

economic restraints and the existence of a highly successful institute in Ireland seem to me to rule that out. We should seek elsewhere. But seek we must. Our leaders need training.

In conclusion, two cautionary thoughts. First, much of our liturgical formation is middle-class. We are learning, at times quite painfully, not to be dazzled by the enthusiasm and response of those who have the background and experience which makes them easy "targets" for lectures and workshops. They make up a minority of our worshipping communities, and a majority at courses and conferences. So what of the others, the silent majority ?

The second cautionary thought. The best method of liturgical formation is the liturgy itself. The very nature of the assembled community, the reality of Christ present in its midst, the power of the Spirit in word, sign and symbol are formative in the fullest manner possible. Good, prayerful celebration does more to form men and women into true worshippers in spirit and in truth than any number of courses, commissions, institutes and directors of formation.

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LITURGICAL FORMATION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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I suppose that if you write a book entitled "Liturgy Pastoral and Parochial", you are fair game when it comes to being asked to speak on this remarkably elusive subject, "Liturgical Formation in the Local Church". I have great sympathy with Bryan Spinks who wrote recently to the Bishop of Winchester - and his letter has been circularised as a Liturgical Commission paper -

Although 'liturgical formation' is now being used frequently, very few (and I include myself) seem to know exactly what it means and might imply.

Until last night I'm not sure that I knew either, but in preparing this paper I have tried to give it some meaning at least within the narrow Anglican confines where I am at home, with apology to those in other traditions for whom my experiences will not ring bells !

I have been puzzling about why liturgical formation is difficult to get hold of, why the concept is difficult to express, and how it is to be done hard to explain. And I think the answer is that it is because 95% of liturgical formation is hidden within the liturgy itself and within the life of the Christian community. This morning I probably ought to concentrate on the remaining 5%, but they will seem in some ways very peripheral, and indeed they are, for you form people liturgically above all by exposing them to the liturgy, and, if you believe that there is a crucial relationship between liturgy and life, then you form them liturgically by forming their whole Christian approach to life.

This is very much the theme of a contribution by Joseph Buckley in that marvellous book, Pastoral Liturgy, which Harold Winstone edited and which was published in 1975m a book incidentally which inspired me to try to do for Anglicans in Liturgy Pastoral and Parochial what Harold Winstone and the other contributors had done for Roman Catholics. Joseph Buckley's paper, "A People Prepared to Celebrate", is well worth reading again, and as part of the way into our subject, I should like to extract two quotations from it. The first is very brief, but, I think, important:

In a very true sense there can be no real preparation for celebrating the liturgy other than the liturgy itself.

And we heard that last night too.

We might put it differently thus: Liturgy gets inside you by doing it rather than talking about it. More to come on that. But, first, Buckley's second statement, this one somewhat longer:

The formation of the Christian for the liturgy is identical with his formation for life because the liturgy is the highest manifestation of the life of God's people. The life of God's people who live in the world is not different from that which they live in the liturgy - it has different expression. It is essential to realise that preparing the people pastorally for

life is of one piece with preparing them for the liturgy. At the same time the liturgy has a great deal to do with preparation for life. If the lex orandi and the lex credendi are convertible, so are the lex orandi and the lex vivendi.

Although I want to return later to how this relationship between liturgy and life is given overt expression in worship, I wanted to put that quotation at the beginning of this paper as a reminder of how the two reflect one another and as something of an explanation of why so much liturgical formation is so well concealed within more general Christian formation for the business of living.

I understand liturgical formation to be about getting the liturgy inside people, helping them so to assimilate it that, unconsciously, they live and breathe it, its rhythms are in relationship with the rhythms of their own life and experience, that it helps them to make sense of their life and experience, and that, at all sorts of points, it acts to clarify, to let the light in on a particular situation. If I had to find another word it would not be "education", though I have no doubt that education is part of the process, for we are dealing with something that is as much to do with the heart as with the head. I am happier with "assimilation" than with "education".

