

THE NECESSITY OF RITUAL

By JOHN GALLEN

ONE OF THE very delightful and intriguing scenes presented to us in the Old Testament occurs in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Exodus. We are given the picture of a battle: the amalekites come out and attack the people of Israel at Rephidim, as they continue their way of pilgrimage to the promised land. Joshua, at the direction of Moses, is in command of the israelite army, against Amalek.

Where is Moses in the midst of this threat? As the battle rages, Moses goes up, with Aaron and Hur, to the top of a nearby hill, where he raises up his arms in ritual action, in a gesture of ritual prayer. It is most extraordinary ritual action: for, as the text recounts:

As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight. Moses' hands, however, grew tired; so they put a rock in place for him to sit on. Meanwhile Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other, so that his hands remained steady till sunset. And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.¹

In this ritual prayer-liturgy enacted by Moses, Aaron and Hur, there is a sense of confidence in the powerful and mysterious *presence* of God. It is a confidence that is at one and the same time peaceful and reckless. Peaceful, because the participants clearly place tangible trust in one whom they sense to be 'with them', according to his promise. Yet it is also reckless, because the ritual demanded of them a kind of surrender and commitment that was without total certitude and guarantee, asking that they trust in one whom they saw, as Paul was to say later, 'as in a glass, darkly'.²

On the other hand, the experience was its own guarantee. Like all authentic jewish and christian prayer, the event had its beginnings and impulse not in man but in the God of mystery who touches man with his presence. The ritual of hands was the sign of experienced presence. Thus, the orant in the cemetery of Priscilla,

¹ Exod 17, 11-13.

² 1 Cor 13, 12.

transfigured in the warm light which streams from the holy One turned graciously to him, shows in his open hands, he no less than Moses, the openness of his heart's response.

All prayer is response. All prayer, even when it is intercession, is the response of praise in which we are drawn out of ourselves to make *sacrificium laudis*: 'my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God'.³ *Berakah*, jewish and christian *eucharistia*, is man's shout – or whisper – of praise before the light of light, before the One who dwells in unapproachable light and yet who touches us with his presence. *Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro!*

Moses emerges quite clearly in the Exodus passage as a ritual person, as one who believes in the importance and, indeed (judging from the crisis of the incident recounted) the crucial necessity of man's ritual activity. It is apparently a case of life or death. Earlier, Yahweh had transformed the staff of Moses as a sign of his powerful presence. It was to show Moses that he was to trust more in the God of such power than in his own unsupported weakness. The staff was the sign of presence. It was *zikkaron*, the memorial. And so Moses took it with him to the top of the hill, standing, he told Joshua, 'with the staff of God in my hand'.⁴ Moses seemed to put a lot of trust in ritual.

Not everyone feels the same way. Dr Arthur Janov, for example, in his very popular recent book about neurosis and its cure, *The Primal Scream*, writes about the meaning of ritual action, including what we know as 'religious' ritual action, in a way that appears to compromise quite severely the pious picture of Moses given in the text of Exodus.

Symbolic ways of breaking the barriers which people have erected internally cannot resolve *real* feelings. For example, one popular technique is to have people gather in a circle with one person in the middle. He learns to 'break out' by crashing through the circle of people who are arm-in-arm. I suppose that the person is theoretically learning how to be free by this act. One rationale often given is that the person is learning how to liberate himself. This seems to be magic: 'If I do this ritual, I will solve my real problems'. I suppose that this ritual is designed to enable the person to feel truly free. But until he feels what is really constricting him, I believe that this ritual is encouraging the neurosis by encouraging symbolic acting out. It seems to be no different from the neurotic who is skydiving in order to *feel free*. I am sure that there is a momentary release of tension

³ Ps 84, 2.

⁴ Exod 17, 9.

through the symbolic ritual, but it scarcely can dent the rigid defence system.⁵

Where does Dr Janov leave poor Moses, hands raised in symbolic ritual action, presuming to affect the course of human history, presuming to wither the marauding army of Amalek by this liturgy of hand-raising? Does Moses believe in magic? Is Moses sick? Allowing for the therapeutic advantages of a little momentary release of tensions for poor old upset Moses, isn't he encouraging and fortifying the impact of his own neuroses by acting them out? Doesn't he make them worse by prolonging them, giving them body and substance, revelling in them? Aaron and Hur sat Moses on a rock and held up his hands when they grew tired. Is this a bit of sympathetic humouring of the old man; or were they as foolish as he?

