love for Jesus Christ, whom she encountered in the Liturgy, namely the Eucharist and the Divine Office. We are now better able to see her in her true light as an exemplary religious who, for a few short years, enjoyed very special mystical graces and lived out the last 16 years of her life under great trial and suffering, a woman whose theological insight, coming from the formation she received in her home and in the monastery, is remarkable in its breadth and clarity, allowing us to view the truths of Christian faith as the content of a person's experience of God.

St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi sought God through all the means that were part and parcel of the spirituality of her day, in constant prayer, penance, and the life of charity. Yet, we cannot detect any pattern of growth in her mystical experience. Even her earliest experiences were marked by mystical union. There was no order or pattern in her experience but a whole array of spiritual gifts appeared at once and, when the relatively short periods of ecstasy were ended, she lived out the remainder of her life in simple observance of the religious life, emptying herself more and

1 These scholars include, among others, Claudio Catena, Bruno Secondin, Ermanno Ancilli, Franco Candelori, Ernest Larkin, Albert Verbrugghe, Charlò Camilleri, Gianfranco Tuveri, Chiara Vasciaveo and Paola Moschetti. All references to the works of St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi refer to the first printed edition of her works (Catena 1960-1966). These works are the result of the work of the sisters who wrote down what she spoke in ecstasy. They are the following: *The forty days* (hereafter, QG); the *Colloquies* (hereafter, CO1 and CO2); the *Probations* (hereafter, PR1 and PR2); *Revelations and Illuminations* (hereafter, RE), and the *Renovation of the Church* (hereafter, RC). The translations are my own.

more so that, in her love, there was what she called “dead love”, where she could say with St. Paul: “It is no longer I who live, it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20; see RE 75).

In his study of the science of spirituality, Waaijman (2002:138-150) includes a short chapter on liturgical spirituality, in which he reminds us of the reform of the Liturgy that took place at the Second Vatican Council, the articles of which we find in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Flannery 1975). Waaijman picks up the statement of the Council in paragraph 22:

In this restoration, both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify; the Christian people, so far as possible, should be enabled to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community.

We might add to this what the Council document mentions in paragraph 11:

But in order that the Liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the Liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects.

I want to use this occasion to reflect on the importance of St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi's experience of the Liturgy as a contemplative encounter throughout her life. I am interested in its current relevance in the Church, which has reformed its Liturgy in two ways, namely by bringing out the mystery, and by working towards the full, active, and fruitful participation of the faithful in every celebration.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MYSTIC

2.1 Biographical notes

Born in 1566 into a devout and well-to-do family in Florence, Lucrezia de' Pazzi, from a very early age, showed a very deep interest in the things of God, with a particular regard for the Eucharist. When, at the age of 16, she convinced her parents to allow her to be a nun, she entered the

Carmelite monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli. One of the principal reasons for her choice was that the nuns in that monastery could receive Holy Communion daily.

The Monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli was a very good choice. Since the year of its establishment as a cloistered monastery in 1480, it came under the care first of Jesuits and then of Dominican friars. The influence of the Jesuits was considerable, well versed as they were in the spiritual exercises and in the practice of mental prayer (Secondin 2007:56). The Jesuits' period of service to the monastery ended in 1553 and then it was the turn of the Dominicans. The Jesuits, however, did not lose contact from their newly founded house in the city of Florence, and their influence lasted long after they had ceased to serve as ordinary confessors.

The two confessors or governors of the monastery who had the greatest influence were Agostino Campi, a diocesan priest, and Alessandro Capocchi, a Dominican. On the invitation of Campi, governor of the convent, Capocchi acted as preacher, and he was a very fortunate choice. A man with a great regard for Carmelite spirituality, he was able to guide the sisters in the way of affective prayer rather than the intellectual approach, more typical of the Dominicans (Catena 1966:14). From 1566 onwards, when the sisters began to collect his sermons, in the words of Secondin (2007:52), we begin to see the emergence of a fine collection of reflections and meditations that nearly always begin from the link with Liturgy and move through the Scriptures and the Fathers to some practical and convincing application. In this instance, we may find the source of the biblical and liturgical flavour in Mary Magdalene's meditations and contemplations, thanks to the patient work of this Dominican who instilled in the nuns a deeply contemplative spirit nourished by a solid liturgical life and an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures.

