ELEVATIONS, PART II

Undoubtedly the most memorable moment of “elevation” within the Mass occurs at the heart of the Eucharistic Prayer after the words of consecration. Because this gesture has become iconic and so deeply associated with the Mass, we might be surprised to know that in fact it is only a liturgical development from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Flowing from the desire of the faithful to see the precise moment when the host becomes the sacred species, “the Bishop of Paris in 1210 ordered that the priests should hold the host breast-high, before the consecration, and only after the consecration should they lift it high enough to be seen by all.” (Jungmann, 207) This practice quickly spread, but the parallel elevation of the chalice was slower to develop. Of course, by the Roman Missal of Pius V in 1570, the elevation of both species after the words of consecration became proscribed. As Jungmann summarizes, “The desire of gazing upon the Lord’s Body was the driving force which, since the twelfth century, brought about this intrusion of a very notable innovation into the canon which for ages had been regarded as an inviolable sanctuary” (Jungmann, 208). As Gerard Grant notes, “the elevation of the Host may be regarded as a touchstone of the Western liturgical spirit” (Grant, 229).

This history moves us to a further point of reflection that some might find surprising. In no missal (either before or after the liturgical reform) is there a rubric to “elevate” the host or the chalice! The rubric in both the Roman Missal of 1962 and the Roman Missal of 1969 reads “ostendit populo,” that is, “shows [it] to the people.” We can take this dictional detail along with the history of this gesture to help direct our ars celebrandi.

At this second moment of elevation, that is of the host or chalice during and after the words of consecration, we in fact see two levels of elevation. First, before and during their respective consecratory statements, the host and chalice are “slightly raised” (cf. RM 89-90). This would seem to correlate to the level they are raised during the offertory prayers. As we read in the historical development, this slight raising is not a “showing,” for the faithful are not looking upon the host or the chalice before the words of consecration in adoration, lest they worship the creature and not the creator. Peter Elliott reminds us, the priest should not take the paten

CALENDAR NOTES

JAN 1
Holy Mary Mother of God

- NOT OBLIGATORY THIS YEAR
  According to US Norms, when this holy day falls on a Saturday, the obligation is dispensed.

- EVENING MASS
  Because the Epiphany of the Lord is a Feast of greater liturgical precedence with a proper Vigil Mass, Masses in the evening must be taken from The Epiphany of the Lord.

JAN 2
The Epiphany of the Lord

- ANNOUNCEMENT OF EASTER AND THE MOVEABLE FEASTS
  This ancient custom sanctifies the created temporal reality expressed by the calendar year. The text for the Epiphany Proclamation with dates for 2022 can be found online here. A pointed version for chant can be found online here. During the Mass of the Day, the proclamation is solemnly recited or chanted after the Gospel or within or after the Homily.

- BLESSED CHALK
  There is a tradition of blessing chalk for families to take home on Epiphany to bless their houses for a new year. Priests can use different formulae to bless the chalk outside of Mass or after the Prayer after Communion, but here are some links to suggestions: Roman Ritual (cf. Weller, Roman Ritual III, 10), Dioc. Davenport

JAN 9
The Baptism of the Lord

NB: there are 2 sets of options for the readings. Prepare accordingly.
or ciborium in his hands when slightly elevating the host. (cf. Elliott, par. 299) Second, after the words of consecration are pronounced the sacred species are “shown” to the people. Allowing the word’s denotation to penetrate the action, we can consider this rubric under the hermeneutic of noble simplicity proper to the Roman Rite. We should not interpret “show” to mean an overdramatized gesture, neither a panoramic movement nor otherwise. Simply speaking, whether the Mass is being celebrated ad orientem or versus populum, whether there are candles or a crucifix or anything else between the people and the priest, the host and the chalice must be raised to a height over the corporal so that all might look upon the sacred species. Elliot reflects, “It seems preferable to elevate the Host at least above eye-level, where it would obscure the celebrants face. The action is more significant if he raises the Host higher, without stretching” (Elliott, par. 301, emph. added). The same is true of the elevated height of the base of the chalice. Likewise, the hands and fingers of the priest should be arranged such that the host is minimally obscured. Traditionally, it is only the thumbs and forefingers which touch the host, and the right hand holds the node of the chalice while the left holds the base. The duration of the elevation should be reserved: neither too rapid, nor too curt; neither too prolonged, nor too perfunctory. As Elliott describes it, “The elevation of the Host should be a gracious and unhurried ‘showing’ of the Body of Christ to His people” (ibid.). The prepared and well-executed tintinnabulation (ringing of the bells, once or three times) can assist in indicating the duration appropriate for the elevation. Despite this being the “touchstone” moment of elevation in the Eucharist, the remaining two moments are equally important and will be discussed in future issues.

Rev. Zachary M. Boazman

RESOURCES

Water, Light, and Life
A Lenten Parish Mission
Paul Radkowski and Rodica Stoicoiu

This multi-generational prepackaged mission is practical, adaptable, and easy for any parish staff to organize and implement. During this four-session mission, participants of all ages will reflect on the stories of the Samaritan woman at the well, the curing of the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus from John’s Gospel. It is the perfect way for parish staff to animate parishioners during the Lenten season as the community journeys to Easter and prepares to celebrate baptism and renew baptismal promises. The Secretariat for Divine Worship has a sample copy for priests and parish leaders to access as you plan for the lenten season around the corner!