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The Solemn Vigil of Easter

EASTER EVE was the only Saturday of the whole year on which fasting was permitted by the Apostolic Constitutions (1). The fast on that day was of the strictest character, and at Rome not even children were granted a dispensation.

A very old Eastern tradition held that the *parousia* would take place at midnight on Easter Eve: each year on that day the faithful waited in awe for the second coming of the Redeemer, but as soon as the hour of midnight passed, they celebrated the feast of Easter with great joy (2). Whatever the value of this tradition it is certain that the custom of passing the night before Easter in prayer, is very old. Tertullian speaks of this custom as a law whose origin was lost in the mists of time and from which none could be granted dispensation (3). Easter night was spent by the assembled faithful in prayer and supplication, in the reading of the Scriptures and in hearkening to the exhortations of the bishop: the whole service culminated in the blessing of the font and the baptism of the catechumens, followed immediately by Mass shortly after midnight on Easter morning. Excepting the blessing of the font and the baptism of catechumens, this was the usual way, in the 3rd century, of sanctifying the night pre-

- (1) Const. Apost. 7, 23; The Apostolic Constitutions, attributed to Clement of Rome, probably were compiled at the beginning of the 5th cent. near Antioch. They are found in Migne P.G. 1, 555-1156.
- (2) "Unde reor et traditionem apostolicam permansisse, et in die vigiliarum Paschae ante noctis dimidium populos dimittere non liceat, expectantes adventum Christi. Et postquam illud tempus transierit securitate praesumpta, festum cuncti agunt diem." St Jerome, Comm. in Mt. 25, 6; P.L. 26, 192.
- (3) Tertullian speaking of the difficulty which would be caused by the absence of the Christian wife from her heathen husband during the whole night of the Paschal vigil, says: "Quis denique Solemnibus Paschae adnoctantem securus sustinebit?" (Ad uxorem, II, 4; P.L. 1, 128.

ceding each Sunday—the ceremonies of Easter Eve have preserved intact the old night service of the Roman Church before the introduction of the night office of the Breviary in the 5th century through monastic influences (4).

In the later Middle Ages the whole service of the vigil was transferred to the afternoon, vespers being added, bringing about a curious anachronism by which after having celebrated the Resurrection of Our Lord we are taken back a few hours before: in fact the antiphon of the *Magnificat* speaks of the visit to the tomb on the evening of Saturday, while the deacon had already announced in the Gospel that Christ had risen at dawn of the “*prima sabbati*”. The anomaly became greater when later the whole office of Easter Eve was celebrated in the forenoon.

In 1951 Pius XII re-established the Easter vigil but “*facultative*” for that year only (5); the following year a new decree extended the time to another three years and at the same time introducing certain modifications and additions (6). The restored Easter vigil cannot be considered simply as a return to the celebration of Easter Eve according to the rites in use at Rome in the first centuries of the Christian era; various elements which had accrued during the centuries were retained, some anachronisms and anomalies were taken away and certain new elements suited to our times introduced.

The first part of the liturgy of Easter Eve comprises the blessing of the fire and of the paschal candle, and the singing of the “*praeconium paschale*”.

The blessing of the fire is something altogether foreign to the ancient liturgical tradition of the Roman church; no mention of it is found in the “*Ordines Romani*” (7). Most probably it is due to a sort of compromise which was effected at the time of Charlemagne between the Gallican uses and the Latin rites.

(4) SCHUSTER, *Liber Sacramentorum*, vol. 4, *Introd.*, pp. 2-14.

(5) A.A.S. XXXIII, 3, pp. 127-137.

(6) A.A.S. XXXIV, 1, pp. 48-63.

(7) The “*Ordines Romani*” describe the ceremonies observed at Rome during liturgical functions. From these *Ordines Romani* the ceremonial of bishops has been derived. The oldest *Ordo* belongs to the 6th or 8th century, the last (the 15th) to the fifteenth century.

Various Fathers (8) bear testimony to the existence of an evening service in many churches; this was a sort of symbolic offering of light which the church at that hour consecrated to Him who was the Substantial Light: in fact the phrases used by the Fathers or found in the various liturgies, as *lumen offerre, oblationem solemnem reddere, lucerna accensa, reddere sacrificium*, all point out to this symbolism. This rite of the *Eucharistia lucernaris*, as St Gregory of Nyssa styles it, most probably originated in Jerusalem itself, and its origin might be sought for in the primitive liturgical deposit which the Church borrowed from the Synagogue. The rite, it seems, consisted in the lighting of a candle or lamp near the lectern at the beginning of the Sunday vigil, as a sort of symbolic sacrifice of light burning in honour of Him who is "Lumen de Lumine", who came to dispel the darkness of the world (9).

