

Initial reflections on the experience of the late medieval
Mass in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary
in choir on Saturday during Christmastide
at Christ Church, Bronxville, New York
on Monday, 17 January 2011

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This report relates principally to the experience of the celebration of the Christmastide Lady Mass in New York in January 2011. That said, it is written by someone who was involved in the preparation and rehearsal of the Mass, and sat in the choir, close to the action, and indeed in a position to prompt in case of difficulty. A separate appendix deals with some of the issues of engaging with the original text and instructions, and interpreting and adapting them for performance of the liturgy.

Mass in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary during Christmastide was celebrated at 4 pm on Monday 17 January 2011 at Christ Church, Bronxville, New York. The order followed that of the Commemoration of the BVM celebrated each Saturday in Quire (in contrast to other celebrations in the Lady Chapel on the remaining days of the week). The Mass was conducted by three clergy, with four servers, and a professional choir of 14 singers with a director. Three others with responsibility for planning the service and ritual were also robed in choir. The service was attended by delegates at the winter regional conference of the Anglican Association of Musicians (c. 100 – including at least 20 clergy) and members of the parish congregation (c. 25).

1. The church building and spatial configuration

Christ Church, Bronxville is a traditional stone church built in the 1920s and later adjusted to meet the needs of a ritual practice based on principles and directions set out by Percy Dearmer in *The Parson's Handbook* (London, 1899, running to 12 editions by 1932) and other publications. (See illustrations attached.) There is a small sanctuary (intended for a 'Mattins church' rather than Eucharist with three ministers and four servers), substantial choir stalls (three rows on each side), nave, two generous aisles and western gallery over the narthex. On the south side of the chancel is a Lady Chapel; on the north side a baptistery and sacristy. Both altars in the church assume eastward-facing celebration. For this celebration the wooden altar rails in the sanctuary were removed, allowing more space for the ritual.

2. Atmosphere and light

The service was conducted on a winter afternoon when the light had gone, and we were reliant on artificial light. In the nave the lighting level was subdued, but in the chancel and sanctuary the lights were at their normal level. Undoubtedly this created a contrast of atmosphere, and this was observed from the nave and gallery: the action in chancel and sanctuary seemed too bright. The light had a distinct impact on the atmosphere, and implicitly created a tension between the 'mystery' of the celebration and the 'clarity' of the setting.

3. Layering of event: the entrance of the clergy and singing of Introit and Kyrie

The first point at which clergy and choir coincide is the intonation of Gloria in excelsis: the clergy's preparation and vesting in the sacristy, entry to the church, confession and approach to the altar, censing of the altar and recitation of Introit and Kyrie all take place while the choir sings Introit and Kyrie. This is what is specified in the rubrics. This opening section underlines the distinction and liturgical separation of clergy and choir throughout the Mass: the moments of coincidence when all are engaged in a single liturgical action or text are in the minority. Furthermore, it provides an example of the contrast between the extent of text shared only between the priest, deacon and subdeacon (or in some instances recited privately by the priest), and that text which is voiced. Not only are the words of the clergy 'veiled' by the sung chant, but much of their action is concealed, since they face away from the people at the eastern end of the church, towards the altar. One is aware that the clergy are engaged in other things, but not able to hear what is being said or done. At Bronxville the preparation in the sacristy began before the Introit, and the murmuring of prayer could just be heard by the singers and congregation in church.

4. The preparation of the bread, wine and sacred vessels

This celebration brought home the very slow process of preparation for what we would now term the Liturgy of the Eucharist during the Liturgy of the Word. The taperers, having led the clergy into the sanctuary during the Introit, then returned to the sacristy. One of them brought in the lavabo bowl with water and towel to the sanctuary. Then both brought the bread (on this occasion in a ciborium) and the cruets of wine and water to the place of preparation; at Bronxville this was the Lady Chapel altar. Having done this, the taperers returned to the sanctuary, took up their candles, and went again to the sacristy. They then led the acolyte (who had not entered with the clergy procession) bearing the chalice, paten and corporals to the place of preparation at the Lady Chapel altar. The acolyte then went to the altar of celebration and placed the corporals upon it.

All this took place during the clergy preparation before the altar, the approach to the altar, and the censing of the altar, and while the choir sing Introit and Kyrie. Three layers of liturgical event were apparent, to which can be added the thurifer's preparation for the censing of the altar.

