

Views from the Pews:

Towards a Theology of Catholic Experiences of the Liturgy



Recordings and texts from the Zoom conference, 10 June 2022

Introduction

The motu proprio of Pope Francis, *Traditionis Custodes*, of July 2021 revealed ongoing difficulties and tensions around the reception of the reform of the Roman Liturgy following the Second Vatican Council, which interventions by liturgical experts and theologians have not yet succeeded in resolving. Pastoral experience suggests that the motivations of individual Catholics for attending Old Rite Masses are actually quite diverse, even more so where they have a choice between New and Old Rite in the same place. Some, for example, may attend both, and among them actual perceptions of and attitudes towards Vatican II tend to be very varied.

Seeing the urgent need for reconciliation, the Centre for Ecclesial Ethics decided to host a Zoom conference with a difference: rather than just inviting experts, in a spirit of synodality we decided first to seek short video or written testimonies from Catholics on whether they preferred the New or Old Rite (or both), and why, with the sole condition that only positive reasons could be given.

The testimonies were surprising and very diverse, and challenged the stereotypes of “traditionalist”, “conservative” and “progressive/liberal”, and immediately raised questions about the main focuses of liturgical theology as currently practiced. Above all, the testimonies bore witness to Catholics’ love of the Mass, in whatever rite or *ordo* it is celebrated. We passed the testimonies confidentially to the speakers, who were asked to frame their lectures in direct response to them. The testimonies were also shown or read (as applicable) at the conference, with the permission of the contributors. In view of the sensitive nature of the topic, time was given for reflection and both personal and communal prayer.

The choice of speakers reflects the synodal process and the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology’s three pillars of research, teaching and pastoral support: we sought to be both academically solid and inclusive of voices from outside the academy, especially the voices of pastors as well as relevant ecumenical partners. Our preliminary conclusion

from the testimonies and papers is that there is a need for urgent rethinking in how the theology of the liturgy is done, especially in the area of liturgical anthropology.

We invite you to view the testimonies and experts' lectures below. Owing to technical difficulties, recordings are not available for all of the lectures – in such cases, a link to a pdf of the lecture is provided.

We are deeply grateful to all who contributed to *Views from the Pews* with such honesty, charity and wisdom. We are delighted to announce that the new St Mary's University Press has accepted our proposal for a book on the conference. We're especially pleased as this is the publishing wing of the flagship Catholic university which is known to have the attention and support of the English and Welsh Catholic bishops. The book will include an additional chapter to bring the discussion up to date, with a reflection on the liturgy question in the new Synod documents of the Church, Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi* (June 2022), and the liturgy question in the work of Stephen Bullivant and his team on Catholic disaffiliation.

Currently we are fundraising: publication, including printing 200 copies, will cost about £3,600. We have already raised over a third of this (£1,400) thanks to a grant and pledges. Will you help us raise the remaining £2,200 for the book which seeks, by listening to the experiences of God's people, to heal the divisions in the Church and renew our worship? Donations can be made via the CAF donate button below

Fr Dominic White OP and Fr Liam Hayes

[Donate](#)

1. **Introduction: Deep Attentive Listening for a Synodal Church.** Fr Liam Hayes, Director of the Central for Ecclesial Ethics, Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology VIDEO 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r26KA9JJfS8>
2. **The Testimonies: a video mosaic, and written testimonies (read by Fr Dominic White)** VIDEO 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOGokHwJOZg>
3. **A Response Through Sacred Art and Architecture of the Church: Recovering its Context.** Canon Robin Gibbons, Emeritus Lecturer in Eastern Christianity and Liturgy, Oxford University; priest of the Melkite Catholic Church VIDEO 3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yX2xWENw4k>
4. **The Experience of the Mass as Multi-Sensory: Liturgy, Catechesis, and Children's Interpretations.** Dr Medi Volpe, Director of Research, Wesley House, Cambridge; Assistant Professor of Theology & Ethics, University of Durham VIDEO 4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmbLUiOaREY>
5. **An Eastern Orthodox Perspective.** Archpriest Paul Elliott, Rector of the Parish of St Elisabeth the New Martyr, Wallasey, and Chancellor of the Diocese of Great Britain and Western Europe (Russian Orthodox Church Outside Europe) PDF [5 Fr Paul Lecture](#)
6. **To Come to the Liturgy: Sound, Architecture and Church.** Sr Marie Trainar OP, Monastery of St. Catherine of Siena, Langeac, France (translated by Fr Dominic White OP) PDF [6 Sr Marie Trainar](#)
7. **Gathering the Threads: Good and Bad Diversities.** Fr Dominic White OP, Acting Director of Research, Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology / Blackfriars, Cambridge. Plenary discussion follows. VIDEO [7 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3epBloo7fg&t=1345s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3epBloo7fg&t=1345s)