The *Eucharistia Lucernaris* of the Easter Vigil was performed with great solemnity; we find it repeatedly referred to in writers from the 4th century onwards (10). It was known then as the *Laus Cerei* and it pertained to the deacon's office to sing the praises of the *Cereum*. This fact shows that the *Laus Cerei* was a derivation from the *Lucernarium* or *Eucharistia Lucernaris* which was a ceremony reserved to the deacon. One cannot explain otherwise the importance given to the deacon in the first part of the ceremonies of Easter Eve.

(8) St AMBROSE, *De Virginibus*: "Solemnes orationes... sunt defendendae... hora incensi..." (Lib. III, c. IV, n. 18; P.L. 16, 237)

ST JEROME, *Ep. CVII ad Laetam*: "accensaque lucernula reddere sacrificium vespertinum" (P.L. 22, 875).

PRUDENTIUS, no. 5 of the *Calemerinon* hymns, "ad incensum lucernae".

(9) The rite was accompanied by the singing of psalms: ps. 140 seems to have been the evening psalm "par excellence": it is still so in the Eastern Church. At Nola ps. 131 seems to have been used for the evening service. The Antiphony of Bangor for the evening service has ps. 112 and the great doxology. The rule of St Cesar of Arles mentions that the evening service comprised the *Lucernarium*, the *Duodecima* (12 psalms), a double lesson and a final hymn. For further details see Schuster l.c.

(10) Cyril of Jerusalem, in his introductory Catechetical lecture (§ 15) speaks of "that night, that darkness shows like day", and Eusebius records (*De vit. Const.* 4, 22) that Constantine observed Easter Eve with such pomp that "he turned the sacred or mystical vigil into the light of day" by means of lamps suspended in every part, and

While St Jerome disapproves of the *Laus Cerei* in a letter to the deacon Praesidium (11), St Augustine mentions the lines he wrote "*in laude quadam cerei*" (12), and the fathers of the 4th council of Toledo explain why the "*lucerna et cereus in praevigiliis Paschae*" is blessed (13).

At Rome the *Laus Cerei* was a late introduction. What St Jerome says in his letter CVII *ad Laetam* seems to imply that evening devotions in Rome were a private affair popular with ascetics. And though the *Liber Pontificalis* seems to attribute the

setting up huge waxen columns through the whole city. We find reference to the same custom in St. Gregory Nazianen (*Orat. 42 de Pasch.*) who speaks of persons of all ranks, even magistrates and men and ladies of rank, carrying lamps, and setting up tapers, both at home and in the churches, thus turning night into day; and again (*Orat. 43*) describes this *hieranux* as "torch-bearing" being as it were a *prodromos* or forerunner of the rising of the great light, Christ. St Gregory of Nyssa also describes the brilliancy of the illumination as a cloud of fire mingling with the dawning rays of the sun, and making the eve and the festival one continuous day without interruption (*In Chr. Resur. 5*). From the poem of Prudentius (*Hymn. V ad incens. cerei pasch.*) we learn that the church was illuminated with lamps depending from the roof, reminding the spectator of the starry firmament". (Quoted from Smith Cheetham, *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, John Murray, London, 1908, art. Easter. Ceremonies of).

- (11) Praesidium, a deacon of Placentia, had asked St. Jerome to write for him a "*Laus Cerei*". The saint objected to this as he considered the *laus Cerei* to be unworthy and unedifying to the liturgy of the church, because "*Virgillii totus Georgicorum liber profertur in medium*"; besides although "*haec iucunda sint... quid ad diacenum, quid ad Ecclesiae sacramenta, quid ad tempus Paschae... cum, tacente episcopo, et presbyteris in plebeium quodammodo cultum redactis, levita loquitur, docetque quod pene non didicit*". The Scriptures are against this custom: "*nusquam in Dei sacrificium mella, nusquam cerei usum, sed lucernarum lumina, et oleo fotos videbis egniculos*" (*Ep. 18 ad Praesidium, P.L. 30, 188*).
- (12) "*Quod in laude quidam cerei breviter versibus dixi:*
Haec tua sunt, bona sunt, quia tu bonus ista creasti.
Nil nostrum est in eis, nisi quod peccamus amantes.
Ordine neglecto, pro te, quod conditur abs te".
 All MSS have *cerei* (not *creatoris*) and this seems to be the true reading. (*De Civ. Dei, 15, 22; P.L. 41, 467*).
- (13) "*Lucerna et cereus in praevigiliis Paschae apud quasdam ecclesias non benedicuntur, et cur a nobis benedicantur inquirunt: propter enim gloriosum noctis ipsius sacramentum solemniter haec benedicimus, ut . . . Resurrectionis... Mysterium... in benedictione sanctificati luminis suscipiamus*" (*Conc. Tol. IV, can. 9*).

introduction of the *Laus Cerei* to Pope Zosimus in 417 (14), yet the Gregorian Sacramentary has no mention of it, and the *Ordo Romanus I*, describing the rites of the Easter vigil in the 7th-8th century says that *Laus cerei* was still in use only in the suburban churches (15).