Though less visible to those in choir or nave, the process of preparation continued during the singing of the Gradual, Alleluia and Sequence. The subdeacon, having washed his hands, went with the acolyte to the Lady Chapel altar and there placed the bread (a single host) on the paten, and mixed wine with water in the chalice. The last stage of preparation took place during the singing of the Offertory, when the acolyte brought the chalice and paten with the remaining corporals to the altar of celebration.

5. The Liturgical Books and Pax Board

Three books were used – to recite the Epistle, the Gospel, and the Mass text itself. The Mass book was placed on the altar either at the right-hand side or near the centre, according to the position of the celebrating priest. It was principally used only by the priest, though it could be seen by both deacon and subdeacon when they gathered round the priest to recite a shared text. The Epistle book was placed on the credence 'table' to the right of the altar (at Bronxville this was a niche with shelf). During the collect, the subdeacon took it, went to the

far end of the choir, and recited the Epistle. For the recitation, the deacon did not face the people but eastward, facing the singers, clergy and altar.

The Gospel book was principally used by the deacon to recite the Gospel. For that purpose it was brought in procession by the deacon from the sanctuary to the western end of the choir, led by thurifer and taperers. There the book was held by the subdeacon during the recitation. As the rubrics direct, the deacon turned east to announce the Gospel, he faced north to recite it, and then returned to the sanctuary. Although the additional ceremony before the proclamation of the Gospel seemed fitting, it was not apparent why the deacon faced north (towards neither clergy and singers nor people): this seemed to be one of the few moments when the reason for an action seemed unclear.¹

Although the Gospel book was essential for the recitation of the Gospel, it had other significance. It was revered with a kiss on four occasions: during the initial preparation, by the celebrant after the first censing of the altar and celebrant; by the deacon immediately after reading the Gospel; by the celebrant when the book was then brought back to the sanctuary; and finally by each person in choir in turn, after they have each been censed. (This final ritual took place, as the rubrics direct, after the Credo and Offertory has been sung, not directly after the Gospel.)

Comparable ritual kissing took place after the Canon of the Mass: the sharing of the Pax Board (generally a small rectangular object of wood or precious metal, with a Christian image or symbol on its front – at Bronxville a small icon was used). Having completed the Canon and recited the Lord's Prayer and Agnus Dei, the celebrant greeted the deacon with a ritual kiss of peace, and then gave him the Pax Board. The board (with ritual words of peace) was shared by the deacon first with the subdeacon and then with the rulers of the choir. They in turn took it to each person in choir, where it was kissed (by those in the front row) or honoured by a bow (by those in the second and third row, one by one: it was solemn, unhurried, and visible to all present. The reverencing of the Pax Board, as with the Gospel book, was a tactile, gestural and visual experience when an object sanctified by incense at the altar was shared by all in choir and sanctuary.

6. Purposeful washing of hands and use of incense

Some ritual actions can appear superficial in modern celebrations, mere echoes of what was once symbolic or even practical. In this Mass the purposefulness of the actions took on greater significance. Each of the ministers washed his hands before undertaking an action where clean hands were required: the subdeacon did so during the singing of the Gradual before preparing the bread, wine and water; the deacon, during the Alleluia, before he laid out the corporals on the altar; the celebrant at the Offertory, before consecrating the elements; and the deacon once again in the latter part of the Canon, before holding up the corporal which had covered the consecrated host, and then the paten on which the broken, consecrated host was to be placed. Finally, the celebrant washed his hands after washing the chalice and paten after communion. (The action of washing was visible to those of us at the eastern end in choir, but less apparent elsewhere in the church.)

¹ In the rubrics a taperer and another boy are directed to prepare the eagle (i.e. lectern with eagle head) by placing a hanging over it before the Gospel. In this case it seems all the stranger that the subdeacon holds the Gospel book for the deacon.

The specified use of incense was also judicious and purposeful. At the beginning of the Mass, when the ministers have approached the altar, the celebrant ritually purified the altar of celebration by censuring, and then was himself purified before he kissed the Gospel book and then began his own recitation of the Introit and Kyrie. The deacon censured the altar, on which the Gospel book was now placed, before taking it in procession to recite the Gospel. The celebrant censured the chalice and paten when they had been brought to the altar at the Offertory, and was himself censured before undertaking the consecration (and handling) of bread and wine during the Canon of the Mass. Finally each person in choir was censured before they kiss the Gospel book.