The question becomes a bit more pressing when it is turned to focus more directly on our own situation. What is the nature of our own involvement with ritual? Are we neurotic skydivers, claiming to *be* free simply because we have a momentary sense of weightlessness; claiming authentic religious experience simply because we hold our hands in the air, simply because some symbol, perhaps of contemporary devising, reminds us of the presence of God? What is the serpent-staff in *our* lives that consoles us, assures us, quiets us, inflames us with a sense of victory? Or, perhaps, deceives us?

If we look around us in our american culture, we can find other attempts and efforts in the general area of ritual activity, outside the explicitly religious scene: efforts which often seem to be quite similar to religious ritual in its intents and purposes. What is known as 'ritual theatre', for example, can illustrate very well some of contemporary man's attempts to understand himself and to spell out in action, to ritualize, what is taking place in his own interiority, within himself.

Lance Larsen, writing in *The Drama Review* about one contemporary theatre experience known as the 'Liquid Theatre', describes one of the high points of this ritual drama which directs that each member of the 'audience' (but not a passive group of spectators) pass through, walk through a maze and allow himself openly to experience sense/body contact with members of the participating cast.⁶ This is the kind of ritual, even though it appears in the context of theatre, that Dr Janov is thinking of in terms of a studied, for-

⁵ Janov, Arthur: *The Primal Scream* (New York, 1970), p 76.

⁶ *The Drama Review*, XV, 3a (Summer, 1971), p 92.

malized and symbolized acting out of a person's attempts to be liberated and free, to release tensions and inhibitions.

Let us, however, very carefully focus our attention on the precise point that Janov is making. He does *not* oppose ritual action as such. What Janov attacks is the situation in which ritual action occurs without any substantial backing, when there is no parallel between what a person truly feels or experiences and the ritual symbolizing action. In situations like this, the ritual action is false. A person might, for example, *act* as though he were free, even though in fact he was not free. Pretending to be free does not make you free. It can, in fact, cause more tension by increasing a person's sense of contradiction and frustration in that he does not feel the way he acts. Pretending to be something does not make you that something. Pretending to be religious does not make you religious. And this is the question that we must confront about liturgy. Is our liturgy a religious ritual which deceives us into an entire series of unsupportable judgments about ourselves, the course and direction of our lives, about God and the presumption of his presence among us? Or is it really as the second Vatican Council expressed it in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 'the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed' and 'at the same time, the fount from which all her power flows'?⁷ Is liturgy in a true sense the summit and the source of christian experience? Do we *need* ritual?

If we look to the origin and source of rituals and celebrations, we find that it belongs to the very heart of human experience for man to be playful and celebratory. It is not irreverent or frivolous to think of man as playful. A person's playfulness is not an index of his immaturity or his lack of proper seriousness; on the contrary, the more profoundly serious a person may be, the more his capacity for play is enhanced. Why is this so?

The reason is that the act of play is an act of *delight*. To play means to take delight in our experience, to revel in the sheer abundance of it, to take joy in its meaning. Perhaps one of the best words to describe play is the verb we have just used: to 'revel'. To revel in an experience means to plunge more and more deeply into it for what it is, to penetrate more and more entirely its significance and meaning, and so in these ways to extend and prolong the experience. Secondly, play cannot be separated from *freedom*, since no kind of restraint or inhibition can be allowed to interfere with or

⁷ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

touch the playful act without destroying its revelry. Finally, play is *contemplative* in the sense that it rises out of and is built upon vision: vision of the meaningfulness of human experience. The contemplative truly *sees*, and because he sees, he is able to take delight in the richness that is before him. Nor is the contemplative naïve: he knows of evil, but he knows of more than evil, and so he is not kept from revel. It begins to become clear, then, why a person's capacity for play is enlarged by his *seriousness*. The more he *sees*, the more does he take delight.

