

Catechism on the Liturgy I,9

f. The religion of the Chosen People was no exception to this principle. In order to teach the children of Abraham what was sacred and what was not, a plethora of sacred paraphernalia, holy days and clothing was employed in the service of God to teach them the idea of the holy.

But there was yet another idea to be expressed by the priesthood. The object of reconciliation was holiness. Israel was to be 'a holy nation' – reconciled through the 'sprinkling of blood;' brought near to and kept in fellowship with God by that means. The priesthood, as the representative offerers of that blood and mediators of the people, were also to show forth the 'holiness' of Israel. Every one knows how this was symbolized by the gold-plate which the high-priest wore on his forehead, and which bore the words: 'Holiness unto Jehovah.' But though the high-priest in this, as in every other respect, was the fullest embodiment of the functions and the object of the priesthood, the same truth was also otherwise shown forth. The bodily qualifications required in the priesthood, the kind of defilements which would temporarily or wholly interrupt their functions, their mode of ordination, and even every portion, material and color of their distinctive dress were all intended

to express in a symbolical manner this characteristic of holiness. In all these respects there was a difference between Israel and the tribe of Levi; between the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron; and, finally, between an ordinary priest and the high-priest, who most fully typified our Great High-priest, in whom all these symbols have found their reality. (Alfred Edersheim, The Temple Its Ministry and Services)

g. Not only were these sacred articles and vestments used to teach holiness; the very gestures of the priest were packed with significance. The book of Leviticus is replete with these gestures, down to the slightest detail. "He is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the Lord, in front of the curtain of the sanctuary." (Lev. 4.6)

According to the difference of sacrifices, the blood was differently applied, and in different places. In all burnt-, trespass-, and peace-offerings the blood was thrown directly out of the vessel or vessels in which it had been caught, the priest going first to one corner of the altar and then to the other, and throwing it in the form of the Greek letter gamma (capitalized), so that each time two sides of the altar were

covered. Any blood left after these two 'gifts,' as they were called (which stood for four), was poured out at the base of the altar, whence it flowed into the Kedron. In all sin-offerings the blood was not thrown, but sprinkled, the priest dipping the forefinger of his right hand into the blood, and then sprinkling it from his finger by a motion of the thumb. According to the importance of the sin-offering, the blood was so applied either to the four horns of the altar of burnt-offering, or else it was brought into the Holy Place itself, and sprinkled first seven times towards the veil of the Most Holy Place (Lev. 4:6,17), and then on the four horns of the golden altar of incense, beginning at the northeast. Finally, on the Day of Atonement the blood was sprinkled within the Most Holy Place itself. From all sin-offerings the blood of which was sprinkled on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering certain portions were to be eaten, while those whose blood was brought into the holy Place itself were wholly burnt. But in the sacrifices of firstlings, of tithes of animals, and of the paschal lamb, the blood was neither thrown or sprinkled, and only poured out at the base of the altar. (Edersheim)

h. What was true for the Persians, and what was true for the Israelites, is also true for Catholics. In the *New Catechism*, we read in the section on how the liturgy is to be celebrated: "In human life, signs

and symbols occupy an important place. As a being at once body and spirit, man expresses and perceives spiritual realities through physical signs and symbols. As a social being, man needs signs and symbols to communicate with others, through language, gestures, and actions. The same holds true for his relationship with God."

2. If it has been established that everyone needs signs and symbols in order to learn; then in what sense does the classic Roman liturgy teach, beyond the obvious case of the sermon?

a. One way to answer this question is to look briefly at the art of teaching, of which there appear to be eight modes. The modes (from *modus*, "limit") are like the colors of the spectrum, or notes on a musical scale, and are stages of a gradual act. As much as attempts to make teaching into a science, at least in the United States, have largely failed, it may be wise to speak of teaching as an art.

b. The idea of these modes comes from the thought of John Senior, who was a Professor of Latin at Cornell University, and later, at the University of Kansas. His ideas on teaching having different modes, came from a variety of sources, from Plato to Sacred Scripture, St. John Cassian, and especially St. Thomas Aquinas,

notably in the *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, and above all from his long experience in the classroom. His ideas are certainly open to criticism, and much disagreement (as one would find much argument about any art), but hopefully, you will find them somewhat useful. Then, after a brief discussion of what a particular mode is, I hope to apply the mode in question to the liturgy, to show how the liturgy teaches us in many ways, and on many levels.

Art, from articulum meaning "joint," is the joining together of things not joined in nature. It operates in four modes: Two are transitive, that is they result in something extrinsic to the artist – ars faciens, the making art, like

the carpenter's and ars auxiliaries, the helping art, like the farmer's; and two are intransitive, intrinsic, remaining as habits in the artist – ars perficiens, the perfecting art, or skill, the habit of doing something well, like the violinist's, and ars imitans, the imitating art in which the artist imitates his masters and the operations and object of nature, becoming like them in love and knowledge. Each of these applies to teaching in a two-fold way so there are eight in all: Ars faciens as erudition and formation; ars auxiliaries as information and education; ars perficiens as institution and instruction; ars imitans as imitation and exercise.