7. When servers are not required they do not remain in the sanctuary

The practicality of the ritual also extended to the servers. For instance, the acolyte did not enter with the other servers and ministers, because he was to bring in the sacred vessels and linen. There was no reason for him to come into the church before this, certainly not simply for the sake of processing. Furthermore, at the end of the Mass, he left the sanctuary before the clergy and servers in order to take the chalice, paten and corporals back to the sacristy: there was no need for them (or him) to remain in the sanctuary. In a comparably practical way, the taperers went to the choir stalls after their initial duties at the beginning of the Mass, and returned to the sanctuary only when they had a specific task to undertake – for instance, to lead the Gospel procession and light the Gospel book. Their candles otherwise remained in their place in the sanctuary; but the taperers went to stand with the choir.

8. The ritual engagement of the singers in choir

The same group of singers who took part in the Mass on Monday had sung Evensong on Sunday afternoon, broadly following the order of the Book of Common Prayer of 1559 with late sixteenth-century music. The contrast between musical demands on Sunday and ritual and musical demands on Monday was striking. At Evensong, their ritual actions were limited to three postures in the choir stalls – standing, kneeling, sitting, and turning east for the Creed. In the Mass there were internal musical rituals, for each item was begun by a designated person or persons: two rulers vested in copes for the Introit, Sequence, Offertory, Communion and Ordinary; two ‘boys’ at the choir step for the Gradual (at Bronxville sung by women); two of the second row for the Alleluia. Within the musical items themselves, there were additional changes of posture: bowing at the holy name and other designated phrases, turning east for Gloria Patri and certain portions of Gloria in excelsis. The two rulers also faced east to begin the Introit, Offertory, and Sequence. There were also significant portions of the Mass where all faced east: all the prayers, and for most of the Mass from *Sursum Corda* onwards, except for the complex polyphony of *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*.

The ritual actions of those in choir at the censuring, kissing of the Gospel, and sharing of the Pax have already been described. However, the posture during the singing of Gradual and Alleluia are notable. Having sat for the Epistle (as would still be customary) all except the two ‘boys’ facing eastward remained seated for both Gradual and Alleluia – the only items for which the singers were seated during the Mass. The designation of high voices to begin the Gradual chant, the only chant to be begun at the choir step, had both aural and visual significance in the contrast of both tessitura and location. One other aural practice was striking: those chants begun by the rulers followed a ritual pattern. The choral director (representing the precentor) sang the opening of the chant to the first ruler; the first ruler sang the same opening to the second ruler; then both turned east and began the chant together. A

similar practice occurred at the Gloria in excelsis: the ‘precentor’ sang the opening intonation to the first ruler, who then sang it to the celebrant at the altar, and only then did the priest intone the Gloria.

9. The overlaying of music in choir and liturgical texts and action in the sanctuary

In addition to the plainsong Propers and Kyrie, the choral director made the decision to include four movements from Taverner’s *Missa O Wilhelme bone pastor* (sometimes known as the ‘Small Devotion’ Mass). Each is an extended piece (between five and seven minutes). Gloria in excelsis stood alone, and once the ministers had recited the text at the altar they moved to the sedilia while the polyphonic text was sung. The other movements overlaid the liturgical texts and action in the sanctuary. The Sanctus followed the Preface, and was sung while the priest continued with the text of the Canon of the Mass. There followed a silence, while the priest recited the words of institution and elevated the host. The Benedictus followed while the priest completed the Canon. The combination of the priest’s solemn rite and the rich polyphony accompanying it had strong impact on the ministers at the altar, surrounded by musical prayer. However, the singing of Agnus Dei was even more powerful, sung as the priest shared the peace with his fellow ministers, recited the final prayers before Communion, and then received the sacrament.

10. The interpolation of the Communion of the People

Because the Mass formed the final act of worship of the conference, it had been decided that the people should be allowed to communicate in one kind. In the Middle Ages, such communion might only take place on Easter Day, and possibly after rather than during the course of the Mass. Here it took place after the communion of the priest. It offered opportunity to experiment with the use of a housling cloth – held outstretched by the taperers originally to avoid hands touching or taking away the sacrament, and to use an extended Communion chant (with psalm verses, as described in the late seventh/early eighth-century *Ordo Romanus I*) during the communion of the people and the ablutions.

11. The impact of the Mass on those present

At the time of writing this initial report, we are awaiting written reactions from the delegates at the conference, who have been invited to respond to three questions (as well as to make any further comments they may wish):

- What was your experience of worship in the Latin Mass?
- What sensory, emotional and spiritual responses did you encounter?
- Located in the nave, how did you engage with a celebration of a Eucharist that was principally shared by those in sanctuary and chancel?

What is recorded here is either personal reflection or based on informal conversations.