More than twenty years ago, Hugo Rahner reminded us that an even more important consideration than the playfulness of man was the playfulness of God. He wrote with great imagination about the play of God in terms of 'a love that works in creative freedom wholly ungoverned by necessity or constraint'. It is from this point of view, he says, that we can understand 'that both creation and incarnation are expressions of God's love', and therefore the expressions of his playfulness.⁸ Again, it becomes especially clear that playfulness is not to be identified with superficial frivolousness. Rahner is suggesting that play is most perfectly expressed by God himself, because he is the utterly free one, whose love is entirely unbounded. Creation and Incarnation, seen as the outpouring of the divine love rising out of the superabundance of divine life, are the joy of God's creative spirit, the delight of his masterful and holy creativity. They are the profoundly imaginative art wrought by his hands from before all time.

The book of Proverbs, in the eighth chapter, catches this sane view in the picture which it presents of wisdom *playing* before Yahweh. Even before creation, 'before the mountains were settled, before the hills', wisdom came to be. And the sacred author continues the personification of wisdom: 'I (wisdom) was by his side . . . delighting him day after day, ever at play in his presence, at play everywhere in his world, delighting to be with the sons of men'.⁹ The reality of the God of mystery is suggested to us, then, as a reality of *playfulness* which creatively and continually exercises itself and expresses itself in the superabundance of an ever-developing life. The word of God, personified wisdom, is the manifestation of God's playfulness, 'at play', as Proverbs proclaims, 'at play everywhere in his world'. If God is playful, what can we say of man? Let us present some hopes for man.

⁸ *Man at Play* (New York, 1967), pp 11-25.

⁹ Prov 8, 25, 30-31.

Man, and indeed, all of creation proceeding from God, is patterned upon the reality of God. Man, furthermore, is made in his very image and likeness; and the more that man enters into the fulness of his own human reality, the more he becomes himself as man, the more he becomes like God, in whose image he is made. 'The glory of God', Irenaeus preached, 'is man fully alive'. So we can understand man's playfulness as modelled upon the playfulness of God, as a way that man has of being more like God. 'All play', writes Rahner, 'just as much as every task which we set ourselves to master with real earnestness of purpose, is an attempt to approximate to the Creator, who performs his work with the divine seriousness which its meaning and purpose demand, and yet with the spontaneity and effortless skill of the great artist he is, creating because he wills to create and not because he must'.¹⁰ Creation, we may say, is the celebration of God.

Man especially is God's celebratory act, and as man celebrates and gives himself to play he continues the beautiful dynamism of God's play. It is this same vision which inspired Teilhard to pray:

Let others, fulfilling a function more august than mine, proclaim your splendours as pure spirit; as for me, dominated as I am by a vocation which springs from the inmost fibres of my being, I have no desire, I have no ability, to proclaim anything except the innumerable prolongations of your incarnate being in the world of matter; I can preach only the mystery of your flesh, you the soul shining forth through all that surrounds us. It is to your body in this its fullest extension – that is, to the world become through your power and my faith the glorious living crucible in which everything melts away in order to be born anew: it is to this that I dedicate myself with all the resources which your creative magnetism has brought forth to me.¹¹

Man, the glorious spirit-body that he is, is the sacrament and shining-forth of the God of joy and revel, the God of love and power. Man is the prolongation of this God in the world of matter, and has as his calling a ministry of praise and love. He has a stewardship for this sacred world, so that all creatures mirror the presence of the living God.

The creative responsibility, moreover, which man's freedom places upon him to be the author of his own history and story, to share with the Lord in the labour of bringing himself to be, urges upon man an invitation to contemplative celebration and play. It

¹⁰ *Op.cit.*, p 28.

¹¹ 'The Mass on the World', in *Hymn of the Universe* (New York, 1969), pp 36-7.

draws man so clearly to the adventure of trust and belief in his own sacred reality as he stands before the *Mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the holy One, that man may be expected, like David, not simply to *stand* but to *dance* before the Ark of his holy Presence. Man is expected to believe in the sacred character of the human experience, sacred by reason of its sacred origin and sacred by reason of its sacred destiny, and to *revel* in it, to take *delight* in it: 'David and all the house of Israel danced before Yahweh with all their might, singing to the accompaniment of lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets and cymbals'.¹²

It is not always easy for man to be so trusting. Often he doesn't feel like dancing: He is a creature of suspicion and inconstancy, and he often distrusts what deserves his trust. No one, at least no one with any mature experience, would want to suggest that such trust occurs without risk. But maturity understands risk much more clearly than immaturity does; and so is well prepared to take it.