At the Lateran these were the rites : on Maunday Thursday about the time of None, fire was produced from flint to light a candle placed on a reed, held by a *mansionarius*. On Good Friday and on Holy Saturday the candle was carried by the archdeacon and by the youngest bishop. On Maundy Thursday at the consecration of the chrism a large quantity of oil was collected in three large vases. Pope Zachary (+ 752) in his letter to Boniface says that the tradition of the Roman Church was that on Maundy Thursday three lamps of more than usual capacity were set alight in some hidden spot of the church with oil sufficient to last till Easter eve; from these lamps candles and other luminaries were lighted on that day for the ceremonies of Baptism. This rite was attended by some solemnity as Pope Zachary in the letter mentioned prescribes that a priest (or bishop?) should officiate. No new fire was blessed on Holy Saturday as these large lamps were providing it. Therefore at Rome on Easter Eve there was only a procession *cum supplicii silentio* with a candle on a reed and the usual seven lighted candles carried by acolythes.

Later on a fusion of various rites and prayers took place as we have said and this fusion resulted in the ceremonies of the morning of Holy Saturday.

The rubrics in our Missals for the morning office on Holy Saturday say : At a convenient hour the altars are dressed, but the candles are not lighted till the beginning of the Mass. Outside the church fire is struck from a flint and coals are kindled therewith, after which the priest before the church, if it can conveniently be done, otherwise in the very entrance of the church, blesses the new fire. The blessing is done by the recitation of three prayers, which formerly had been intended for the lighting of the evening candles near the lectern at the beginning of the holy vigil. Only later were these prayers transferred to the

(14) The *Liber Pontificalis* says of Pope Zosimus : "per parochias concessa licentia cereos benedicendi".

(15) "Et hic ordo cerei benedicendi, in suburbanis civitatibus agitur" (P.L. 78, 960).

blessing of the fire through a misunderstanding of the rubrics in the Middle Ages. These prayers are more adapted to the blessing of the evening candle than to the blessing of fire. This anomaly is clearer as regards the prayer which immediately follows for the blessing of the grains of incense. The "incensum" mentioned in the prayer is not incense at all but the lighted candle: this is easily confirmed from the reference there is in the prayer to the custom of distributing to the faithful bits of the blessed candle as a sacramental (16). This custom was not in use at Rome: instead on the morning of Holy Saturday the archdeacon mixed liquefied wax with oil and from this mixture small medallions known as *Agnus Dei* (17) were made and distributed to the faithful on Low Sunday.

In the restored Easter vigil the anomaly mentioned has disappeared: of the four prayers only the first has been kept and it is the one more easily adaptable to the blessing of the fire (18). The grains of incense are not blessed at all, but as soon as the prayer has been recited the priest sprinkles holy water on the fire,

- (16) The prayer runs as follows: *Veniat quaesumus, omnipotens Deus, super hoc incensum larga tuae benedictionis infusio; et hunc nocturnum splendorem invisibilis regeneratores accende: ut non solum sacrificium, quod hac nocte litatum est, arcana luminis tui admixtione refulgeat, sed in quocumque loco ex huius sanctificationis mysterio aliquid fuerit deportatum, expulsa diabolicae fraudis nequitia, virtus tuae maiestatis assistat. Per Christum.*

In the new Ordo for the restored Vigil this prayer is used for the blessing of the Paschal candle, and the word *cereum* has been added to *incensum* and the word *intende* substitutes *accende*, for the Paschal Candle is already lighted.

The custom of distributing bits of the Paschal Candle to the faithful is also mentioned by Ennodius of Pavia (+521) in the two *Laus cerei* he composed. A survival of this custom may be still noticed among us in the fact that the faithful asks for bits of the Tenebrae candles or of the three candles on the reed.

- (17) Later on the Pope himself assisted at both the blessing and distribution. The great consecration of the *Agnus Dei* took place only on the first year of the pontificate and every seventh year afterwards, which rule is still observed. The discs of the *Agnus Dei* are brought to the Pope on Wednesday of Easter week to be consecrated and then they are distributed by the Pope himself on the following Saturday.
- (18) Formerly the priest was not bound to recite the four prayers which are found in the Missal for the blessing of the fire: he could choose any one of the four. Later the four became obligatory. In the new Ordo, only the first has been kept.

puts incense in the thurible, blessing it in the usual manner, and then incenses the fire.