2.2 Her religious personality

The young girl, christened Lucrezia, who as a child preferred the name Catherine, entered the monastery of St. Maria degli Angeli on 1 December 1582, the year St. Teresa of Jesus died. This girl did not come empty-handed, for she already possessed a wealth of religious experience through her knowledge of the Passion, the Athanasian Creed and her love for the Eucharist. Her life was already marked by experiences of ecstasy, a practical sense of charity, and a desire to do penance. Yet these things in themselves only serve to highlight the deeper holiness on which they were built. She had been given the greatest gift, namely the desire to know the things of God. This desire grew steadily in her from the time when she liked to dress up as a nun or listen to grown-ups' conversations on the

things of God, to the time when she had taken the Gospels as her spiritual reading and began to see, in the Liturgy, the moment when she could be closest to God. Accompanying this growth in the prayer aspect of her life was a life of goodness and charity, which impressed all who knew her (Saggi 1965:54-57; QG 82).² Examples of this include the times when she shared a word and her lunch with the prisoners as she went to school (QG 71; Saggi 1965:50), or the poor people in the country whom she taught to pray (QG 71-72).

On entering the monastery, however, she did not come with the attitude of one learned in holiness. Her first prophetic gesture, on the day that she was clothed in the habit, was to hand herself over completely to her mistress of novices, Vittoria Cantugi, “*come morta*”, as one who was dead (Papasogli 1976:59). By this gesture, she wished to leave aside all she had come to know and understand and humbly offer herself to be guided in whatever way her mistress saw fit. This type of spirit was to be a characteristic of the remainder of her life. She opened herself to take part fully in the life of the community. Her former desire for solitude gave way to a desire to be with the sisters at work and in prayer, and it was always a great cross to her if she had to be exempted from community exercises for any reason at all (Secondin 2007:115). Mary Magdalene was the kind of woman who could absorb the spirituality of the convent in all its richness, as a spirituality that was, as we have noted, deeply scriptural and liturgical. This openness to God and his inspirations brought her to the heights of mystical transformation.³ Still, she retained a deep humility, often fearing that she might be deceived in the great favours that were being shown to her and always speaking reluctantly of the experiences she had (QG 133; CO1 156). She remained ever open to God’s presence and he revealed himself to her as the triune God in Liturgy and contemplation and the God of Salvation whose history continued in her, in and through the Church.

Mary Magdalene seldom analysed her own experience. On one occasion, she wrote:

I had received Communion and I was thinking about the union that the soul has with God in the Blessed Sacrament. Suddenly I found that I was totally united with God. I was so transformed in him, removed from all bodily feelings, I could feel nothing, as if I was dead. I really believe that if at that time I was thrown into a furnace and burned I would have felt nothing. I didn’t know was

2 For example, the sisters in S. Giovannino.

3 See QG 203: “In an instant I found myself totally united with God: I was somehow transformed in him, removed from all bodily feeling, I was like as if I was dead ...”, with St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, 27, 6, on the union of transformation.

I alive or dead, in the body or in the soul, was I in heaven or on earth: all I could see was God, glorious in himself, loving himself totally, knowing himself entirely, capable of himself infinitely: loving every creature purely, with an infinite love, being a union in Trinity, one single and one God of infinite love, of consummate goodness, incomprehensible, inscrutable. It was such that because I was in him, I could find nothing of myself, I could only see myself being in God, but not seeing myself, but only God (QG 203).⁴

Even such high mysticism is not divorced from the Liturgy. In the words of Larkin (1950:166):

The union was not only in the Blessed Sacrament as if the reception of Holy Communion were merely the occasion of the ecstasies; it was through the Blessed Sacrament. Holy Communion was the source and the foundation of the mystical union that the saint experiences in the period of the Forty Days.

2.3 Different levels of intensity

In order to help us appreciate the link between the Liturgy and her contemplative experience, it might serve to examine more closely the different kinds of experience that she had. We can distinguish these experiences by pointing to the context and the introductions to her accounts. First, there are those experiences that are introduced by the words, "Come, my Beloved". Then there are those where she begins with "I had just received Holy Communion", and then all the others that could be said to be always related to the Liturgy, but somewhat more indirectly.