'The trick', complained Nietzsche, 'is not to arrange a festivity. The trick is to find people who can enjoy it'. This may be a justified pessimism from time to time. Think, for example, of the ways in which gnosticism and gnostic ways of thinking have worked their perversity upon us for so many centuries. In the second century, Irenaeus, standing almost at the head of the christian tradition, affirmed everything about the inherent goodness and sacred character of man that gnosticism most disclaimed. 'Man fully alive' was a man out of control, an affront to the sacred, as the gnostics saw it.

Man, the gnostics feared, was corrupt by reason of his compromising involvement with material reality. And so *body* and all human history, which is a history of flesh-and-blood man, is the contemptible prison of the only respectable element of man, his spiritual element, which has been caged so dangerously in flesh. What follows from all this is, of course, disaster! There is no salvation for man in this gnostic view because man, as we know him, the flesh-and-blood man of history, is intrinsically corrupt and beyond saving. Only his spiritual element is saved, in the esoteric experience of *gnosis*. The body, furthermore, deserves the condemnation it gets.

Gnosticism, it seems has always been with us. The trick, much too often, is to find people who are able to enjoy human festivity,

¹² 2 Sam 6, 5.

celebration and play – for the most radical and upsetting season of all: they fail to find reason to rejoice, they fail to find cause for festivity, they feel that they have nothing to celebrate!

We must agree with Nietzsche that it would be quite a trick to find enough people in the world of religion who would be able to enjoy festival – or just have fun at a simple party! The dance of the naked David before the Ark of the Lord, ‘Displaying himself’, as the outraged daughter of Saul put it, ‘under the eyes of his servants’ maids’:¹³ what a condemnation such a spectacle would draw from gnostic religionists!

Sam Keen, in his theological essay, *To A Dancing God*, says this:

The time is ripe to return to the primitive, the primal, the carnal. To repeat Arthur Darby Nock, ‘Primitive Religion is not believed. It is danced’. Words, concepts, doctrines, ideas are all very necessary for clarity and for consistent action. There is a time for words. It has lasted from the reformation to the present. Now we are sick of being inundated in an ocean of verbiage. The word must be rediscovered in the flesh. Religion must return to dance. Perhaps Zorba is the saint for our time.¹⁴

Sam Keen’s poetic appraisal has a remarkable balance about it. He is clear on the importance of words, conceptual structure and systematization, ideology. Yet David and Zorba have likewise their respected place. A ‘dancing God’ manifests himself in men who dance. Thomas Aquinas is matched by Francis, God’s troubadour, his *jongleur*, the dancer. Moses, hands raised, steady until sunset, believed in the importance of being carnal, could himself have written notes for a visceral theology. Abraham himself thought circumcision to be the impressively holy fulfilment of his faith-experience in God’s presence. In this whole range of views, nowhere is the carnal opposed to man’s spirit or to religion: body is everywhere the sacrament, the symbol, the ritualizing sacred sign of sacred experience.

Where does all of this lead us? It leads us to affirm that symbolic ritual action is an event that calls the *wholeness* of man into action. Ritual is, moreover, an event which enlarges the richness and the reality of an experience already begun in us, and without which that experience can never come to its completion. Man’s spirit, we must insist, will never be itself, will never be fulfilled, unless it is able to *come to be* in matter, unless matter comes to sacramentalize and

¹³ 2 Sam 6, 20.

¹⁴ *To A Dancing God* (New York, 1970), p 160.

embody spirit. Man is ever coming to be, is continually the creative author of the history which is his own, as he ritualizes, spells out in action and sacrament, the meaning of himself. Man is, *must* be, ritual person.

It is not enough to think. We must dance. It is not enough, says the letter of James, to hear the Word of God. We must *do* the Word, must ritualize it, dance it, announce and proclaim it in the *event*, the action, which is our personal history, as individuals and as community. All morality is built on this principle. Morality itself means to ritualize in the action of our lives the experience which we have of God's presence. 'Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and *do* it!' Faith-experience is fulfilled in circumcision-experience, in baptism-experience – which are themselves moments of faith. Ritual brings experience to its high point, its summit.

This approach to ritual has something to offer to Dr Janov, and does not fall under his criticism because it is not *empty* ritual or an exercise in nothingness. The kind of ritual we are describing is the expression and the continuation, the development of something that is already present, already begun. It is the bringing of something to its proper fulfilment. It is not pretence, but is actually an intensification of reality.

