

“Looking Forward:
Thoughts on the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Order of Saint Luke”

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Romey P. Marshall was the founder of the Order of Saint Luke (along with William E. Slocum) and he served as its President from its formation in 1946 until 1962, when John Bishop was elected President. Marshall was the leading voice and visionary among the first generation of the Order, although there were other important leaders as well.¹ In 1960, toward the end of his long term in office, Brother Romey wrote a retrospective article that he titled “After Fourteen Years” in which he narrated his understanding of the origins of the Order and its vocation. As such, he took up an agenda similar to the one we address in this issue of *Sacramental Life*. Marshall wrote,

The Order of Saint Luke was not formed by men who became interested in Liturgy because of their liking for beauty or their desire to follow tradition. Each of the founders had been at first rebels against tradition, as we understood it . . . We had used all sorts of techniques in an effort to attract crowds and save souls. But each of us had come to an appreciation of historic liturgy and a belief in the Church as a Divine Institution, and a conviction that the sacraments were, in the deepest sense of the word, “means of grace.”²

Our work stands in continuity with much that our founder and first president expressed there, both its understanding of our mission and, dare we say it, its expression of our shadow side. I will refer to each of these, our vocation and our shadow, in discussing some potential trajectories for our work.

¹ Among these were David Taylor and Laurence Guderian. I discuss aspects of the work of Taylor, Guderian, and Marshall in my article “Catholic Yearnings: The Discussion of Apostolic Succession and Ordination in *The Versicle*,” *Methodist History* 37:1 (October 1998), 3-17.

² Romey P. Marshall, “After Fourteen Years,” *The Versicle* 10:2 (Kingdomtide 1960), 3.

Our Vocation

Brother Romey was raised within the milieu of the holiness movement and he embraced much of its piety. Although we both lived in central Pennsylvania,³ I do not have any direct memories of Brother Romey, but my mother tells the story of him leading worship one summer at the Annual Conference School of Christian Missions. She does not remember anything remotely reminiscent of high-church practice, nothing like cassock or surplice, incense or chanted Psalm. Rather, she remembers him leading “Amazing Grace” in what she describes as a slow, “Southern Gospel,” tempo. Nothing that I have read or heard about Brother Romey would indicate that he rejected the deep heart language of American evangelicalism, or, for that matter, that he accepted all of the aesthetic trappings of high churchmanship.

He could, for instance, poke fun at the Order’s reputation for wearing clergy collars. A member of the Order had written to his “Liturgical Question Box” with a question about the proper use of clerical collars among Protestants. Brother Romey described the difference between band and step collars and then he moved into a discussion of the Order and clergy collars. He wrote,

You can’t spot a member of the Order by looking for collars. At a Conference recently, a non-member said to one of our “boys.” “There comes a St. Luker,” pointing to a black-garbed and clerically collared brother with a pious expression. “No,” said my friend, “He thinks we are crazy.” Then he pointed to a jolly young man in a tweed suit who was holding forth under a tree. “There’s one of our fellows,” he said, “but he isn’t advertising it.”⁴

It is one of my favorite Marshall quotations.

Although early versions of the Rule indicated “we will wear recognizable clerical garb

³ I probably did run into him, perhaps literally, at some point along the line, because he and my father served in the same district of the old (Methodist Church) Central Pennsylvania Conference from 1962-1970, but in those days I was just a little guy on my way to the swing set or the baseball field.

⁴ Romey P. Marshall, “The Liturgical Question Box,” *The Versicle* 10:3 (Advent 1960), 8-9.

when engaged in the business of the Church,”⁵ I am not convinced that Marshall considered it all that important. He was, however, deeply concerned about the peculiar American tendency to substitute “technique”—dare we say, manipulation--for the authentic movement of the Holy Spirit, about the American preoccupation with “draw(ing) a crowd”⁶ as an end in itself. Marshall was convinced, rather, that the church is called to a historically rooted practice of liturgy and sacraments. We share with Brother Romey an aversion to worship that attempts to manipulate emotional responses, and to shallow substitutes for the classic means of grace. The challenge that we face from these problems is no less intense than it was during the early years of the Order; we face tendencies bred in the bones of the American Church.

Members of the Order have been particularly good at describing the liturgical and sacramental problems that the church faces along with the various *faux pas* that have been committed in and around the Lord’s altar. Brother Romey could tell those stories with the best of them. What strikes me most about him, however, is that he believed he could do something to help improve the practice of worship. And so, he wrote his articles, which appeared in *The Versicle* and in a variety of other publications, including *The Christian Century*. He gathered persons for meetings. He accepted speaking engagements wherever he could, including ones on several seminary campuses. He coauthored a book on Catholic-Methodist relations and liturgical practices.⁷ He saw the problems, but also saw the possibility of better practice, and he worked toward that end, using the means that were available to him.

We have a similar calling, along with increasing opportunities. Much has occurred since

5 “The Rule of Life and Service,” *The Versicle* 8: 3 & 4 (Christmastide 1958), 11.

