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Els Rose

***Plebs sancta ideo meminere debet.* The Role of the People in the Early Medieval Liturgy of Mass**

The early Middle Ages are seen by many liturgical scholars as the era in which, at least in the Latin West, the celebration of the Eucharist increasingly became a matter of the ordained clergy and thus gradually moved away from the body of the faithful. Gregory Dix is one of the representatives of this tendency, which he claims to be present already in the fourth century and which he characterises as “the clericalisation of the Eucharist”:

[...] that steady tendency which begins in the fourth century to take the eucharistic action away from the Church as a whole and to concentrate it exclusively in the hands of the ministers, so that it becomes in fact something done *by* the clergy *for* the laity, instead of the action of the Body of Christ.¹

Similarly, Arnold Angenendt states that in the early Middle Ages the corporate character of the Eucharist was “verdunkelt” and the faithful laity lost its agency in the Eucharistic celebration:

Dieser kirchlich-öffentliche Bezug wurde im Frühmittelalter verdunkelt. Denn jetzt galt der Priester als der eigentlich Feiernde und Opfernde, ja als der “Mittler” zwischen Gott und den Menschen, so daß sich die Gemeinde ihm nur noch anschließen konnte und nicht mehr eigentliches Subjekt der Feier war.²

However, not all scholars side with such a view. As early as 1977, Rosamond McKitterick reacted against this presentation of the role of the faithful during the liturgical celebrations in the early medieval Church. Even though she confirms the increasing importance of the mediating function of the ministers between God and humanity in the Carolingian approach to the clergy,³ as is stressed by Angenendt in the passage cited above, she emphatically draws attention to the importance of Mass as a corporate celebration, and its relevance as a marker of unity of the whole Christian body. She does so with reference to an anonymous Mass commentary which will be part of our discussion later on.⁴ McKitterick’s response is concerned in particular with Dix’s assumption of a dramatic decrease of the “active comprehension and participation of

1 Dix (1937) 132. I am grateful to Yitzhak Hen for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article, and to Nina Crowther for correcting the English.

2 Angenendt (1990) 333.

3 McKitterick (1977) 116–117 and 142.

4 McKitterick (1997) 117–118.

the laity”, making the latter into “spectators”.⁵ In an elaborate exposé McKitterick discusses the details of the people’s contribution to Mass. She argues that “in a sense the comprehension and participation of the laity was increased, if we see the laity as an audience participating in the liturgy as they would in a play”.⁶ To involve the laity actively in the celebration of the liturgy and to increase their understanding of the rituals was, according to McKitterick, the task and responsibility of the local parish priests, who were encouraged to explain the nature and significance of rituals and celebrations to their flock.⁷ Moreover, the dramatic character of the ritual performances itself – of Mass in the first place but also of other rituals such as penitential processions and the alternating of chants and colours in the liturgical tides of penance and joy – was helpful in drawing the faithful present at Mass to the mysteries of faith and their celebration.⁸ Finally, McKitterick stresses the active participation of the people in Mass in both words and deeds, underlining the people’s contribution in the very concrete form of the oblations of bread (and wine).⁹

Other authors underline the importance of the laity and their contribution to specific elements of the liturgical performance. Yitzhak Hen gives a brief overview of the responses that were the people’s role during Mass, which in his description “required the full attention, cooperation and participation of the congregation”, and suggests that this manner of active participation was promoted in sixth-century Gaul also to keep the laity from attending Mass for reasons of social encounter or even business exchange.¹⁰ Edward Foley shows the role of the laity in performing some of the sung elements of Mass, such as the *Sanctus* (to which we will return below) and the proper texts sung by the people. Foley argues against the idea that the music in medieval liturgical practice became more and more a matter for specialists rather than the common faithful.¹¹ More recently, Carol Symes addressed the issue, stressing on the one hand the importance of the laity and their contribution to the liturgical performance, and acknowledging at the same time that the liturgical sources seem to hide this element because “the makers of those texts were trying to promote the interests and authority of a small class of professionalized clergy”.¹²

In the present contribution I should like to investigate the role of the laity and its relevance for the performance of liturgical rituals in early medieval Gaul between the sixth and the ninth centuries in three types of sources: 1. Sermons and other admon-

5 McKitterick (1997) 138.

6 McKitterick (1997) 138. The idea of Mass as a drama or play is discussed in more detail by Yitzhak Hen, who makes a helpful distinction between a “drama”, including a plot and a passive audience, and a “dramatic performance”, such as Mass, in which the “audience” is actively involved. Hen (1995) 76–77; Hen (2016b) 194–198. See also the work done by Bailey (2016).

