



INSTITUTO NACIONAL HISPANO de LITURGIA

POPULAR PIETY AND LITURGY

Many authors have written about this relationship since 1963, but, in particular, since Pope Paul VI's Exhortation on Evangelization of 1975. The purist side of liturgists does not seem to care much for any type of integration of popular piety in the liturgy of the Church. By the same token, the abuses of popular religiosity prior to the Council have been curtailed, since, preferably, all of popular piety should be aimed at a better understanding of the Paschal Mystery proclaimed and celebrated by the Roman Liturgy.

The challenge is ours to face and to confront our own situation in the United States among our Hispanic Catholics. Faced with a culture of death, and called to announce and recreate a civilization of love, are we willing to take Hispanic liturgy and popular religiosity seriously?

Hispanic liturgy and popular religiosity are not only here to stay, but to grow. Just as one cannot abandon liturgy to itself, for it might tend to lack its focus and the people for whom it is intended—one cannot abandon popular religiosity to itself, for it can be easily manipulated by other entities and for other ends that might deviate it from its liberating power.

The anthropological and theological analysis, already available from the Mexican-American perspective and the Caribbean worldview,¹ among others, must reach our Seminaries and the curriculum of all universities and centers of learning. Our

future priests must understand how our people move and are moved at worship. Our pastoral agents must also learn how not to rationalize liturgy and popular religiosity and, thus, not to relegate them to "Cinderella" roles, the "filler" courses and independent studies, thereby diminishing their importance in relation to other areas of theological research.

All of us must heed the voice of the liturgical reform uttered by *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the subsequent documentation discerned and issued by the post-Conciliar group of *periti* known as the *Consilium*.² If the motivating force of the reform became grounded in the criteria of *participation, the rediscovery of the Scriptures, the use of the language of the people, the development of ministries, and the cultural adaptation currently referred to as "inculturation,"* then we would already have with us an overwhelming treasure of spiritual wealth in the interaction between liturgy and popular religiosity.

Lastly, all of us must heed the voice of our people, whom we serve and for whom we exist (*sensus fidelium*). In their need, they cry for worship that can heal them and free them. In their joy, they long for worship that can help them share their humanity through its best possible cultural mediation—their symbols. And in their hope they look toward us with pride so that we can help them become pilgrims of love

¹ the work of Virgilio Elizondo, Arturo Perez, and the Instituto de Liturgia Hispana can be useful for seminaries and universities addressing the question of the anthropological and theological aspects of Hispanic devotional practices and liturgy.

² *Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de sacra Liturgia* (The Council for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy). See Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 49-53.

on their journey of faith, not messengers of despair and death. Are we willing and ready to walk with them these extra miles by reaching out to them at the deepest core, their "circle of intangibles," and help them experience the liberating presence of the Spirit-at-work within and among them through the powerful interplay between (our/their) Hispanic liturgy and (our/their) popular religiosity?