In the morning office of Holy Saturday, after the blessing of the fire, the deacon puts on white vestments and takes the reed with the three candles while the procession starts for the altar. A thurifer goes first with an acholyte who carries in a plate the five grains of incense, then follow the subdeacon with the cross and the clergy in order, then the deacon with the triple candle reed, and lastly the priest. When the deacon comes into the church an acholyte, who carries a candle which has been lighted with the new fire, lights one of the candles on the rod; then the deacon sings *Lumen Christi* and all kneel down answering *Deo gratias*. He sings in a louder voice *Lumen Christi* again in the middle of the church when the second candle is lighted, and still louder before the altar when the third candle is lighted, all meanwhile acting as before. Arrived at the altar the priest goes to the epistle side while the deacon takes the book and after asking the priest's blessing, goes to the Gospel side to chant the *Praeconium Paschale*. At a certain moment of the chanting of the *praeconium* the five grains of incense are stuck in the candle in the form of a cross, soon afterwards the candle is lighted by means of one of the candles on the rod and lastly the lamps of the church are lighted. As soon as the *Praeconium* is finished the deacon changes into purple vestments and the reading of the prophecies begins.

In the rite of the restored vigil these ceremonies have been substantially changed and brought more into conformity with the various ancient rites of which the present rite is a fusion.

In the restored vigil the blessing of the Paschal candle takes place at the entrance of the church. As soon as the fire is blessed an acholyte brings the Paschal candle to the celebrant, who with a stylus cuts in the candle, at the point where the grains of incense are to be fixed, the sign of the Cross and the letters Alpha and Omega, and the year, saying: *Christus heri et hodie, principium et finis, Alpha et Omega, Ipsius sunt tempora, et saecula. Ipsi gloria et imperium per universa aeternitatis saecula. Amen.* The deacon then presents to the priest the grain of incense, which if not yet blessed, are by the celebrant in silence sprinkled with holy water and incensed. The priest then fixes the five grains in the candle saying: *Per sua sancta vulnera, gloriosa, custodiat, et conservat nos. Christus Dominus. Amen.* Then the deacon takes a small candle which has been lighted from the new fire and gives

it to the celebrant who lights the paschal candle saying: *Lumen Christi gloriose resurgentis, dissipat tenebras cordis et mentis*. Then the priest blesses the paschal candle with the prayer formerly used to bless the five grains of incense (19). The lights of the church are all then extinguished, except that of the paschal candle. The deacon puts on white vestments, takes the Paschal candle and the procession starts, a thurifer leading, followed by the subdeacon with the cross, the deacon with the lighted paschal candle, then the celebrant, the clergy in order and lastly the congregation. As soon as the deacon enters the church he lifts up the candle and sings *Lumen Christi*. All kneel down and answer *Deo gratias* while the celebrant lights his candle from the Paschal candle. In the middle of the church the deacon sings in a higher tone *Lumen Christi*, all genuflect again answering *Deo gratias*, and the candles of the clergy are lighted. Lastly before the altar "in medio chori" the deacon sings in a yet higher tone *Lumen Christi*, all again kneel and answer *Deo gratias* and from the Paschal candle the congregation's candles and the church lamps are lighted. The priest then goes to his place on the epistle side of the altar, the subdeacon with the cross to the gospel side, the clergy to their places. The deacon places the Paschal candle in the middle of the sanctuary on a small support, takes the book and asks the blessing from the celebrant. He goes then to the lectern, which is covered with a white cloth, puts the book on it, and incenses it; he then incenses the Paschal candle going round it. All then rise and the deacon chants the *Praeconium*, having the Paschal candle in front of him, the altar on his right and the church's nave on his left. The *Praeconium* is sung, without stopping, to the end. The reference to the Holy Roman Emperor found in our Missals is substituted by a prayer for those, *qui nos potestate regunt* (20). As soon as the *Praeconium paschale* ends the deacon takes purple vestments and the prophecies are read.

(19) The lighting of the Paschal Candle before the *Exsultet* takes away another anomaly from the former rite: it was rather strange to sing the praises of the lighted candle when it was still extinguished.

(20) The new words are: "Respice etiam ad eos, qui nos in potestate regunt, et ineffabili pietatis et misericordiae tuae munere, dirige cogitationes eorum ad iustitiam et pacem, ut de terrena operositate ad caelestem patriam perveniant cum omni populo suo". The prayer recalls the ancient formula of prayer for those in authority. Cfr. e.g. St Clem. I Cor., 60, 61.