From a position in the chancel, one was struck by levels of overlaying of the aural and visual, already described in the opening of the Mass above, but persisting throughout. This was in marked contrast to the relatively straightforward rite of the Reconciliation of Penitents, in which the action and musical event were generally linear and closely related. Here there was a strong sense of two liturgies, in sanctuary and choir, which only coincided at certain key moments. Collect, Epistle, Gospel, Sursum corda and Preface, Elevation, Pater noster and Pax dialogue, Post-Communion prayer and *Ite missa est* marked the few occasions of a single complete text or action taking place in the same time-line. (While there may have been other

coincidences, such as the intonation of Gloria in excelsis and Credo, and the conclusion of prayers, these were not complete texts.) To the liturgy (or liturgies) in choir and sanctuary may be added the diversity of individual devotions among the congregation in the nave.

In conversation it was apparent that many in the nave had been struck by the special qualities of the Mass, and several saw parallels with their experience of Orthodox liturgy. Several valued the fact that, though they were aware of the extended prayer recited in full in the sanctuary, they valued both the modest extent of the text to which they were exposed, and its slow exposition in the polyphony. Both in sanctuary and nave, the combination of choral polyphony was particularly powerful, especially during the Agnus Dei.

The celebrant was particularly struck by the impact of the extended prayers of preparation before the Mass in the sacristy and at the altar steps. He commented further that, although there needed to be constant reference to the rubrics, the experience of worship was valid and strong. One observer (herself a priest) chose not to receive communion, but was especially struck by the humility exemplified by those who did receive as they struggled to kneel unsupported on the floor and raised themselves again; this was also affirmed by the deacon who stood next to the priest during the distribution of communion. The deacon was also surprised by the sense of intimacy at the altar, notwithstanding the formality of the Mass.

Although this was a Lady Mass it was striking that it felt so much like any Mass of the Day, free from what assumes to be Marian layers. To some extent this may be attributed to the need to concentrate on the regular action and texts of the Mass because they were so unfamiliar, and perhaps to the distance from textual immediacy occasioned by the use of Latin. However, the over-riding eastward, altar-focused trajectory of so much of the Mass seemed to emphasise its Christological and Trinitarian basis.

Points already made above – many of which would have been invisible to the congregation – also made their impact on me, standing on the back row in the choir: the practicality and purposefulness of so much of the ritual; the gradual process of preparation for the Eucharist during the first half of the Mass; the reverencing of the Gospel. There was also a consciousness of the privacy of so much done at the altar – which made it hard to be sure where in the text the ministers had reached, even so close to the sanctuary (standing no more than 15 feet from the celebrant). The need for the deacon and subdeacon to read the Missal to share in texts and dialogues with the celebrant, as well as to assist with actions, required them to be far closer than the coloured marker stones set into the top altar step to indicate where the deacon and subdeacon should stand.

That distinction of spacing, and the deacon's observation of the quality of intimacy within formality, raise the issue of the distinction of a reading of the medieval ceremonial directions within the aesthetic of the Anglican Church. This is especially relevant to the Anglican Church in the early twentieth century when the influence of Percy Dearmer and his contemporaries were so strong; or to a reading in relation to the aesthetic of the Roman Catholic Church at around the same time. The expectation of Marian fervour, so lacking in this Mass, may be derived from the emotive and sometimes sentimental engagement with Mary in Roman Catholic devotion even in the 1960s and 1970s. The 'high' Anglican practice exemplified at the parish Eucharist in Bronxville, is derived from late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century aesthetics, values and practices – especially those promulgated by Percy Dearmer and his contemporaries. These men were still determined to put clear water between the Anglican Church and Rome. The contrast of aesthetic may perhaps be most clearly

observed in their recommendations on the use of music: they promoted the syllabic, unison and congregational settings of the Ordinary of the Eucharist by Merbecke (from the sixteenth century), simple plainsong adapted to English (by W. H. Frere) and Martin Shaw (organist of Dearmer's church), and the hymnody found in *The English Hymnal* (of which Dearmer was text editor and overall driving force).

While the ritual of the Dearmer tradition may have been derived from late medieval English usage, the aesthetic was firmly rooted in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer (or rather in the movement towards the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, which brought the 1662 BCP closer to the 1549 book but was rejected by Parliament). The reforming spirit to be seemly but uncomplicated, free of superstition, together with the artistic aesthetic that was moving from elaborate Gothic revival to the simpler and more earthed idioms of the Arts and Crafts movement may provide another signal. Certainly, in comparing the Sunday Eucharist at Bronxville (a modern pastoral rite of the Episcopal Church of the USA, with eastward facing celebration and ritual in the tradition of 'English usage' of Dearmer) with the Lady Mass, it was apparent that the basis for the liturgy as a whole and the ritual action, overlaying and interplay of text, movement, gesture and music in the medieval Mass belonged to a different world of liturgical experience.