"Come, my beloved!" On these occasions, her Lord and Spouse called her in a personal way, to reveal his truth to her. Thus, for example, she is invited to enter the mystery of the Holy Spirit, at the beginning of the *Revelations and Intelligences*, known also as the *Eight Days of the Spirit* (RE),⁵ or to see the work of the word incarnate in the Trinity (RE 196). When we meet the language of the Spouse in her experiences, we are reminded of the lover seeking the Beloved in the Spiritual Canticle of St. John of the Cross. In this sense, Mary Magdalene's experience was another of the many experiences of Carmelites related in some way to the Song of Songs (see Welch 2001:Introduction).

We find a second form of introduction in the book *The Forty Days* (QG). The most typical form of introduction is: "Just after receiving Communion, I began to think." (QG 101). The ecstasies took place in the meditation

4 30th ecstasy, Monday 23 June:158.

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period after communion and are associated directly with the reception of communion. Where the saint refers back to the Gospel, as she often does, we should not forget an unusual practice in Sancta Maria degli Angeli, where communion was received, not during the Mass, but at a separate hour (Secondin 2007:65-97; RE 216). Despite the time difference, however, the intimate association between the Gospel in the Mass, the receiving of communion and the reflection afterwards was maintained, giving a rhythm to the contemplative and liturgical lives of the sisters.

On other occasions, she begins simply by saying: “As I pondered the Gospel of the day...” (QG 109). On these occasions, she might consider the actual text in detail (QG 183) or be brought off to something quite different, with hardly any direct relationship to the text (RE 216). Nonetheless, the association of the experience with the Gospel of the day is unmistakable.

Two other indications are worthy of mention: those in which the verses of the Psalms read in the Office come to mind again and again in the course of the day or in the course of a particular ecstasy, giving further indication of a life steeped in the Scriptures,⁶ and those occasions when at any time of the day she might be taken up in ecstasy: “around midnight she went into rapture” is the simple description given by the *amanuensi* (scribes). On these occasions, there is no direct reference either to Gospel or Communion.

3. THE CONTENT OF HER EXPERIENCE

3.1 The truths of Christian faith

In this instance, we encounter an objective spirituality in the sense of a spirituality that is built on a person’s encounter with revealed truth, as distinct from a spirituality that is concerned with the growth process of the person and with its various stages. The objective kind of spirituality was known to the Fathers and practised up to the Middle Ages when the Bible, through the lack of education on the part of the clergy and laity alike, faded from the scene and gave way to a more private devotional and psychological spirituality. It has returned more recently through the reforming work of the Second Vatican Council in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy which states:

Nevertheless the Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the fountain from which all her power flows (SC, n. 10).

6 A glance at the index of Scripture texts, given with each volume of the works, leaves no doubt in this regard.

This is so because of the penetration of the truths of our faith, that occurs in a well-celebrated Liturgy. The truth about God and the history of salvation then becomes the object of our contemplation, in so far as these truths are the truths that Jesus revealed and are his statement about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are the truths that are revealed about the Church, about Mary, about life, death and resurrection. When they are known deeply, they have the power to transform the life of the believer.

Let us take, for example, her penetration of the truth of the Blessed Trinity. In her ecstasy, she describes how she could see the movement of the persons of the Blessed Trinity towards one another. In her search for words to describe this movement, she settled upon two, namely "influence" as in one flowing into the other, and "gaze" as in one looking at the other, looking deeply, and loving what the looking saw. Her words describe the flowing:

She flew in the usual way to the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, to dwell upon the greatness of God and his immense goodness. There she saw the three persons flowing into one another with their divine flow in ways that she could not say. The Father flowed into the Son, and the Son flowed back into the Father. The Father and the Son flowed back into the Spirit, and the Spirit flowed back into the Father and the Son ... and she saw that that flowing went on ... in a way that we cannot understand, but which God was pleased to reveal to her, in so far as the human condition would allow (C01 114-115).