The rite of the restored vigil has introduced again certain ancient uses in the blessing of the paschal candle. The signing of the candle with a cross seems to be very ancient and at first, perhaps, the sign of the Cross on the candle was made with holy chrism in Spain, at Milan, in Gaul. Later, on account of the ambiguity of the rubrics, which therefore were differently interpreted, the cross was made on the candle with a stylus or, sometimes, the cross was made with a reed having a lighted candle. The introduction in the rite of the five grains of incense is due to a misunderstanding of the term *incensum* in the rubrics which was meant to refer to the lighted candle and which was taken to refer to incense. The five grains of incense were in use at Rome in the 12th century. The new rite has kept the insertion of the five grains of incense as a secondary ceremony, and they are blessed only once not (as in the morning rite) each year. Fixing them in a candle the celebrant says a short prayer composed specially for the new rite so as to point out one of the symbolic meanings attached in the later Middle Ages to the grains of incense i.e. the five wounds of Christ. The main ceremony of the rite of the blessing of the paschal candle is the signing with the cross, with the Alpha and Omega and the date of the year. Even the prayer said during the signing of the paschal candle has been composed for the new rite so that everyone might see that the paschal candle symbolises the risen Christ and that the feast of Easter is the day round which the whole liturgical year evolves itself. The tracing of the figures of the current year formerly, in many places, belonged to the office of the deacon. The tracing of the letters Alpha and Omega may have originated in the mozarabic rite whose lectionaries more than other liturgies gave, it seems, more importance to the Apocalypse from where the two symbolic letters are derived (21). In the late Middle Ages there was also the use of attaching inscriptions of various kinds to the Paschal candle.

The order of the procession in the new rite has been changed so as to give principal place to the paschal candle around which the whole ceremony of the procession is centred. The most noticeable change is that the reed with the three candles is no longer used. We have already mentioned that at Rome in the

(21) "Ego sum Alpha et Omega, primus, et novissimus, principium et finis" (Apoc. 22, 13). See on this point. Dict. Arch. Lit. 1, 24-25.

8th century only one candle on a reed was carried in procession at Rome at the Lateran. The candle may have become three from the fact that there was the use, mentioned in the *Ordo Lateranensis* (22), of joining together the number of candles so that the light could not be easily extinguished by the wind. Later the candles were kept separate and the inevitable symbolism easily explains why the number of candles on the reed was limited to three. Nevertheless a 5th century lectionary of Jerusalem and the 7th century Georgian *Kouanarion* mention a triple candle (*tripertitus cereus*) lighted by the bishop. Before the 10th century the use of the triple candle and the signing of the *Lumen Christi* were unknown in Rome, though they had been introduced in the 12th century. The *Lumen Christi* may have been derived from the Spanish liturgies through the Gallican rites and resulted at Rome in a fusion of various rites at the time of Charlemagne. What happened seems to be this. The one candle mentioned by the 8th century *Ordo Romanus* in time became a triple candle; this was kept when the Paschal candle and the *Laus cerei* were introduced in the Roman rite. Each of the three candles were lighted successively by means of a small candle from the new fire and each lighting greeted by the singing of the *Lumen Christi*. Lastly the Paschal candle itself was lighted by means of one of the three candles. All this shows that either the triple candle or the paschal candle was redundant, and this is why the use of the triple candle has been discontinued in the new rite, and the Paschal candle lighted at the beginning of the procession.

As we have already mentioned the *Exultet* was a late introduction in Rome: it is not found in the Gregorian Sacramentary but was added in the supplement to what has been loosely called the sacramentary of Adrian. It has been recently attributed to St Ambrose (23) and the earliest manuscripts in which it appears are those of three Gallican sacramentaries, i.e. the Bobbio Missal (7th cent.), the *Missale Gothicum* and the *Missale Gallicanum Vetus* (8th cent.). In the Holy Saturday morning ceremonies the grains of incense were affixed at the words *incensi huius sa-*

(22) "Diaconus plures candelas in unum glomeratas, ne a vento leviter extinguantur, ab ipso benedicto igne accensos reportat". Cfr. *Ami du Clerge*, 1952, n. 12 p. 189.

(23) B. CAPELLI, O.S.B.: *L'exultet pascae oeuvre de Saint Ambroise*, *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, volume I (Studi e Testi, 121), Città del Vaticano 1946.

crificium through a misunderstanding of the sacred text. The Paschal candle and, soon after, the lights of the Church were lighted at the word *accendit*: formerly a long bravura was introduced upon the word to fill in the pause which might otherwise occur in lighting the candle. In Italy in the 10th and 11th centuries the text of the *praeconium* was sung from long strips of parchment gradually enrolled as the deacon proceeded with the chant. These Exsultet-rolls were decorated with beautiful illuminations drawn upside down so that when unrolled over the back of the lectern they could be admired upright by the congregation.