May I take a very obvious illustration ? What is the liturgy of Holy Week for ? Is it an educational exercise to help people to know what happened to Our Lord in the events of his Passion ? Not chiefly, I think. Is the power of the liturgy in Holy Week to arouse in us a deep gratitude to God who in Christ wrought our redemption ? Well, yes, I think that is part of it. But there is something else, just as crucial. In Waiting for the Risen Christ it was expressed like this:

Let the liturgy of that week unfold, to faithful people returning for each successive part of the drama of their salvation, and they will find themselves moved at depths they have not often known, and experience an identification of their own story with that of Our Lord in his Passion that will transform both worship and Christian living throughout the year.

My life, my experience, my story, illuminated by the life, the experience, the story of Christ, as the liturgy reveals it to me, that seems to me to be very near the heart of liturgical formation. Holy Week illustrates it with particular clarity. But it is not just something for one week of the year. Every day, every week, the liturgy makes connections between the Christ

story and my story, and in so doing relates God and me.

That, by way of introduction, has been about what I think we mean by liturgical formation. Now let us begin to apply this to the local church. How often as pastors and preachers we tell people that the church is not the building, but let us start with the building nonetheless. It is a good thing that the church is not the building, for the building is very often almost a denial of what we believe the Church to be.

In the General Synod of the Church of England last November, David Stancliffe made this point:

The Church gathered for worship is the point where our common life in Christ is both expressed and created. Its worship is crucial for our formation and for our mission. But orders of service - the verbal content, that is - are only a part of the picture. The texts take their colour from the way they are done...In this the most potent force is the church building, its ordering and its furnishings. To put it very simply, what our contemporary eucharistic liturgy is saying is often flatly contradicted by the essentially Victorian arrangement of the building and consequent disposition of the worshippers.

That is well and strongly said, and it is good to be reminded that liturgical re-ordering is a theological, more than an aesthetic, matter. We look critically at our buildings, we arrange them differently from our forefathers, we build new churches in a different style, because we recognise that architecture plays a key role in our Christian formation. It is quite fundamental: our picture of God is deeply influenced by the building in which we worship him. Little less significantly, our understanding of the Christian Church, and thus of our own place in the divine society, is influenced also by the way the furniture has been arranged, and the way we arrange ourselves, when we come to worship corporately.

Part of liturgical formation in the local church is to be conscious of the power of the building itself and of the way it is ordered. Vicars come and vicars go, and in our day eucharistic rites come and eucharistic rites go (though perhaps more reluctantly !), but, in most places, the building goes on unchanged, and often contradicting both the vicar and the eucharistic rite, in what it says about God and his people, and in the end I suspect the building "forms" us more than the vicar or the rite. And so would plead that we grow not weary in trying to find ways of modifying our churches, without doing them aesthetic damage, in order

that this powerful element in our formation may not be working contrary to the other things we are doing.

From the building we may now move logically to the concept of the "community" in our liturgical formation. For the major impetus to liturgical re-ordering of churches has been the desire to stand and sit and kneel and gather in such a way that the sense of community, of the Church's fellowship, may receive proper expression. Fifteen or twenty years ago, anyone speaking about this subject would have lamented the lack of sense of community in most of our churches. The strongly personal and private - "making my communion" - was strong. The Roman Catholic book, Pastoral Liturgy, was still complaining in these terms ten years ago, though that, I suspect, may represent a slightly different attitude to Sunday Mass-going among Romans than among Anglicans for instance. In all the Christian denominations there are still congregations with very little sense of being that - congregations, people gathered together. But in 1986 there is, equally, a worry that our concentration on the fellowship, the community, aspect of our worship has in some places produced too great an emphasis on the horizontal, with a loss of the upward thrust of the vertical.