There are two requirements which must be set down for the successful use of symbolic-ritual action. The first is that a symbol must meet people where they are: that is to say, when a person is exposed to the use of a symbol, he must somehow be able to relate to it, to grasp it in some way, to detect some note of the familiar in it. The symbol, therefore, must *speak* to the people who are invited to participate in a ritual action. The symbol, in this sense, gives expression to their very own experience: it relates to their experience inasmuch as it is a way of summarizing, crystallizing, encapsulating and picturing their experience. Rituals speak to people where they are because they symbolize the experience of those people. Rituals are the sign of an experience in which persons are already involved. Ritual tells the story of a people. Ritual tells the story of you and me.

The second requirement for successful symbolic action is that the symbolic ritual, while it speaks to people where they are, does not *leave* them where they are. Ritual adds to the story of a people by drawing them into a future. Symbolic ritual brings the participants in the action to a new level of reality by continuing and developing and deepening their experience. The circumcision-experience of Abraham was a developing of his experience of faith. It was the

sign and the symbol, the sacrament of his faith. And so, it too was faith, an intensification of faith, a nourishing of faith, a new reality of faith. The ritual of faith, in fact, the sacrament or symbolizing of faith, is so essential to faith itself that faith cannot develop fully without ritual expression. As the psychologist Eugene Kennedy has written:

Man is a maker of rituals; he strives to put a shape on his more valued experiences in order to keep them in the focus of his consciousness, prizing them as sources of strength and direction for his life. Men are always trying to write the best of their lives, especially the best of their lives with each other, into some kind of shorthand of word and gesture. Traced first on the walls of his cave and danced around camp-fires, this symbolism also shows up in poetry and painting, in world's fairs and family reunions, in handshakes and embraces. It is second nature for man to develop properly expressive rites to underscore the things that are most important to him: the beginning and endings of life, the celebrations and the sadnesses, the deep but sometimes fleeting moments of trying to reach beyond himself. Take away man's rituals and you render him vulnerable again to the terrors of a universe that has slipped out of the control of his understanding.¹⁵

Father Kennedy correctly underlines the role of ritual when he emphasizes that without ritual man will always be blocked and frustrated in his efforts to *be* himself, to become, to come to be himself – a process that *necessarily* requires not only interiority but expressive manifestation and development precisely in terms of action. Man must do so to grow, to live; else he is repressed, made weak, underdeveloped, and reality slips from his control, as Father Kennedy suggests.

Ritual, then, comes directly from the human experience, not as a prop to the otherwise sufficient and well-organized scheme of reasoned and orderly life of man, not as a breather from the properly human tasks that take up his best hours, not as therapy for his inhibitions and 'hang-ups', not as distraction from the anguish and rigour of the demands made upon him daily. Authentic ritual is none of those things. Ritual is the high-point of the human experience, in the sense that, in ritual, man expresses and brings to fulfilment everything that belongs to his experience, both as an individual and in community. All his interiority is given embodiment and thus an enlarged reality. All his individualism and all his community experience, his relationships of person, both intimate and casual,

¹⁵ 'The Contribution of Religious Ritual to Psychological Balance', in *Concilium*, 62, p 53.

are further enhanced and deepened during the community ritualizing which celebrates them, prolongs them, makes them more dear and reverences them. In the very precise understanding that we give it here, we can say that community ritual and symbol-making is the delightful summit of man's experience, inasmuch as it is the sacrament of it.

Sacrament means the same thing that ritual and symbol do. Sacrament is a double-faceted reality, in that it both gives expression to (manifests the reality of) an experience and, secondly, nourishes and deepens that reality as well.

This understanding of ritual, symbol, sacrament, celebration, is exactly the way in which the Church has understood the meaning of liturgy as the community prayer of believers. Liturgy has been described continually in the Church's tradition as the *sacramentum fidei*: liturgy is the sacrament of the community's faith-experience. Liturgical worship as ritual action gives expression to the religious experience which the community has already been sharing; and furthermore, it brings that religious experience to a new level of reality, precisely inasmuch as it gives it expression, thus bringing it to be, bringing it to development and fulfilment. *Lex orandi est lex credendi*: the shape of our prayer mirrors and expresses the shape of our religious experience.