After the *Exsultet* in the morning service the twelve lessons were read in a low voice by the priest at the epistle side of the altar while they were read aloud in the church. The new Ordo requires that a lector reads them in a loud voice in the middle of the sanctuary in front of the Paschal Candle having the altar on his right and the congregation on his left. The celebrant, the deacon and subdeacon, the clergy, and all the people hear the reading sitting. The priest therefore in the new rite does not read what the lector is reading aloud: this is a return to the former custom of the Church—only in the 17th century was the rubric, obliging the priest to read what was sung, introduced in the missal on account of the distractions of the officiating priests at that time! In our missals the lessons are called *Prophetiae* while the canticles are styled *Tractus*. These titles were introduced in the 14th-15th century and the new Ordo puts back the former titles of *Lectiones* and *Cantica*. Probably the canticles formerly were sung whole; they belong to old Latin version anterior to the Vulgate. A very ancient tradition, probably derived from the Synagogue, reserved for the morning office the chanting of such prophetic canticles. These *Lectiones* were sung (in Rome) without title or benediction at the foot of the papal throne while two subdeacons with torches gave light to the reader. They were sung first in Greek then in Latin, a custom which lasted till the 15th century in theory at least as the Pope often dispensed from the reading of the Greek text (24). After each lesson there was the Oremus, Flectamus genua and the collect. After every three lessons a responsorium was sung first in Greek then in Latin. This was the observance originally common to every vigil: so in the lessons of Holy Saturday we have the only survival of the form of

(24) The Ordo Romanus X, n. 17 has: "Si Dominus Papa velit".

the ancient Roman Office before monastic influences changed it altogether. St Gregory had reduced the lessons to six, but soon after the former tradition of twelve lessons was reintroduced. At Gaul in the 9th century four lessons were read. The new Ordo has reduced the number to four lessons i.e, besides the first, the three lessons (4th, 8th and 11th) which were followed by a canticus. The 8th lesson has had the first sentence omitted and in the new Ordo begins with: "*In die illa erit germen Domini*" (25). Many liturgists have regretted this reduction of lessons chiefly because the 12 lessons, as we have said, was one of the very rare instances still extant of the primitive rite of a vigil both in the East and the West. Some have even suggested that one could be permitted the reading of the twelve lessons if it was so desired, especially as some as really adapted to Easter night and the collects themselves are truly striking. According to the Ordo of 1952 it is no longer the subdeacon, but (which is more proper) it is the deacon who gives the order for ending the silent prayer (26). These few moments of silent prayer after the reading of the lesson before the collect are now enjoined by the rubrics of the new Ordo.

In the Morning Service as soon as the prophecies were ended, if the church had no baptismal font, the litanies were sung, the priests and ministers lying prostrate on the altar steps, and rising to go to the sacristy to vest for Mass at the invocation *Peccatores, te rogamus, audi nos*. While the choir sang the *Kyrie* of the litany, the priest and the ministers began the Mass in the usual manner and, after incensing the altar, the *Gloria* was sung. If the church had a baptismal font, as soon as the prophecies were read, a procession wended its way to the font for the blessing, which finished, all returned to the sanctuary singing the litany, the priest and ministers prostrating themselves on the altar steps till the invocation *Peccatores* etc.

In the new Ordo substantial changes have been introduced. As soon as the reading of the lessons ends, two cantors start the singing of the litany (which is not duplicated) while all kneel down. If the church has no baptismal font as soon as *Propitius*

(25) The first paragraph has been suppressed by the new Ordo of 1952 after the S. Congr. of Rites had received various suggestions to have it omitted.

(26) It is the deacon's office to give such orders to the congregation. Cfr. e.g. *Ite Missa est*.

esto is chanted Baptismal vows are renewed. If the church has a baptismal font, during the singing of the first part of the litanies, in front of the Paschal candle, in full view of the congregation a large ornate basin is prepared with water to be blessed. During the blessing the celebrant will face the people having the Paschal candle on his right and the subdeacon (27) with the processional cross on his left. The blessing of the water is that which is found in the Roman Missal but omitting the *Sicut cervus* with its collect, and the sprinkling of the people with the blessed water before the infusing of the holy oils. As soon as the blessing of the baptismal water has ended, a procession is formed with a thurifer preceding, followed by the subdeacon with the cross, the deacon with the basin of the water, and the celebrant: the choir meanwhile sings the *Sicut cervus* and when the water has been put in the font the celebrant recites the collect and incenses the font. Then all return to the altar for the renewal of the Baptismal vows. If the Baptistery is outside the Church, if so preferred, the blessing of the water may take place in the Baptistery. In this case as soon as the invocation *Sancta Trinitas unus Deus* has been said, the priest, preceded by the processional cross and acholytes, the paschal candle, and the clergy, goes to the font while the cantors and the people remain in their places chanting the litany, repeating as often as necessary from *Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis*. As soon as the blessing is accomplished all return for the renewal of the baptismal vows.