Now here is an interesting, if alarming, example of how liturgical formation works. The recent Anglican eucharistic rites have laid great emphasis on this community/fellowship insight. In common with other churches we have revived the Kiss of Peace. We do not just greet one another, we listen to a little exhortation: "We are the Body...Let us then pursue..." We do not just break bread, we talk about it: "Though we are many, we are one Body, because..." We do not just share Bread and Wine we go off into the hall and have compulsory coffee and biscuits too ! Now, don't get me wrong. I am not dismissing the whole rediscovery of the corporate in worship. The rediscovery is wholly good. In my own parish I have in the last two years introduced the exchange of the peace, a real fraction and all but compulsory coffee, and I have seen the people of my parish begin to rediscover the corporate, to experience fellowship, and to be a community. But I have just a little worry that, where we set out too deliberately to form liturgically, we may do it so successfully that we create fresh exaggerations in the life of the Church. But, with that little worry noted, let us add to the list of instruments of liturgical formation, alongside the building, the sense of community inside it. Without such a sense, little else can succeed.

I should like to turn now to what I believe to be, for better or worse, one of the most powerful instruments of liturgical formation. The liturgical book ! Whether it be the Book of Common Prayer, or the Alternative Service Book, or the Roman Missal, or whatever. I think I find myself lining up with the reactionaries in my desire to have a book. I do not mind too much what

book, but I want to have a book that I bring to church and home again afterwards. I want to have a book that I can dip into, pray out of, look through and allow to get worn and torn. And where we are creating liturgical styles where the folk don't have such books, I believe that we are depriving them of something important. This is a very personal view, and I am putting it fairly strongly as much as anything to provoke disagreement, but I do, for instance, have deep reservations about the way some of my Church of England Liturgical Commission colleagues are talking about not wanting a book of statutory services to follow ASB 1980, but a sort of loose collection of "Use it if you like or forget it if you like" resource packs for worship. The liturgical book is a powerful weapon of formation. It can be misused, it can be a millstone, but for all that I will defend it.

In a strange sort of way it does seem to me that some of the most liturgically formed Christians I know are the ones who cause no end of trouble in defence of the book they love, the Book of Common Prayer of 1662. I have not great enthusiasm for that book, at least not for it as a bit of liturgy for use in the Church today, but I do not believe that those who defend it passionately do so only because they are bigotted or narrow or blinkered or thatcherite, or however we often dismiss them! They have been formed liturgically. It's got inside them. Its phrases, its prayers have genuinely become part of their spirituality. And that has happened because all their life they have owned a copy, all their life they have heard that liturgy, all their life they have drawn parts of it into their personal devotion, all their life that liturgy and their life have been intertwined. Of course they care with passion. Of course they encounter the "old service", of which they are so often deprived, they respond as a woman did speaking to me recently: "It was like a benediction running over me".

From Prayer Book devotion, learn a lesson. I know the lesson some think should be learned. "Don't ever have a book; people grow too attached to it; and then you're in for trouble !" But I'm not too sure that is the right lesson to be drawn from it. I would respond rather: "A prayer book helps in the process of drawing together liturgy and spirituality, liturgy and life. Of course we must ensure that our book is one that makes us open, that gives us freedom, that encourages us to be adventurous, but let us have a book nonetheless".

The Alternative Service Book of the Church of England, together with its equivalents in other churches, has many imperfections. As the years go very quickly by, these imperfections seem the more striking. I do not imagine that we are ever again going to see a prayer book that in

its entirety will last more than a generation. That is good. But there does need to be in every revision a strong urge to conserve, and thus to ensure that there are liturgical words, phrases and whole prayers that a man or woman may take right through their life to their soul's health. I do find it worrying that we are depriving ourselves of the opportunity to commit to memory the great prayers and praises of our religion because of the speed with which a particular transmission gives way to another, and I am convinced that part of our liturgical formation is our assimilation of some basic texts that we carry with us in our hearts and minds.

As I have said, this seems to be particularly important, not so much in order that we should not have our head buried in the book, pamphlet or service-sheet throughout the liturgy, but in order that we may take our liturgical prayers from church into our personal devotions. Gone may be the days when personal prayer meant reciting out of little holy books prayers that looked surprisingly pseudo-Cranmerian, but we may still to our profit use the liturgical words of the Church as a resource or a stimulus to personal prayer, and as a marvellous resort when our own words fail us.