Her words describe the looking:

That peace was present even more when in looking at one another, we conceived the humanity that we had already conceived. This was not a peace that came through aspiring, but through looking deeply, and in that looking there was so much of the goodness and greatness that we share that without desiring we did desire, with a great desire, to communicate this goodness of ours. Because we could not find anyone who might be capable of receiving what we wanted to communicate, and knowing that God is communication by nature, we decided to conceive the already conceived the human being in our own image and likeness, and so demonstrated the greatest love that we could by giving to humanity our image and likeness, never having done that for any other creature.

This penetration of the truths of Christian faith came through her meditation on the Gospel for that day in the Liturgy. It was the passage from St. John's Gospel in which Jesus says: "My peace I leave you, my peace I give you." (John 14:27). That peace was in the Trinity and the

Trinity sent it out into creation where it found the human person created in God's image and likeness.

3.2 Growth through the Liturgy

The love that Mary Magdalene developed for the Liturgy was her love for Christ and, in him, she saw the eternal "now" of the history of salvation, all things – God, Spirit, Church, Salvation, Creation and Redemption – centred in him as the incarnate Word, the *humanified* Word, risen and glorious.

Beginning with her profession, she was to go through four significant periods of intense experience of the Word of God, described as *The Forty Days*, the *Conversations*, the *Eight Days of the Holy Spirit*, and the five years of trial. What she said while in ecstasy during these periods was recorded by the sisters in the community, and from, along with her letters and her spiritual instructions, the corpus of her writings that are now known as her works, even though they were written by others, with her help.

Because of the work of good confessors and governors in the monastery, we are able to explain why or how this saint could speak with such clarity about the things of God and be so in tune with the teaching of the Church.

Her experience allowed her to encounter God in the way God chose to reveal himself to her. In her moments of union with God, she spoke out loud, and what she said, and what her sisters wrote down as they listened to her, became the works that we are able to read nowadays.

The clarity of her theology is very much in line with something that St. Pope John XXIII said in his opening address to Vatican Council II in explaining the need for a council. In referring to the need to be able to preserve the truth of the Church's teaching, he said,

From the renewed, serene and tranquil adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness ... the Christian, Catholic and apostolic spirit of the whole world expects a step forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought (Pope John XXIII 1962).

The word "penetration" stands out. It suggests that people have the ability to go right to the heart of the gospel message and discover all that God has chosen to reveal to us for our salvation. The word "penetration" helps us grasp the kind of experience that Mary Magdalene had. In her experiences,

she penetrated revealed truth, in the sense that she stepped into and saw and understood, in so far as it is granted to human beings, the truths of revelation. She encountered God in the way that Christian faith says God chose to be revealed, that is in the unfolding of the history of salvation. She encountered that revelation most of all in the Liturgy, namely in the readings at mass and in the Divine Office. The spread of the Liturgy gave her a sense of the whole plan, centred in the love of Jesus.

In this instance, we catch a glimpse of what the Vatican Council intended to achieve through the reform of the Liturgy, namely that the believers would be able to participate in it, in an active, conscious, and fruitful way. The effect of such participation would be that the celebration involved and affected the person as a whole and that it would lead to clarity of encounter with the Word, in the way the Word chooses to come to people.

Mary Magdalene understood her ecstasies as moments of an excess of love, or an excess of illumination. While it is true that, in any one ecstasy, there might be a host of mystical graces present, nevertheless, it is possible to find certain patterns in these ecstasies, associated with the texts that were used in the Liturgy. We might begin with the occasions when, in a direct way, she penetrates the mystery in its simplest form. Examples of this are the experience of the Blessed Trinity, or the mystery of the Incarnation. In these moments, words fail her. After giving the briefest and simplest account of what she sees, she is reduced to silence. Then there are the occasions when she is given a detailed understanding of the Scripture text in terms of analogy. The best example is her reading of the Gospel of the miraculous catch of fish in Luke, read on Sunday, 17 June (CO1 183-185). We might say that these experiences are on a second level because of the synthetic vision of the mystery contained in them, the ability of the contemplative to see things in their essential relationship, and in an instant, without the labour of discursive reasoning. There is a third level on which we find the use of very rich symbolic language (taken from nature, the city, or the arts). These are moments in which she recounts her understanding of the theological mystery (RE 76-90, 150-170), the situation of the Church (CO1 292, 371) or the situation in her own community (QG 116-119; CO1 292, 178, 360; see Secondin 2007:376-377). In terms of the Liturgy, the symbols of blood and peace stand out. Finally, there are those moments in which the saint entered into and relived the events she was given to share with the Lord. The best example of this is the experience of the Holy Week, in which she literally perspired and suffered with her Jesus. In this instance, we can note her association not with an individual text, but with the liturgical season Holy Week and Easter.