Probably the chanting of the litany was primarily intended to keep the congregation piously occupied in the church while baptisms were being administered in the Baptistery. In the Middle Ages in some churches the custom prevailed of chanting the beginning of the litany while going to the font and the final part of the litany while returning, but the greater number of the churches sang the Psalm *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus* while proceeding to the font. In the Ordo of 1951 the chanting of the *Sicut cervus* was prescribed during the procession to the Baptistery if the blessing of the water was held there, but in the 1952 Ordo the *Sicut cervus* was reserved for the procession with the blessed water at the end of that part of the ceremony of Easter Night. Logically speaking the *Sicut cervus* with its collect ought

(27) The Ordo has "a sinistris ministrum stantem cum cruce", but when speaking of the procession to the font with the blessed water the cross-bearer is the subdeacon.

to precede the administration of Baptism—the chant expresses the ardent desire of the sacrament — and it would be a proper thing to have the Baptism of adults administered during Easter night after the blessing of the waters. The rite, as we have said, is that contained in the Roman Missal with a slight change in the punctuation of the first words of the Preface which now runs as follows : *Domine, sancte Pater, omnipotens aeternae Deus* (28).

Easter Eve was the chief time for the Baptism of catechumens. The first seventeen catechetical lessons of St Cyril of Jerusalem were delivered during the weeks preceding Easter for those who were to be baptised on Easter Eve, on which day he pronounced the 18th instruction, and on Easter Monday in the 19th lesson he explained to them the deep meaning of what was done on the evening of their Baptism. When the soldiers broke in the Cathedral at Constantinople on Easter Eve to arrest St John Chrysostom there were 3000 catechumens awaiting Baptism. In the *Ordines Romani* of the 8th century it is prescribed that the Pope after having himself baptised some catechumens would leave the rest to be baptised by the priests while he went to the nearby oratory of the Holy Cross where the neophytes as soon as baptised would go to receive Confirmation from the Pope. There were two unctions with the Chrism : the *chrismatio* done by the priest on the head of the neophyte as soon as he was baptised and *chrismalis signatio* performed by the Pope. The people remained in the church chanting the litanies repeating the invocations first seven times, then five, then three times. For this reason in the former Ordo (for the morning service) the invocations were duplicated. In the new Ordo the old Roman custom of having the people and the cantors remain in the church chanting the litany, while the celebrant is in the Baptistery, is still maintained, but the litany is not duplicated. We may note however that the blessing of the baptismal water at the baptistery is a concession, *si praefertur*. The principle underlying the new Ordo is that the whole rite should be seen by all the congregation.

The renewal of the Baptismal vows is something altogether new to the liturgy of Holy Saturday, but a rite well adapted and needful in our times. The celebrant changes into white vest-

(28) The whole question of the punctuation of the first words of this Preface is fully discussed in Eph. Lit. 65 (1951) 101-104, 66 (1952) 282-283.

ments (29), incenses the Paschal candle, and then, either from the sanctuary or from the pulpit, he addresses the congregation inviting the faithful to renew their Baptismal vows: the words he uses are derived from St Paul's letter to the Romans (30) and from St Augustine. The rite ends with the recital of the Lord's Prayer and the sprinkling of the congregation with the holy water, extracted from the basin during the blessing before the infusion of the holy oils. The 1951 Ordo permitted the use of the vernacular in those dioceses where the language of the people was partly permitted for the administration of Baptism. The 1952 Ordo permits the use of the vernacular *ubique locorum* but the vernacular version must be approved by the Ordinary (31).

The congregation would be better disposed for this renewal of vows if it were possible to have the administration of the sacrament conferred to some persons, possibly adults—in this case the words of the *Hanc igitur* (pro his... quos regenerare dignatus es ex aqua et spiritu sancto) would be more true. This has been done in many places where the restored rite was celebrated. In some places also all had candles lighted for the renewal of the Baptismal vows (32).

After this renewal has been accomplished the second part of the litany is chanted to the end. If Holy Orders are conferred the prostration and the benediction of the ordinandi takes place now, otherwise the litany is chanted while all kneel. We may notice that except in the case of ordinations the prostration no longer takes place as it is in contrast with the processional character of the litany.

When the litany is terminated the celebrant and the minister go to the sacristy to vest for Mass, while the Paschal candle is removed from the centre of the sanctuary to its place in the large candlestick on the Gospel side of the altar.

In the new Ordo, Mass is celebrated as in the Roman Missal but the Psalm *Judica* and the confession are omitted. While the

(29) If he has not already assumed white vestments because he has administered the Sacrament of Baptism.

(30) 6, 4-11.