But I should not want this defence of "the book" to be misunderstood as a plea for another Book of Common Prayer, narrow, inhibiting, invariable, a kind of liturgical straight-jacket. Part of the liturgical formation of our people is that they be helped to be open, adventurous and free, in their liturgical experience as in much else. For all its faults ASB 1980 seems to have been on the right track. "Say this, or say that, or find something else, or make up your own", 'it seems to say at points, or "Would this work now, or better later, or not at all, or only sometimes ?" And, though it has been easy to mock the many alternatives, and even easier to dismiss as fanciful and eccentric some of the experimental ritual that local churches have dreamed up to accompany the book, the truth is that the freedom the book represents is gradually bringing into existence a people whose liturgical formation is of a different sort from their Prayer Book predecessors. It is a formation, that though it needs the security of a recognisable shape, a logical order and a collection of memorable material, can cope with, and rejoice in, variety, special input, seasonal emphasis, and all the other elements that a more adventurous and open liturgy can encourage.

It is a little bit of an aside, but at this point, briefly, I want to mention a related matter. We have already noted right at the beginning that "in a very true sense there can be no real preparation for celebrating the liturgy other than the liturgy itself". Though that is true and important, none of us would want to dismiss the need for careful preparation by those who lead worship. But, interestingly, in an era where we have laid emphasis on the fact that the new freedom to order the liturgy locally requires of the worship

leader greater preparation, we have, many of us, allowed to go out of fashion what might seem equally important, the careful preparation by the people before they come to church. This has been another victim of the rejection of private prayer from pious book. Though it is true in a real sense that only liturgy can form us liturgically, preparation can heighten our awareness and our openness so that the liturgy may touch us as it should. I suspect that in the local church we should be helping people to find the appropriate way to prepare for the Sunday liturgy, whether by studying the scriptures they are to hear, thinking about how they are to fill those key silences in intercession, before confession, after communion, and so on, or in some other way. If private prayer from pious books formed a preparation for Prayer Book liturgy, what, we have to ask, forms an appropriate preparation for today's liturgy?

Before we leave books, a word about the good book.

An important part of liturgical formation in the local church must surely be biblical formation? I suppose the Roman Catholic Church was particularly conscious of this after Vatican II, and it has taken very seriously the need to open the scriptures to the people, in the liturgy more than anywhere else. In Church of England circles, except among the more evangelical, the era of liturgical reform has seemed to many to mean the decline of Bible-centred worship. Shorter passages of scripture and shorter sermons have usually come hand-in-hand with liturgical reform, and there is a strange orthodoxy around that believes that you can't do the Bible justice within the eucharist. Biblical formation is an urgent need in our churches.

This isn't just a matter of encouraging our people to read their Bibles at home, whether with little helpful notes or not. It is a matter of how the scriptures are used in the liturgy itself. People are far more likely to open their Bibles at home if they have been both gripped by the scriptures in church, and also shown how to relate them to their daily living. The imaginative and expectant use of scripture in the liturgy, the preaching of a sermon that is grounded in the lections of the day, the balance of the service so that the liturgy is seen to be a celebration in Word and Sacrament, with the two of equal significance and related to one another, would all contribute to a liturgical formation that would also be a Biblical formation for our people.

If we may now leave behind books and even the good book, I should like to turn to signs, symbols and ceremonies. It is in this area that there has perhaps been the greatest change in recent times. This is not the time or place to discuss at length most of the issues in this area, but

I should like to pose one question, which I think is important. It is this: To what extent should symbolism and ceremony be explained ? And here I think the position of the Church of England and of the Free Churches differs a good deal from that of the Roman Catholic Church. The difference lies in this. In the Roman Catholic Church, however overcomplicated some signs and ceremonies became, however much they were things you watched rather than things you did, the ordinary worshipper has always been familiar with a way of worshipping that involved doing things, and nearly always at least partly grasped their meaning. He or she knew about ash and candle and palm and oil and so on. There was no need for explanation. The prayers reminded you verbally what it was all about, but you hardly needed the reminder, these things were inside you; they spoke to you; they rang bells for you. I have over-idealised the Roman Catholic position, I'm sure. Sometimes, no doubt, explanation is needed. Sometimes wrong ideas need to be dispelled. Look at all that wide-of-the-mark belief in many churches about the significance of the water in baptism. But, on the whole, Roman Catholics do it, while Anglicans and Free Churchmen either just talk about it or, nowadays, talk about it and then do it. We live in danger of the sign that we deprive of its power by explaining it away, or by giving its "true" meaning and therefore excluding the endless resource of meanings with which it could speak differently and creatively to a great variety of worshippers. We have already noted that Roman Catholics exchange the peace, but Anglicans exhort one another and then - sometimes - exchange the peace !

