

The Western Orthodox Eucharistic Liturgy in the Celtic Orthodox Church

The solemnity of the feast of Saint-Tugdual of Saint-Dolay (feast day on August 11) was held this year on Sunday August 9. HB Mael chose this date to celebrate and so announce that the new Eucharistic Liturgy was now the official liturgy of the Church. The fathers of the monastery have worked on this liturgy for ten years. It has been celebrated each day of the week at the monastery and in the majority of the parishes on an experimental basis. It has evolved with the passing of years and finally finding its completion with the creation of the liturgical music, thanks to work of François Gineste. Her speciality is adapting the French language to the melodies of Gregorian chant, but also takes inspiration from other hymn traditions. The choir worked hard to give to this Liturgy all the splendour which it deserves. We intend producing a CD of the music in 2010. In the mean time, we are providing a CD for the use of parish choirs.

We have called this Eucharistic Liturgy: Western Orthodox Liturgy, unable to find a more appropriate name, but we could have named it: Liturgy of, or according to, Monacensis, because the principal texts come from a palimpsest written shortly after 600 in Ireland and discovered at Munich (a palimpsest is a manuscript page from a scroll or book that has been scraped off and used again). From a first publication in 1964 it helped with a reconstruction of the missing pieces of a puzzle, which was dispersed in several iro-gallican and Hispanic manuscripts, and the restoration of the Western Rite Eucharistic Liturgy, non-Roman.

This restoration is the fruit of the work of many researchers, scientists and liturgists for more than a century. One of them, Matthieu Smyth, recently carried out his doctoral thesis on this topic and published his findings in the 2003 editions of the *Cerf*, under the justifiable title of: *The forgotten Liturgy*.

This research is a providential sign for our new times at the beginning of the third millennium. Thanks to the work and the advice of Matthieu Smyth, we were able to make wise choices between various texts. One of the fundamental criteria was to choose only parts belonging to the old non-Roman Western liturgy. Indeed, certain manuscripts contain hybrid parts which did not allow for a proper grasp of the ethos and spirituality of our Tradition. The work on the liturgies was essential, but equally essential was the Community celebration. It took nine years of daily celebration at the monastery (except Sundays) so that the liturgy is validated by God's people.

Saint Tugdual would have been happy to celebrate this Liturgy, he who wanted so much to offer the Holy Celtic Church with all its traditions. While reading again his meditations on the celebration of the Eucharist, we see how much they are in perfect agreement with the texts of our Liturgy. This will be the subject of a publication in the near future.

By celebrating each day The Western Orthodox Liturgy of use in the Celtic Orthodox Church or the Liturgy of Monacensis, we practised a sort of manducation of each word, a sort of chewing over and meditating on each word, as we do daily with the psalter. We resisted the temptation of hybridization with other Liturgies because it is difficult to pass from one rite to another. We accepted that we were to put ourselves in school for a necessary examination, because the rite fashions us and not the reverse. It is only when we live the same essence of the spirituality which it conveys, that we can plan to create, if necessary, new liturgical pieces. Nothing is fixed, but this Liturgy is already an actualization and we should not step away from the spiritual current which it incarnates. Here is the mission which we must fulfil in order to remain faithful to the precious heritage that our fathers entrusted to us.

The Eucharistic Liturgy is at the heart of the Christian life. It is also at the heart of the spiritual heritage of our fathers. For us is the work of deciphering and transmitting the riches of those who continue the work which began the restoration, one day in 1866, when father Jules Ferrette accepted episcopal consecration at the hands of a Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church, leading to the restoration of the venerable Celtic Church. Saint Tugdual, in 1955, offered his mysticism and his spirit. Bishop Mael, since 1977, has continued to build the Church by the restoration of its rite, its monasteries and its ecclesiology.

Many await the publication of this Liturgy. It will be made available on this site very soon.

On this day of August 11, 2009, Saint-Tugdual of Saint-Dolay, the 143rd year of restoration of the Celtic Orthodox Church.

Bishop Marc