(31) This is in line with what is said in the cnc. *Mediator Dei*: "In non paucis... ritibus vulgati sermonis usurpatio valde utilis apud populum existere potest; nihilominus unius Apostolicæ Sedis est id concedere."

(32) *Chr. Eph. Lit.* 66 (1952) 53-76.

cantors are singing the *Kyrie* the celebrant proceeds from the sacristy, goes up to the altar, kisses it and incenses in the usual way. Without saying the *Kyrie* when the chanting ends he intones the *Gloria*, the bells are rung and everything proceeds as usual.

The prayers at the foot of the altar, which formally were said by the priest as a private preparation for Mass, had since the 13th-14th century become obligatory and since Pius V in 1570 officially inserted in the Missal. On the new Ordo of Easter Eve they are omitted for there is no reason for them as the whole preceding rites are a sufficient preparation for the Sacrifice of the Mass. In the new Ordo even the last Gospel is omitted for there is no reason to lengthen the ceremony with another Gospel, only added to the Mass with the Missal of Pius V.

There is no introit, for all masses concluding a vigil had originally no introit; at Rome the introit was added at the time of Pope Celestine I when Mass was no longer preceded by the vigil office. The Easter Eve Mass itself, properly speaking, had to begin at the offertory, the collect being the conclusion of the litany. Therefore the epistle and Gospel of the Mass are also later additions. They were added about the 6th-7th century when the relation of origin between the twelve lessons of the vigil office and the epistle and gospel of the Mass was forgotten (in fact the epistle and gospel of the mass represent the last relic of the vigil prayers which in the early centuries preceded the Mass).

No lights are carried at the Gospel, but whatever symbolical meaning the medieval liturgists gave to this rubric it is certain there was no need for lights to sing the Gospel as the Paschal Candle would have been enough.

The Offertory Chant is omitted as the Easter Vigil Mass is older than the introduction of this chant in the Mass at Rome. The same reason explains the omission of the *Agnus Dei* and the Communion chant.

The omission of the *Agnus Dei*, more especially of the invocation *dona nobis pacem* brought about the suppression of the kiss of peace which at Rome took place at every Mass.

We have already mentioned the anomaly which was caused by ending the Mass with short vespers when the service was transferred to the afternoon. In the 1951 Ordo the vespers were suppressed and Mass ended with the priest's blessing, the last Gospel being omitted. The 1952 Ordo introduced a new rite *Pro*

Laudibus to substitute the *Pro Vesperis* of the morning office. The only difference between the *pro Vesperis* and the *pro Laudibus* is the antiphon for the canticle.

In the 1951 Ordo, as there were no Vespers at the end of the Mass, a Communion antiphon was inserted: it was the Magnificat antiphon of the *Pro Vesperis* of the morning service. Some liturgists regretted that in a reformed rite an antiphon, against which many objections had been moved, was still maintained (33). One of the members of the Liturgical Commission (34) gave two reasons why the text was kept. But when the 1952 Ordo substituted a *Pro Laudibus* for the *Pro Vesperis* the antiphon for the Benedictus became that which is in the Breviary for the Lauds of Easter: "*Et valde mane*".

The *Pro Vesperis* was introduced in Rome, from England and France, in the 12th century; before that time, communion was given in silence. Outside Rome in the 10th cent. the chanting of the *Alleluia* was introduced; later on the psalm *Laudate Dominum* and the *Magnificat* to fill the time during which communion was being distributed. When the service was transferred to the morning and few or no people received communion, considering the time of the day, the chanting of the psalm and canticle were considered to be a substitute for vespers (35).

The reports from all the places where the restored rite was observed have been very enthusiastic and all those who have tried it are in favour of its retention (36). There have been some difficulties but these have been already overcome *ex auctoritate* in the *Ordinationes* of the Sacred Congregation of Rites published with the Ordo of 1952 (37).

It would therefore be no vain hope to see this rite extended to the whole church so that for all Christians Easter Day may become again what it was formerly, the *solemnitas solemnitatum*.

J. LUPI.

(33) One of the objections is that it is a faulty rendering of Mt. 28, 1.

(34) A Bugnini in Comm. ad Decr. (Suppl. Eph. Lit. 1951, p. 42, n. 3). "Interpretatio mutata non est: 1o. quia eundem textum refert etiam pericope evangelica Missae vigiliaris, et opportunum visum est expectare omnium pericoparum liturgicarum revisionem, quae, uti creditur progressu temporis fiet; 2o. quia textus melodiae subest, neque prevenienda erat, in hac materia, revisio generalis".

(35) Cfr. Ami du Clergé, 1950 n. 12, p. 182.

(36) Eph. Lit. 66 (1952) pp. 52-76.

(37) A.A.S. XXXIV, 1, pp. 50-52.