Something is lost by the exhortation. But I know why it was put there, though I hope it will one day be optional. It was put there surely because you cannot treat signs and symbols in churches that are not used to them in the same way as you can in churches where they are ? Of course we ought to be able to draw meaning from the things we do in the liturgy without a lecture on why we are doing it, but we can't do that until we have regained what most Protestants have lost for centuries, an attitude to the sign and the symbol that expects it to have meaning, that is able to receive that meaning, that is moved by the doing or the seeing as much as by the saying. And so, though the purists will maintain that explanation robs the sign or symbol of its power, I believe that for a while we have to educate people into this expectancy. We have to write explanatory introductions to be put into the liturgy itself, until our people have recovered this sense that they have lost. And, where many Anglicans and most Free Churchmen are now, the explanation and exhortation is the right stage of liturgical formation. But, if it is well done, it does turn out to be transitory, and at that point - and the point will not be reached by the whole Church at one moment in time, but in every local congregation individually - the explanation goes and a new, much more exciting, phase of liturgical formation takes over. Things speak for themselves.

Introducing The Peace into Anglicanism needed a "We are the Body...Endeavour to keep the unity..." or a "We meet in his name and share his peace". But a lot of congregations no longer need it. They can just greet one another, with all the levels of meaning that that can include. The Peace is just one example.

Here is one other example: ash on Ash Wednesday. Rome not only has no explanation of what is to be done (though of course there is always the homily, and the prayer over the ash gives a clue), but it has no confession either, for the ash is an acted out confession. Anglicanism, in the 1984 Lent, Holy Week, Easter, has explanation:

As a sign of the spirit of penitence with which we shall keep this season of preparation for Easter, I invite you to receive on your head in ash the sign of the cross, the symbol of our salvation

and that on top of a longer explanation of the origin and meaning of Lent earlier in the service, and also a confession, with the ash as a kind of acting out to follow it. That's fine, but only for a while. If liturgical formation does its job, the explanations, even perhaps the confession, will in a few years' time seem like overkill, and the imposition of ash will stand on its own. My plea therefore, in this area of liturgical formation, is that we accept that we are in transition, that we are re-awakening lost senses, and that then we must move on. When we do move on, it will not only be that ash, for instance, will no longer need explaining, but that people can be introduced to quite new signs and symbols without too many words because they will have been re-equipped with the capacity to respond to the symbolic.

I confess to just one reservation about what I have just been saying. I fear it may assume a church that is no longer expecting the stranger, the casual visitor and the newcomer. If we say that "in a while" the capacity to respond to the symbolic will be rekindled, we somehow assume a congregation that moves forward together, rather than one that is being constantly changed by the arrival of new worshippers. But I suppose that is only part of the wider problem of the Church in using worship as a tool of its evangelism.

I turn now to three issues about which I intend to be very brief. I want to do no more than indicate that they seem to be part of the question of liturgical formation in the local church.

The first concerns the pattern of services in a church. Here it seems to

me that the Roman Catholic Church has a great advantage over the rest of us in that every Roman Catholic knows that his duty is to go to Mass each Sunday, and that, if he goes to church, he will find the Mass. This has meant, I think, that the process of liturgical reform has been easier to implement, or, to put it differently, the new liturgy has been more speedily assimilated. He goes to church each week (or is that just an Anglican idealising of Roman Catholic discipline ?) and each week he finds the Mass. It isn't long, even when it undergoes some major change, before he is into its rhythm, familiar with its language, secure in its invariable shape.