6 Marshall, “After Fourteen Years,” 3.

7 Romey P. Marshall and Michael J. Taylor, *Liturgy and Christian Unity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

Brother Romey wrote his retrospective on the early years of the Order. That very year, James F. White was hired at Perkins School of Theology, becoming the first full-time professor of worship in a Methodist seminary; now, all of our seminaries have a faculty person teaching worship, and some, like Perkins, have more than one. In 1963, the Second Vatican Council passed *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. That text, along with the scholarship that both supported it and followed it, brought major, positive changes to Catholic liturgical texts, and before long, to the ritual texts of the mainline Protestant denominations. Including among these Protestant texts were *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989) and *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (1992). *By Water and the Spirit* (1996) and *This Holy Mystery* (2004) were passed and published. Many of us have studied these texts and taught from them in a variety of academic and congregational settings. Many of us have been involved in significant liturgical and sacramental renewal efforts in local congregations.

Unfortunately many of the problems Brother Romey mentioned remain with us, and only the most naïve think they will go away any time soon. Again, they are bred in the bone of American Protestantism, and especially Methodism. There is no ritual book, hymnal, or General Conference resolution that will usher in an ideal ritual world, in and of itself. Rather, each text written, each lesson taught, each liturgy well performed makes its contribution to the goal; and considerable progress has occurred. Romey understood these dynamics and he responded with optimism, imagination, and energy, not to mention a sense of humor. I hope that members of the Order will continue to do the same.

One way to contribute is through scholarship, an emphasis alluded to in Brother Romey's reference to an "appreciation of historic liturgy." Of course, coming to an appreciation of

historic liturgy requires study of it, and we encourage doing so. We are, after all, “a religious order dedicated to sacramental and liturgical scholarship, education, and practice.”⁸ We are, however, much less sure what we mean by that phrase “historic liturgy” today than we were in 1960. As the scholarship has expanded, we have come to understand that there was a diversity of liturgical practice among Christians of the first century, just as there is diversity among contemporary Christians. Neither can we learn what Christians of the first centuries did simply by reading ancient ritual texts and rubrics. To borrow a phrase from the scholarship of Susan J. White, we have learned to look for the “silhouette” of official texts, that is, for the unspoken dialog that often stands behind a rubric.⁹ For instance, why would Ignatius of Antioch bother to say “You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated by the bishop or someone he authorizes ... he who acts without the bishop’s knowledge is in the devil’s service”¹⁰ if there were not, in fact, liturgies being celebrated that had not been granted such approval?¹¹ Given the ongoing development of scholarship, it is much more honest to say that the best liturgical practices develop in dialog with historic sources and we seek to read those sources as accurately as possible. Even with an accurate reading of those sources, the church must then decide what to do with what it reads. It may rightly decide to reject

⁸ See “Who We Are” at the Order of Saint Luke website.

<http://www.saint-luke.org/who/index.html> Accessed October 6, 2006.

⁹ Susan J. White, *A History of Women in Christian Worship* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2003), 278. See also page 28 where she refers to the same tendency as a “shadow.”

Paul Bradshaw also discusses these dynamics in his scholarship, particularly in his book *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship, Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, Second edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 18.

¹⁰ Ignatius of Antioch, “To the Smyrnaeans,” circa 107 CE, in *Early Christian Fathers*, Cyril C. Richardson, editor, in collaboration with Eugene R. Fairweather, Edward Rochie Hardy and Massey Hamilton Shepherd. (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 115

¹¹ To use a more recent example, we know that a complex ecclesiastical, political, and economic history underlies that Methodist communion rubric, “The pure, unfermented juice of the grape shall be used.” See *The Book of Worship for Church and Home* (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964), 15.

some of what it finds there—thus the relatively recent decision to ordain women.

Moreover, we must also admit that the “new measures” of Charles G. Finney are a deeply influential historic liturgical source in their own right, even though we might reject much of what he wrote.¹²

We continue the scholarly dialog in spite of its complexity, and the Order is part of that process in a variety of ways, especially in our publications. Some of us within the Order are professional scholars and thus we have particular responsibilities to fulfill within the Academy and church, not to mention the Order; but all members of the Order are called to study. It is one of the ways that we “magnify the sacraments.”¹³ Participation in the Boston University Worship, Music, and Religious Identity Project was a formative scholarly experience for me. We focused on the observation and analysis of liturgical life in three Boston area United Methodist congregations.¹⁴ At a conference that we held prior to writing the final draft of our findings, one liturgical scholar colleague commended us for providing thick descriptions of actual congregations, noting that there is a lack of these available. Odd as that observation may sound, it is true. We need more descriptions of liturgical life, and especially, we need them from persons who live and work in parishes and have also done significant reading in the liturgical studies field. In other words, we need them from the kind of people who join the Order of Saint Luke. As we look ahead, I challenge you to think of yourselves as chroniclers of liturgical life. For instance, at the May 2005 Council meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, we spent about

¹² Charles G. Finney, *Revivals of Religion* (Old Tappan New Jersey, n.d., originally published in 1835), 280-313.

¹³ *The Book of Offices and Service, After the Usage of the Order of Saint Luke* (Akron, Ohio: Order of Saint Luke Publications, 1994), 42.

