

Dom Virgil Michel and the Liturgical Movement in the USA

Oral Presentation

THEO 143 – Liturgy and Spirituality

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Outline

- **Motivation**
- **Biographical sketch**
- **From Europe to the US**
- **The liturgical movement in the US**
- **Liturgical components**
- **Social components**
- **Other components**
- **Conclusions**

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Motivation

- **The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy**
- **Full and active participation in the liturgy**
- **Social justice**
- **The Mystical Body of Christ**
- **Dom Virgil Michel, O.S.B. (1890-1938)**

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Biographical sketch



- **Founder of a magazine and a publishing house**
- **English and philosophy professor**
- **Dean of a college**
- **Violinist in the University orchestra**
- **Baseball and tennis star**
- **Coach of a Prep School athletics**
- **Translator**
- **Prolific writer**

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From Europe to the US

- **Dom Virgil: studies in Rome and Louvain**
- **Philosophy and liturgy**
- **Became a disciple and friend of Dom Lambert Beauduin**
- **Visited the abbeys of:**
 - **Solesmes (*France*)**
 - **Beuron and Maria Laach (*Germany*)**
 - **Maredsous and Mont Cesar (*Belgium*)**
- **Returned to the US in Sep 1925, to St. John's Abbey, in Collegeville, MN**

From Europe to the US

- **Founded *The Liturgical Press***
- **Launched the publication *Orate Fratres* (“Pray Brothers and Sisters”)**
- **His liturgical vision:**
 - **Parishes, communities of service and love**
 - **Concern for daily lives, national questions, world problems**
 - **Care for the alienated from the economic order**
 - **Full and active participation in the liturgy**
 - ***Lex orandi > lex credendi > lex vivendi***

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The movement in the US

- **The pioneers:**
 - **Clergy**
 - **Lay men *and* women**
- **Fundamental principle: full and active participation in the liturgy of *all* baptized**
- **Difference between *organization* and *organism***

The movement in the US

- ***The Mystical Body of Christ***
- ***The Eucharistic table: the place where parishioners are drawn to participate in the sacrament of Christ, and the place from where they are sent forth to care for the poor and the needy***
- **The opposition and/or resistance**

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Liturgical components

- **Dom Virgil in the *Editor's Corner* of the first edition of *Orate Fratres*:**

The center of the religious worship of the Church is the Mass, both as sacrifice and sacrament. And participation of the faithful in the liturgy of the Church must mean primarily participation in the Mass. The idea of this participation was never better expressed than by Pius X, when he gave his oft-quoted exhortation:

Do not pray in the Mass, but pray the Mass.

Liturgical components

- Mass: ~~hear, attend~~ > offer, celebrate, attend at
- Missals
- Reception of Communion *within* Mass
 - The non-Communion Mass is always as absurd as a family dinner with nobody eating. (Fr. Cummins)
- The Liturgy of the Hours

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Social components

- ***Dom Virgil defined social justice as that virtue by which individuals and groups contribute their positive share to the maintenance of the common good and moreover regulate all their actions in proper relation to the common good.***
- **Participation in the Mass > understanding of the Mystical Body > Christian social action (Catherine De Hueck)**

Social components

– Historical context:

- **Industrial Revolution**
- **Encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931)**
- **The Great Depression**

– Dom Virgil's personal context:

- **The writings of Orestes Brownson**
- **The stay at the Chippewa Indian Reservation between 1930 and 1933**

Social components

- **Catholic social initiatives of the 1930s that became linked with the liturgical movement:**
 - **Catholic Action (1920s)**
 - **Catholic Worker (1933)**
 - **Friendship House (early 1930s)**
 - **The Grail Movement (1941)**
 - **Catholic Family Movement (1943)**

Social components

- **A short anecdote about Dom Virgil, social action and the liturgy:**

How fortunate you are ... This is what I have been dreaming about. You are discouraged. You need the Mass. You must persevere by all means. You have a vocation. Study the Mass, live the Mass. Between two Masses, you can bear everything.

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Other Components

- **National liturgical days > national liturgical weeks**
- ***Missa recitata* in St. Louis and Chicago**
- **Sara O'Neill and St. Benet's Bookstore in Chicago**
- **The Vernacular Society**

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Conclusions

- **Dom Virgil never saw the fruit of his labor**
- **Encyclicals *Mystici Corporis Christi* (1943) and *Mediator Dei* (1947)**
- **National liturgical commissions**
- **Gradual concessions from the Vatican: evening Mass, shorter Eucharistic fast, *Roman Ritual* with portions in native languages, Missals translated to foreign languages etc**

Conclusions

- *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, promulgated on 4 Dec 1963; under implementation since 1965 ...**
- Liturgically speaking, we have definitely come a long way ...**
- But socially speaking, we are still lacking ... the liturgy has been reformed and revitalized, but many hearts and lives have not, yet ...**

Conclusions

- Across the board, there remains a desperate need for further liturgical catechesis as too many of those present on Sunday morning fail to realize that as the Church of Jesus Christ, they are the very body of Christ which they gather to celebrate: thus, the chasm between worship and daily life remains very wide indeed. (Pecklers, 2003)**