The Anglican or Free Churchman is not so often in this position. Holy Communion may be the mid-morning fare every Sunday, but more often it is every Sunday except the first, or no Sunday except the first, or every other week. This may be because that's the way the Church Council, Elders or whatever have decided, or it may be because the priest or minister hasn't judged the time ripe for a change in pattern, or it may be because of the wisdom of a non-eucharistic Family Service or (God help us !) Parade Service, or because, in the rural areas especially, there isn't a priest available every Sunday. And then add to that that the average church-goer misses the odd Sunday, and nowadays with so many counter-attractions and easy mobility, perhaps more than the odd Sunday. He may still be struggling to find his way around Holy Communion Rite A, involved in it for only the seventh time, when the parish has been using it, on what it calls a regular basis, for six months. How does he assimilate the liturgy under those circumstances ? How can one talk of his liturgical formation ? I do not have an answer to offer!

The second question that I simply put on the agenda is the whole area of children and their liturgical formation. Here we may be thankful for real progress in many churches. No longer is the Sunday School experience, by whatever name, divorced from the worshipping community of adults. It meets at the same time. The children join the adults for a while. Things are on the right track, though what I have described is still not well established everywhere. But there is a long way to go. Where children do leave the room, so to speak, for part of the service, in order that they may do things at a level more appropriate to them, it is hardly ever a celebrating at their own level of the Church. It is probably a teaching/learning situation, and that has its own place, though all too often that element is fairly unrelated to what the adults are doing or even to the Christian Year that they encounter when they are in the adult service. How may Sunday School or its equivalent help with the liturgical formation of the young ?

There are others here far more qualified than I to talk about children and Communion. Where does sharing in Communion feature in the liturgical formation of children ? Can you assimilate that from which you are partly excluded?

The Boston statement and other material needs to be taken very seriously by the Church.

The last of my three issues brings us back to the beginning, where I spoke about liturgy and daily life, and back also to the question of rekindling a sort of deadened imagination. The liturgist knows that the liturgy both reflects and informs daily living. As Joseph Buckley put it:

The life of God's people who live in the world is not different from that which they live in the liturgy.

But the ordinary worshipper is not aware of quite this. He or she is aware that "coming to Church helps me in my daily life", and that's half-way there, but it is only a recognition that "church does me good", and not an understanding of how at a whole series of points life is being celebrated in the liturgy.

Here it is interesting to note that, despite Colin Buchanan, and the good sense that he talks in The End of the Offertory, to which many not of his tradition would subscribe, a rather overdone procession of gifts - often with cross, lighted tapers and the lot - or Roman offertory prayers that lay emphasis on "the fruit of human labour" idea, or both, have quite a hold in the Church. I think that is because here is a spelling out, or an acting out, the point of which has been assimilated, of how, in the heart of the liturgy, we are concerned with daily living; we are bringing it to the altar; we are not leaving it behind. It is a powerful idea for many people, and our liturgical cold water has quenched it. Maybe in time, the message about liturgy and life will be so well assimilated that offertory processions, that highlight it, will be superfluous. Maybe this is another of those "for a while" concessions that help with liturgical formation. Who knows ?

I come finally to some questions about bodies and organisations where liturgical teaching, planning and decision-making may be found. I am meaning Parochial Church Councils, and their equivalent in other denominations, worship committees, planning groups, study groups and courses. It is possible that in this paper you might have expected me to talk more about these, to expand, for instance, what I wrote from the safety of a bishop's chaplain's study about "devising the liturgy together" and "making decisions in the parish". But I am convinced that bodies like these, for all their value, are not where the major part of liturgical formation does or should happen. And that is why I have come to them last.