At Bronxville the celebration of the Lady Mass was placed in the context of modern, liberal, high Anglican observance. Many lay and ordained delegates to the conference and members of the parish community came with experience of and sympathy for that tradition, as did most of those in sanctuary and choir. While that tradition could serve as a marker, we were all far less attuned to the niceties of what was normative and what was particular within medieval ritual practice. The rank of a day or an individual service would have been absolutely apparent to those familiar with medieval liturgy: liturgical colours, elaborateness of vestments, choice of chants, and especially who sang what item from which position all signalled the ritual status and significance of the service. For us the whole experience was special, individual and particular: very little was normative.

12. Things that could have been different

The service was planned by email by six people in five different parts of the UK and USA: Salisbury and Anglesey in the UK, and Bronxville (NY), St Louis (MO), and South Bend (IN). It was scheduled in a full weekend conference (Friday evening to Monday afternoon) which included one concert, five services, six full-length papers, a round table and an open rehearsal. We were faced with an entirely unfamiliar team, an entirely 'new' and complex liturgy (texts, actions, chant and polyphony), a crowded conference timetable, and very limited time for rehearsal.

There were additional constraints: the designated subdeacon was unavailable until the final rehearsal before the service and one of the speakers therefore took his place in both rehearsal and Mass; the deacon fell ill on the morning of the celebration and a replacement had to be recruited from the delegates before the final rehearsal; before lunch the rehearsal script with all the variant pencil notes was removed from a chair in the conference hall and never traced; the singers were not booked to arrive until 30 minutes into the final 90-minute rehearsal; and there was no time to go over a procession with the thurifer (who had to miss part of the Saturday night rehearsal). There was also no opportunity at all to explain to the singers the significance of the ritual as a whole or the specific ritual actions they undertook: they simply

followed the instructions during the Mass (while at the same time singing demanding chant and polyphony).

Given the strictures of preparation time and the complexity of overlaid actions (including music), the outcome was seemly, convincing and prayerful – if at some moments not entirely assured. The impact on those in the nave was very strong. Admittedly the thurifer had to be recovered by the deacon when he set out on a procession before the necessary ritual acts at the altar before the Gospel, and then got stranded in the final procession of clergy at the end of the Mass. The deacon failed to lift the paten as required (losing one important visual signal); this left the subdeacon to deal with the sharing of the Pax Board, who then found himself waiting at the altar step facing the congregation during much of a polyphonic Agnus Dei: the choir rulers could not come to take it from him before the singing finished. (Ironically one member of the congregation found the combination of the holding of the image of Christ on the pax board before the people and the singing of Agnus Dei one of the most telling moments in the Mass – demonstrating that even the unintentional can reveal meaning.)

There were more mundane issues from which to learn. Although there were five separate service books, each consisting of carefully rubricated text for the three ministers, the servers and the singers, there was no master script which included everyone's texts and instructions. That needs to be rectified – even though there will be times when three or four actions are taking place simultaneously. Furthermore, within the books, too many of the detailed instructions were conveyed in prose: fine for study, but diagrams or other immediately communicating symbols were needed as aide-memoire in the service itself. In some cases a crib card tucked up a sleeve would have been useful. (The acolyte was notable in his analysis and speedy absorption of his role: 'I have five things to do ...')

Also at a practical level, the intimacy and relative invisibility of the clergy action and the inaudibility of so much recited at the altar made it difficult to discern where in the text the ministers had reached. This was not generally a problem, but it was impossible to tell when to 'toll' the bell for the elevation:² perhaps this is a practical indication of the need for a small bell to be rung by one who is present in the sanctuary and can observe the action and hear even softly recited texts.

jmh
February 2011

² Bronxville has no bells in the tower yet, so the chimes on the organ were used. As the person responsible for this (and supplied with a script), I could only know when to toll for the elevation when the host appeared above the priest's head.

Appendix: from source to performance text and specific location

This appendix addresses a series of issues that illustrate the challenges of reading, understanding, interpreting and enacting the texts found in medieval sources. Some of them are generic; others relate to specific locations. Almost all the discussion here relates to the ritual rather than to the manner of singing or reciting the text. For the most part, the items are dealt with in the same order as in the main report above.

