

THE LITURGICAL REFORM OF VATICAN II AND ITS RECEPTION IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBA IULIA

Habilitation Thesis

Abstract

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The fiftieth anniversary of Vatican II and of the Liturgical Constitution have renewed the interest in the liturgical reform advanced by the Council. The topic is all the more relevant as the local reception of the Liturgical Constitution and the liturgical renewal promoted by Bishop Áron Márton in the Transylvanian Roman Catholic Church have not been yet addressed. This habilitation thesis responds to this challenge.

The thesis is structured in two main parts. The first part discusses the liturgical reform in the context of the ecclesiological and liturgical renewal of the twentieth century which prepared the Council. I address the ecclesiological shift and its concepts (the Church as Body of Christ, people of God and communion) that prepared the liturgical reform. Subsequently I propose an overview of the main trends of the preconciliar liturgical movement in France, Germany, Belgium and Austria, and of the magisterial documents which contributed to the liturgical renewal (*Tra le sollecitudini*, *Mediator Dei*). In what follows I discuss the elaboration of the Liturgical Constitution, the aims and principles of the liturgical reform, notably the centrality of the Eucharistic celebration, and some specific topics, like the rediscovery of the Liturgy of the Word, the use of the vernacular in the liturgy and the issue of active participation. The chapter is concluded with an assessment of the Liturgical Constitution.

The second part of the thesis tackles the reception of the liturgical reforms in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Alba Iulia. As in the twentieth century in Transylvania the reception of the liturgical movement occurred in a particular historical and political context, I briefly evoke the situation of the Roman Catholic Church in Transylvania between the two world wars (period that coincides with the flourishing of the European liturgical movement) and in the first decades of the communist regime, period during which the Council was held. Between the two world wars the Catholic Church of Transylvania went through a process of deep restructuring in an entirely novel political and juridical context, shaped by de new

Romanian Constitution, the Law on Religious Affairs and the Concordat between Romania and the Holy See. In the fifties and sixties, the Roman Catholic Church of Transylvania encountered serious difficulties and was practically isolated from the universal Church. The Church struggled for its mere survival under a deeply oppressive regime. This historical context explains why bishop Áron Márton could not take part in any of the sessions of the Council and the reception of the conciliar documents was relatively late. I discuss here the problem of the participation of the representatives of the Romanian dioceses at the Council, and notably the reception of Vatican II in the Diocese of Alba Iulia. This period coincides with the episcopate of Áron Márton, a man of high integrity, deeply devoted to the Church, who followed with particular attention the work of the Council and prepared with great wisdom the reception of the liturgical reform in Transylvania. In this chapter I discuss the various aspects of the liturgical reform, including the introduction of the vernacular and the issue of Hungarian liturgical texts, the new rites of celebrating the sacraments and sacramentals, the attention the bishop gave to the formation of the priests in the spirit of the Council and their liturgical education, as well as the issue of the active participation in the liturgy and the universal priesthood of the faithful.

This analysis shows that in spite of the very difficult historical conditions Bishop Márton took great pains to promote the reception of the Council and the liturgical reform. Of all the reforms initiated by Vatican II, the liturgical renewal was the most widely received in Transylvania.

This thesis is based not only on secondary literature, but also on a number of unpublished documents from the Archives of the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia as well as the speeches and homilies of bishop Áron Márton.