But a word now about the process by which the priest or minister does consciously involve the people in talking about liturgy, planning liturgy

and understanding liturgy. For I believe very deeply that liturgy is too important to be left to the professionals, and that clergy and people need to work together in the preparation and presentation of worship. I stand by what I wrote four years ago:

The battle to involve lay people in the leading of worship has been fought and, in most places, won (and, where it has not, the resistance has as often come from laity as from clergy). But there is a further stage, that of involving the people genuinely in the ordering of worship, both in the pattern and content of the parish's regular round of services and also in some special events. To involve the laity in the planning and preparation of worship is not a threat to the parish priest. Rather - well handled - it is the opportunity for him both to gain freshness and insight in an area where he may have grown stale or blinkered, and also for him to share with others an expertise and to communicate to them spiritual truths that have sustained him through the years, to talk of the things of God, when all too often in his ministry he is expected to talk of anything else but that.

Because I stand by that, I would hope to see encouraged in every local church some sort of Worship Group that was willing to learn together and then to plan together, a group that included the priest or minister, and all the others with key parts to play in ordering the liturgy, and I believe that such a group would nearly always deepen a church's experience of worship. In some places such a group would best be part of the structure of church councils and committees, in others a less formal group, as circumstances vary.

One would also like to see more churches where the planning of every Sunday's service was the work of a small group, all those who are to take a specific part in it meeting in the week before to see that their individual contributions can be drawn into a satisfactory whole. How many a service has been spoiled by intercessory prayer that takes no account of the key message of the sermon that has come only a little before it. Matters like these are not of huge liturgical significance, but they are part of what creates a satisfying act of worship, and that is almost a pre-condition to Christian formation, let alone the more specific liturgical formation with which we are concerned.

But the danger in the sort of groups I have described is the emergence of a parochial liturgical elite, those who understand the mysteries and share the vicar's strange delight in the esoteric. The most useful group activity

in the parish to encourage liturgical formation is not "The Worship Group", but a simple course in liturgical awareness that can be used by each and every house group, study group and the like. The paucity of good material for such use is preventing good work being done in local churches by enthusiastic lay people. Here the liturgist and the educationalist need to bring their disciplines together to produce simple courses, with teaching, discussion material and exercises that can meet this very real need. We are not needing something academic. We should start not with Justin Martyr, but with family meal time and how it might illuminate our understanding of the eucharist. You may have seen that excellent unit called "Eating, Drinking and Making Speeches" in The Church and The Story, the group study guide produced to go with the last report of the Church of England Doctrine Commission. There is good material about, but not much. What there is is mainly Roman Catholic.

But the greatest obstacle to almost all I have said, not only about small groups in the local church, but about the whole area of liturgical formation, is the lack of expertise or confidence among the clergy. Prior to liturgical in the local church there needs to be liturgical formation in the local priest, and so I find myself ending much as Edward Matthews did last night.

In the Church of England we have for too long regarded diocesan liturgical committees as unimportant, or imagined their principal task was to revise institution orders of service or draw up calendars of best-forgotten local worthies. It is good that our bishops, spurred on by the Liturgical Commission, are now recognising the need for liturgical formation at the diocesan level, so that the clergy may themselves assimilate the liturgy and thus celebrate it with a confidence that will commend it to others. The Commission's advice, accepted by the Bishops in May of this year, read like this:

There is the problem that many of the clergy have not really understood how our different rites each has an integrity of its own which must, to some extent, dictate its style and presentation. There are older clergy using the ASB as if it were the Prayer Book, and now younger clergy using the Prayer Book with an insensitivity to its ethos...

For both clergy and laity there is a need for what the Roman Church calls "liturgical formation". By this it means in part continuing liturgical education, but also the assimilation of the liturgy so that people are helped to really pray the liturgy, and to know at a deep level the relationship between corporate worship and their own

spirituality.

Liturgical formation is therefore firmly on the agenda of the Church of England, and the diocese is seen as the level where work can now be done. Other churches will have their equivalents. But until the clergy have gained a new expertise, a new understanding and a new confidence the task of liturgical formation in the local church will continue to be a sad hit-and-miss affair.

In the theological world the academic theologian is often accused of sitting in his ivory tower, oblivious to the needs of the parish priest. In the liturgical world, the academic liturgist, by engaging with the parish clergy in this process in which they may gain new insight and confidence, may be able to play a larger part than he realises in the liturgical formation of the local church, in the process by which Christian people learn to breathe in the liturgy as part of their life's breath.

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