The preparation of the rite of Reconciliation of Penitents for St Teilo's church in 2010 and of the Easter Vespers with Procession in 2008 for Salisbury Cathedral had established the challenges of the transition from source material to performance, especially in three respects: the incompleteness of instructions contained in rubrics and customaries; the need (even in Salisbury Cathedral for which the rubrics were intended) to adapt instructions to the configuration of the specific building (and in some cases the people available); that even with complete liturgical texts there is uncertainty how they were recited, especially with regard to pace and dynamic level.

Both the Reconciliation rite and Easter Vespers were relatively fully rubricated because they were in some respect distinctive and particular in the annual cycle of the liturgy. By contrast, Lady Mass was a derivative of the regular daily (generally more than daily) celebration of the Mass. To establish a full order of texts and instructions it was necessary to draw together materials from different sources and different parts of those sources, some of them as much as 300 years apart. Time and again, only the exceptional rather than the normative is recorded. Furthermore, sources written at different times, even for the same institution, have different instructions. For instance, in the Old Customary for Salisbury (c. 1200), the final preparation of the sacred vessels takes place during the recitation of the Credo; but in the New Customary (c. 1300) and later Salisbury Missals, it takes place after the Credo, during the Offertory chant.³ We followed the later practice.

A further contrast with both the Reconciliation rite and Easter Vespers was the level of complexity in the Mass and the overlaying of action and/or text. In the Mass, as I have already commented, there are rarely times when fewer than two events are taking place simultaneously, and sometimes more; in the Reconciliation rite and Vespers events were almost always single and successive, not overlaid.

In both the preparation and the rehearsal of the Mass, judgements had to be made about what was practical or simply seemed sensible – either because there was no rubric to follow, or because the rubric was hard to fathom. Take, for instance, hand positions. There are no directions about the normative way to hold one's hands as either clergy or server or singer when not holding something. Clergy and servers followed normal modern 'high church' custom in holding hands together, palm to palm with fingers outstretched in front of the lower chest. However, in the Canon of the Mass, the celebrant is required to have crossed (or perhaps latticed) hands – *cancellatis manibus*, an instruction which is hard to interpret with certainty, and where a pragmatic interpretation had to be devised.

The high point of the medieval Mass was the Elevation of the Host. This was accompanied by the ringing of the sacring bell. Apart from the difficulties of discerning when this should

³ In order to garner the fullest directions regarding the manner of celebration, as wide a range of relevant sources as possible needs to be consulted.

be rung (see 12 above), there are no rubrics to indicate when or how it should be rung; nor are contemporary texts more helpful about this or when the Benedictus should begin. In general it is apparent that bells are rung by way of warning: for instance, directions to parish clerks indicate that the bells before a service were rung half an hour, fifteen minutes and just before a service began to call the faithful to church. By transference, it might be expected that the sacring bell would be rung before as well as at the Elevation of the Host. Was it also rung at the secondary elevation of the chalice, or did this take place during the singing of Benedictus? Nineteenth- and twentieth-century practice (especially for the Tridentine Mass) might not be a valid indicator of earlier practice.

There were other instances where out of caution or necessity we overrode the rubrics. There had been no opportunity to rehearse the opening of the Mass, and we were concerned about timing; so we began the clergy's preparation and vesting before the Introit had started, rather than with the beginning of the Introit. Consequently, rather than follow the rubric which required the clergy to enter after the Introit antiphon and psalm verse at the beginning of the Gloria Patri, the clergy procession entered at the intonation of the Introit (allowing about another three minutes or so for the ritual action). In practice, the impact of the stilling of the church after the singers had entered (informally) coupled with the distant murmuring of the clergy preparation in the sacristy had a distinct impact (see 11. above).

There were other instances where the configuration of the church drew particular attention to the actions required by the rubrics. At Bronxville the sacristy was on the opposite side of the church to the place of preparation at the altar in the Lady Chapel. The taperers' and acolyte's movements (described in 4. above) had a strong visual impression: leaving the sacristy, they passed through the baptistery and across the front of the nave in front of the congregation, and into the Lady Chapel on the opposite side. This movement created a far stronger impact than would have been the case had the sacristy, place of preparation, and altar of celebration been adjacent.

The practicalities of where the taperers should go when they are inactive are derived from instructions in both the Old and New Customaries. These are of two kinds: first after the entrance and the Gospel procession, when they are instructed to set down their candles, and then after the Offertory, when they are instructed to go to their places in the choir until next required. Taken together, these directives suggest that when the taperers had nothing to do they returned to their usual place, which at Salisbury would have been the front bench in Quire. Late medieval representations of the Mass which show only priest, deacon and subdeacon in the sanctuary may therefore not be examples of artistic licence (where the painter has exercised selectivity in the inclusion only of significant participants) but of actual practice.