The implications of this point of view which the Church takes about liturgy are enormous. In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Church preaches that the sacraments, for example, 'not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called sacraments of faith'.¹⁶ No psychologist nor anthropologist could have hoped for more. Liturgy presupposes that religious experience is already in process before the celebration in the ritual event. 'Before men can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and conversion . . .'¹⁷ Before there is any question of ritual action, there must *be* something to ritualize, to celebrate. Otherwise, the ritual is false, the liturgy is a pretence. Christian liturgy always has been and will always be for *believers*. It presumes and builds upon religious experience which is deepened and enlarged in the liturgical celebration.

This principle is applied in whatever form the liturgical celebration takes. A person, for example, must already be converted and reconciled in his heart by the outpouring of God's Spirit before he

¹⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

comes to the liturgy of reconciliation. Unless he is, it is not possible to imagine that a ritual of 'absolution' would be responsible for forgiveness. This is precisely the magical view of liturgy which the Church opposes by insisting that liturgy is *sacramentum fidei*. (Polemical concerns of the last four-hundred years, however, have often provoked less authentic emphasis.) Liturgy does not create a reality out of nothing. It celebrates an already existing reality, and brings it to new reality. One's conversion and reconciliation are nourished and fulfilled in the liturgy of reconciliation. No one's priesthood, for another example, is created at the liturgy of ordination. It begins with what we classically describe as 'vocation', what we biblically know as 'election'. It is brought to its fulness in the ritual prayer-celebration of the community at the liturgy, gathered to express their faith and pray over the priesthood of their brother or sister.

Both aspects of ritual sacrament must be affirmed with equal vigour. Prior religious experience is presumed: there must be an already existing reality. But this reality must be brought to its fulness; it is incomplete unless it comes to be in the flowering, the *necessary* flowering, of expression. So Gerard Lukken notes:

The pre-conciliar theology of the Church tended to teach that the liturgy expressed a faith which was already present and was a condition for full participation in the liturgical act, which in turn confirmed that faith. Now, however, we see faith as more than a condition and the liturgy as more than a confirmation – faith is above all expressed in the words and symbols of the liturgy. Liturgical expression is therefore an essential aspect of faith, causing it to become an 'act'.¹⁸

The magical interpretation of liturgy does not feel pressed to consider pre-liturgical religious activity in any experiential sense. And the gnostic interpretation was not at all concerned with the ritual event: esoteric internal experience, for the privileged, seemed enough.

The New York Times, in an editorial on October 26, 1971 that indicated questions concerning the significance of ritual action are neither dead nor pertinent merely to the religious world. The editors objected to the way in which legislative powers in the United States had agreed to regularize certain holidays in the civil calendar, transferring them from their source-dates to an artificial position (George Washington's birthday moved from its date, for example,

¹⁸ 'The Unique Expression of Faith in the Liturgy', in *Concilium*, 11, 9 (1973), p 13.

to the third Monday in February). What is at stake is a primary rule of all ritual and symbolic action: 'A successful holiday', said the editorial, 'can only develop out of the emotions of large numbers of people . . . Congress can pass a law, but only the people can make a holiday. We doubt that the people will take to their hearts the holidays which Congress has manufactured'.

The *Times* has expressed it well. If there is to be a holiday, it must come from the lives and experience and emotions of a people. It must ritualize their story, new and old, and so help them to carry their story into the future. Liturgy, as the sacrament of a people's faith, is sign of God's faithful and enduring presence among his people; it is sign of his people's future in God. Most especially, when believers gather at the supper table with the risen Master, we know him to be present in the breaking of bread and feel ourselves drawn into his *Berakah* before the Father.¹⁹

The liturgy of praise is the biography of our faith. Sacred liturgy mirrors sacred experience, making us remember what was, what is now in this moment of loving encounter, where we are going together. We cannot do without it.

'People in love', wrote the American bishops, 'make signs of love, not only to express their love but also to deepen it. Love never expressed dies. Christians' love for Christ and for each other, Christians' faith in Christ and in each other, must be expressed in the signs and symbols of celebration or it will die'.²⁰ In the moment of celebration, the Church the New Jerusalem is more beautiful, alive in the shining presence of the God of mystery. Abraham and Moses are fathers to us in faith. Let us remain, with them, hands raised, steady until sunset: *Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro*.

¹⁹ Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 83.

²⁰ 'Music in Catholic Worship' (Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, 1972).