3.3 God revealed in the way God chooses

How can we understand these moments? She encountered God who was in a revealing mood, showing her God in the way that God has chosen to reveal God to the men and women he created in his own image and likeness. It is as if he was going over the Scriptures with her and saying: “You see, that is me, that is what I did, that is what I wanted at that time.” It is not unlike the experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus – Jesus took them through the Scriptures step-by-step, through the revelation of salvation and allowed them to see what they had not seen before, and their hearts burned when it happened (Luke 24:27).

The truths that she penetrated in those moments reflect the teaching of the Church very faithfully. She entered the world of the Blessed Trinity and saw, in ways that she could not describe adequately in words, the way in which the Divine Persons related to one another, as if contemplating one another in peace and love. She saw them as a council that decide that there should be a creation and that creation should be “a created Trinity”, because it would bear so much of themselves as the Uncreated Trinity. She saw that the Father and the Son were moved to enter that creation and be part of that creation through the incarnation of the Word. There was something in her understanding that made her use the term “humanified” Word, more than Incarnate Word. Her vision let her perceive the plan of salvation as a great movement of peace coming from the throne of the Trinity and moving throughout creation until all creation is united and peace returns to the Uncreated Trinity:

My peace I leave you ... Jn 14,27 ... That peace was given at the throne of the Trinity ... It was given with the inspiration of the Father, into the Word and of the Word into the Father and in the Spirit, ... it was given among us, the three divine Persons it was given, above all when we looked at one another, the Divine Persons, and the human person was conceived ... and this was not done by “inspiring” but by “looking” (RE 77).

In that particular vision, in the middle of the *Eight Days of the Spirit*, she saw the whole of salvation history as a movement of peace, from the persons of the Blessed Trinity into Creation and back to the Trinity.

4. LITURGY AND CONTEMPLATION

4.1 Our God is a God who communicates

A comparison of Liturgy, contemplation and her experiences shows us the distinctly Trinitarian nature of all three. The history of salvation is central to all three, initiated by the Father, fulfilled by the Son, and effected in the life of each human person as a member of the body of Christ through the Spirit.

We might understand or explain this history of salvation through the concept of communication. This was the word that Mary Magdalene used. God communicates God to the soul (RE 122, 156). God is a communicative God:

The Word communicates and communicates so much that there is nothing in the Word that the Word does not communicate. Similarly, the soul communicates on account of grace. It communicates all the gifts and graces that it receives, with the desire to communicate all of itself, soul and body, for the salvation of her neighbours. This is the effect of what grace accomplishes in the soul. The other effect is a pleasant charity that brings the soul to dwell in God and God in her ... God communicates this pleasant charity to the creature, and the creature to her neighbour (RE 108-109).

When we speak of communication in the ordinary sense, we mean the action whereby something is passed from the giver to the receiver and received by the receiver in the sense that it was given and intended. We speak of a breakdown in communication where what was given by the one wishing to communicate is impeded either by the means of communication or by the inability of the receiver to receive exactly what was intended by the giver.

In the history of salvation, communication within the Blessed Trinity was total and perfectly unhindered by any weakness or incapacity – God communication of God to God. This communication was received totally by the Son because he is God and by the Spirit because he is God, and returned unblemished to God the Father as God.