The directives about the books used by the clergy are not entirely clear. In smaller parish churches in the later Middle Ages, a single Missal may have sufficed. Up to the eleventh century at least, separate books for different text types were the norm. The separation of Gospel book and Missal is quite clear: the use of a separate Epistle book is implicit.

The rubrics make it plain that when Lady Mass was celebrated as the main Mass of the day on Saturday, both the Epistle and the Gospel should be sung from the pulpitum.⁴ What

⁴ Pulpitum: a stone or wooden gallery over the screen that divided the choir and presbytery from the nave. Memorable medieval examples which survive can be found in the cathedrals of Canterbury, Chester, Exeter,

happened in medieval churches where, as at Bronxville, there was no pulpitum? On this occasion two low platforms were placed at the entrance to the chancel, marking its separation from the nave. But in some churches there was a screen but no pulpitum (or even a pulpitum without ready access), and in others no screen at all. Were Epistle and Gospel recited at the western end of the choir on these days – and if so was that from within the choir or in the eastern end of the nave? Or were they recited, as on ordinary weekdays, from the sanctuary?

After the Epistle, two ‘boys’ are directed to move to the choir step to begin the Gradual chant. In doing so, they are directed to remove their choir copes. At Bronxville both the rulers and the two ‘boys’ wore coloured copes (two pairs of matching copes for each category). In the Middle Ages everyone in choir would have been wearing their black choir cope over their surplice, except for the rulers: they alone were distinguished from everyone else in choir by wearing silk copes. At Bronxville the ‘boys’ were in coloured copes as well as the rulers, and the rest of the choir were in surplices. At the Gradual in Bronxville, the ‘boys’ removed their coloured copes, and therefore resembled the rest of the choir. In the medieval rite, when the boys removed their choir copes they would have been distinguished from all else in choir, as the only persons whose white surplices were visible. Although the medieval rubric was observed at Bronxville, the visual impact was effectively inverted.

The sharing of the Pax board at Bronxville did not follow the rubric for practical reasons. According to the rubric, the rulers received the Pax Board from the deacon, and took it to the most senior person on their side. In turn, each person received the Pax Board with the words of peace, kissed the board, and then repeated the ritual as he passed it on to his neighbour. In parishes the sharing of the Pax Board was conducted by the parish clerk. At a time when no one but the priest received the consecrated bread and wine, such rituals of touch had far greater significance.

The sharing of the peace raised an additional problem. During the singing of the polyphonic Agnus Dei the rulers were fully occupied and the singers were unable to share the Pax Board. This would not have been the case had the Agnus Dei been sung to the plainsong chant. This in turn raised the question about the relationship between the polyphonic singers and the ritual action: might the sharing of the Pax Board have continued during the extended polyphonic Agnus Dei (probably sung by only a small number of those present)? Moreover, might there be instances where polyphony displaced some of the ritual action, offering in aural textures comparable richness to the ceremonial?⁵

The decision to sing polyphony in choir also had an impact on posture. During Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei the singers should have been facing east. In practice the singers at Bronxville faced inwards for the complex polyphony. In late medieval illustrations, polyphonic singers are often depicted gathered around a lectern; in some instances this is evidently at the western end of the choir (where the rulers stood), and by default the singers are facing east.

Gloucester, Lincoln, Manchester, Ripon, Rochester, St Albans, York, inter alia. On greater festal days the solo sections of Gradual and Alleluia were also sung from the pulpitum.