¹⁴ Our findings are published in the following book: Clark, Linda J., Joanne Swenson and Mark Stamm. *How We Seek God Together: Exploring Worship Style*. Foreword by Don Saliers. Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2001.

an hour hearing testimonies from members who had led congregations to the practice of weekly Eucharist. Sister Nancy Bryan Crouch, editor of this publication, asked persons to write down and submit those accounts. Some of them appeared in the Summer 2006 issue of *Sacramental Life*. I hope you realize how important such testimonies are, and furthermore, that persons on site are the ones best equipped to write them. In like manner, if you have learned by making mistakes, write an account of that process as well. Again, I hope that more and more of our members will write about what they have observed and learned.

On the Shadow Side

As noted earlier there is a shadow side revealed in Brother Romey's comments, we find it in his use of the word "men" and also in the assumption that all members of the Order were also members of the clergy. Of course, when it began the Order was a fellowship for Methodist clergy and seminarians, and in 1946 (and for the next decade) that meant a fellowship for Methodist clergymen. In that sense, Brother Romey's statement about the founders was accurate and there is no need to criticize it in some anachronistic fashion. The Order was what it was. The passion of its members was exemplary and they did much good work, so we can honor what those clergy men did. At the same time we can acknowledge our shadow.

It remains with us in a variety of ways. Although we have accepted lay members for some time now, many of our meeting patterns suggest that we remain an organization primarily for the ordained. For instance, many chapters meet on weekday mornings, when many clergy are able to schedule time and most laypersons are working. In like manner, most of our national retreats and convocations have occurred on weekdays, a

schedule arranged primarily for the convenience of clergy. We had one retreat (2003) that met over the weekend, and the 2006 retreat ended on a Saturday morning. Are we ready to commit to a regular schedule of weekend retreats, at least one per quadrennium? A Friday through Sunday schedule would be ideal. On that score, the Emmaus Community—in some ways a lay-centered sacramental movement—has done far better than the Order of Saint Luke. Such an adjusted schedule would change us, but changing people is part of what liturgies and liturgical calendars do.

In addition to a schedule that tends to favor our clergy membership, our discussions over the years have frequently returned to questions that relate to ordination and the life of the ordained. Indeed, the lead article in the first issue of *The Versicle* was an argument against local pastors presiding at the Lord's Supper.¹⁵ Articles on matters relating to apostolic succession, the historic episcopate and reconciliation of orders with the Episcopal Church appeared frequently throughout the 1950s.¹⁶ As it was in the 1950s, so it has been into the 1990s and the current decade. Either one of these issues, lay pastors or apostolic succession, is liable to raise passionate response on the O.S.L. cyber-chapter, sometimes extending for a week or more. One could say that we have been somewhat preoccupied with questions about ordination and the pastoral leadership of liturgy, and these are not unimportant questions; but there are other questions that we might ask more often than we do. We insist that the liturgy is the work of the whole people of God, of all baptized Christians, yet this affirmation feels a bit underdeveloped. Are we sure that the most important part of the Eucharistic liturgy happens on the altar, under the hands of the ordained person? Perhaps so; but an expanded understanding of Christ's presence might

15 Daniel L. Marsh, "Priesthood," *The Versicle* 1:1 (Epiphany 1951), 1, 4-8.

16 Again, see my review of these articles in my "Catholic Yearnings, the Discussion of Apostolic Succession and Ordination in *The Versicle*."

cause us to look for that reality more diligently in other aspects of the liturgy as well.¹⁷

What else is going on within the assembly, and how might we learn more about it?

Recently, for instance, I have become aware of the profound experiences of some of our home communion servers and plan to share some of that testimony in forthcoming work.

We would benefit from more first person testimonies of lay communicants. What is their experience, and what does it mean? What does it mean for the whole people of God to participate in the liturgy in a full, conscious and active manner, and what kind of spirituality supports it?¹⁸ We simply have not done much with themes of this type, and I hope that we will give more attention to them without losing all that we have gained in our reflections on the ordained office.

Doubtless you also noticed the language of “men” and “our boys” in reference to members of the Order, a usage that reflected the times during which those statements were made. But, it may well be that a bias toward maleness remains part of our shadow, although, given the fact that I am a man, I am not particularly qualified to see it. I will note, however, that of the ten Presidents or Abbots that have served in our sixty years, all have been men and all ordained. There is, of course, no fundamental reason why an Abbot (or Abbess) should be ordained; historically, many were not ordained. And there is even less reason why the leader of the Order should be male. Hopefully, our history will look a bit different when the next sixty-year retrospective is written.

¹⁷ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council*, Study Club Edition, with a commentary by Gerard S. Sloyan. (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1964), 33, ¶ 7. See also Maxwell Johnson, “The ‘Real’ and Multiple ‘Presences’ of Christ in Contemporary Lutheran Liturgical and Sacramental Practice” in *Worship: Rites, Feasts, and Reflections* (Portland, Oregon: The Pastoral Press, 2004), 125-140.

¹⁸ The committee that developed *This Holy Mystery* did some of this work through their listening post meetings. I did some research on the experience of lay communicants for my book *Let Every Soul Be Jesus’ Guest*. But, we need to learn much more.

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