God wished to communicate himself to man, and he did so through the Word – his total expression, but man's humanity was an obstacle to communication. It could never receive the communication of God without reducing God to terms that the human condition could receive. The Word thus took on the human condition in such a way that, by beginning from this condition and by destroying its barriers, making the mortal immortal, the unloving loving, the unseeing seeing (CO1 93-94), God made man

capable of receiving this communication. The obstacle placed by man's sin was overcome by an act of obedience much greater than man's selfishness. Thus, the Word came among humankind as human and for a time took on the in-communicability of humankind until he died on the cross. In this death, all that was inhuman, in the sense of all that stood in God's way, was removed. The crucifixion, a man reduced to nothing, his dignity destroyed, his pride humiliated, was the point of total emptiness where the human condition, made fully dependent on God, had nothing to offer of its own that might impede God's communication. The moment of greatest communication is in the Eucharist:

To show how great your communication is and how you communicated with us it wasn't enough for you to communicate with us by spending thirty three years on the earth, you still left to the soul your body and your blood in such a way that you would remain in the soul and the soul would remain in you, where you deify it and transform it (PR2 132-133).

4.2 Communication, Liturgy, sacraments

After the resurrection, the Risen Lord, now returned, without limitation, to the fullness of divine communication, left his spoken word and the sacraments as the means of communication. This is why St. Paul could say that, in baptism, we die with Christ and rise with him, because, in baptism, the power of death as the obstacle to communication is removed and man, when he rises totally with Christ, will be brought to full and unimpeded communication with God. His word and the sacraments are the means of communication until that day when He comes and communication will be total – as total as it can be in respect of the limits of being a creature, however perfect, who still remains dependent on the Creator.

Whoever, therefore, empties (“*come morta*”) (QG 203) and receives the word in the sacraments receives the divine communication in the measure that he has emptied himself of all desire for himself which impedes his desire for God.

However, communication does not come to the individual as an individual, but as a member of the Body. As individuals apart from the Body, we are cut off from the life blood of the Body. We lack the support of the other members, and we decay, having no lifeblood passing through our veins. With the Body of Christ, there is the possibility of perfect communication, because there is perfect communication in God. All obstacles have been removed through the power of the resurrection. The body is being perfected: it is being brought to perfect communication.

Word and sacrament are the very presence and action of the lifeblood that is the Spirit. Thus, the perfect communication begun by the Father is carried on by the Spirit. In the Liturgy, the body of Christ opens all the valves, so that the lifeblood may pass through, so that communication may be made perfect. The perfect Liturgy is the heavenly Liturgy, in which the whole Body will be present and in communication – receiving God's communication and returning it to him perfectly in praise and thanksgiving.

Our earthly Liturgy is our foretaste of the heavenly Liturgy – the moment of communication where the greatest communication is possible because of the unity of the Body. The openness and receptivity of the Body and of each of its members is the meaning of contemplation, which is nothing other than communication from God, of God and back to God.

Thus, Liturgy and contemplation are united in communication. The soul, which is not in communication with the Body, is not contemplative: it has closed one vital avenue of communication. Liturgy, in which there is not communication, is not Liturgy. God must be communicated and received and this reception and return of communication is both Liturgy and contemplation.

In this communication, the human person receives God, knows God, tastes God, loves God, and transmits God and this is his prophetic gift. Prophecy is nothing other than receiving and transmitting God's communication. The prophetic way of celebrating Liturgy is the way that is most capable of receiving God's communication. Therefore, Dom. Nacent (1975:124) rightly suggested that we must find a way to listen totally, in order to receive totally what God is communicating – nothing other than himself in whom there is no division:

Is it possible perhaps that there is a Carmelite way to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word and prayer? ... Is it not something very Carmelite to receive the Word of God, as a living and vibrant word, and transmit it to others in all his strength? Is that not the Carmelite ideal? And is that not the essence of being prophetic?

5. CONCLUSION

The contemplative is one who listens ever more totally and transmits ever more totally. Thus, for Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, Liturgy and contemplation could be so intimately connected. In summary, this is what she has taught us: to die in order not to impede communication, to be part of the body in order not to be cut off from communication, and to come to the word and the sacraments as the source of communication until He comes.

This is the prophetic Liturgy, and the effect is total – not only for our prayer, but also for our life of charity. Where communication is unimpeded, it is God’s charity, God’s love for souls that passes through us. Thus, in communication, there is Liturgy, contemplation, prophecy, and charity. The history of salvation is the history of communication.

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