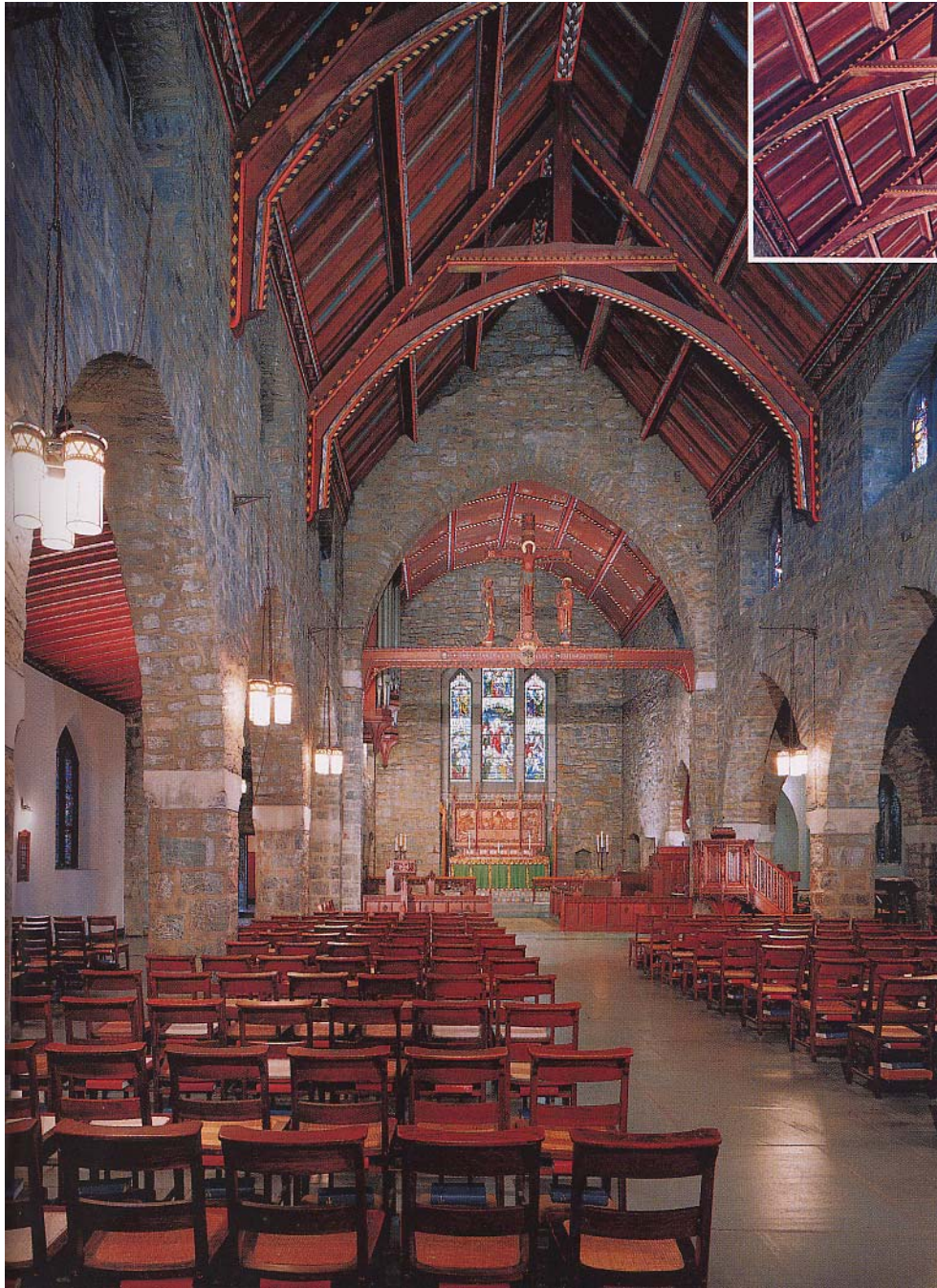
⁵ The evidence of the diaries of the master of ceremonies at the Papal Chapel indicates the physical and ritual separation of the ministers, assistants and clergy in the Sistine Chapel and the singers in the gallery. More extremely, in seventeenth-century France, mass at the court of Louis XIV consisted of grand motet, petit motet, and *Domine salvum fac* sung at gallery level opposite the king with low mass celebrated by a friar at ground level. Only at the elevation (which followed the conclusion of the grand motet) did music and liturgy coincide.

Throughout the Mass everyone was dealing with unfamiliar texts and ritual actions. They needed to have texts available to prompt them. This again resulted in compromise during the last Gospel (John 1.1-14), which should have been sung by the priest as he processed. As a daily text, there is little doubt that priests knew it by heart. However, at Bronxville, although the celebrant might have been able to recite it from memory in the English translation of the King James Bible, it required a text to recite it in Latin. Therefore the procession stopped in the chancel, and all faced east while the priest sang the last Gospel.

One final point, which comes last in spite of the fact that it was evident from the outset of the Mass, is the presence of women in the chancel. Except in nunneries this would be unheard of in the Middle Ages (and in some churches today); and even in mixed monasteries (e.g. the Gilbertines) monks and nuns would have been in separate choirs adjacent in the church. However, once we had accepted that there were no boys available to sing this Mass, the issue of gender seemed irrelevant. The use of female sopranos and altos has so far elicited no comment from anyone present.



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