7 McKitterick (1977) 139–140.

8 McKitterick (1977) 140–141.

9 McKitterick (1977) 144; see also Rose (2017) 71–74.

10 Hen (1995) 74–75 (quotation on p. 75) and see, on Mass as a “social event”, *ibid.* 71–74.

11 Foley (1997).

12 Symes (2016) 263.

itory texts, 2. Liturgical text books transmitting the texts to be recited during Mass, and 3. Mass commentaries. We shall see, then, that although these texts were all written by clerics and (in most cases) for a clerical audience, they surprisingly often spotlight the people's contribution to Mass, thus underlining its indispensability with more emphasis than has been acknowledged so far.

1 The Sixth Century: Sermons and Royal Admonitions

The first category of sources to be discussed in this section will be episcopal and royal admonitions in the form of sermons and royal decrees respectively.

One of the most direct discussions addressing the presence of the faithful during the liturgical celebrations and their contribution to Mass is found in the collection of sermons by Caesarius of Arles, bishop of this metropole between 503 and 542.¹³ Gregory Dix includes Caesarius' sermons in his argument that "the countries of the Gallican rite" were the centre and incentive of the observed tendency of clericalisation.¹⁴ The fact that Caesarius reproaches the laity for their passivity and urges them repeatedly to participate in Communion is seen by Dix just as clear evidence of a "change from a 'collective' to a 'clerical' sacrifice",¹⁵ a change that he sees confirmed in the sixth-century and later councils of Gaul that repeatedly emphasise the importance of the laity receiving Communion.¹⁶ It is inevitable that scholars differ in their interpretation or, more precisely, their weighing of emphasis in sources like Caesarius' sermons and the Church councils of sixth-century Gaul. Yet to my mind, the reproaches expressed by Caesarius and the warnings in the Church councils that those shying away from Communion will lose their catholic identity¹⁷ do not precisely speak of a tendency of clericalisation, if we interpret this term as a process in which the clergy is the agent. If anything, they seem to indicate a lack of fervour among the laity, to which the clergy responds with their repeated summons to change this attitude for a more active involvement. This would imply that from the side of the clergy at least the opposite of a decreasing participation of the laity is strived for.

How did Caesarius and his contemporaries try to increase the people's involvement and active participation in Mass?¹⁸ One of the most informative and detailed

13 For a list of manuscripts of the "Collection A" (Morin [1953] XLV – LI), see Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (2017).

14 Dix (1937) 133.

15 Dix (1937) 132.

16 Dix (1937) 133.

17 Dix (1937) 133.

18 See also Klingshirn (1994) 154–159 on the desired behaviour and participation of the people during Mass.

sources dealing with this issue is Caesarius' sermon entitled "Admonition in order to exhort the entire people to stay in church until the holy mysteries have been celebrated".¹⁹ As in a number of other sermons, Caesarius stresses here the importance of the presence of the lay people in church. His general pastoral concern is the people's (spiritual) welfare, which is in his theological view furthered by their presence during Mass. With reference to the parable of the wedding banquet (Matt 22,1–14), Caesarius confronts his parishioners, unwilling to come to Mass or to stay in church until the whole Mass is completed, with the indignity (*indignos convivio suo ipse dominus dixit*)²⁰ of the invited guests who declined the invitation. Caesarius calls upon his flock to attend church and to stay there for the duration of the celebration: "Do not despise the banquet of your Lord, lest he will despise you in the blessedness of his kingdom".²¹ Next to this, Caesarius expresses another concern, namely that the performance of Mass cannot be effectuated without the people's presence, because of their indispensable contribution to specific elements of that same performance. Reading the Bible can be practiced at home, thus Caesarius – an explicit attestation of private and lay biblical reading in this period – but the consecration of Christ's body and blood only takes place in the house of God:

For the readings from the Prophets or the Epistles or even from the Gospels you can read yourselves in your own houses, or you can listen to others reading them to you. Yet the consecration of the body and blood of Christ you cannot hear or see anywhere else but in the house of God.²²

The voice of the people cannot be missed in the performance of Mass, because a number of components are theirs to perform:

When the greater part of the people, or even worse, almost all leave the church after the completion of the readings, to whom will the priest say: "Lift up your hearts"? Or how can they respond that they have lifted them up when they descend to the street with body and soul? Or how shall they proclaim with fear and joy alike: "Holy, holy, holy, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord"? And when the Lord's Prayer is said, who will shout humbly and truthfully: "Forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors"?²³

19 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 73 (306 Morin): *Admonitio per quam suadetur ut omnis populus donec divina mysteria celebrantur in ecclesia fideliter expectent*. That the sermon was read in the Middle Ages under this heading is shown by the ninth-century (third or fourth quarter) Italian manuscript Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6344, where the title is listed in the capitula (fol. 74r). The beginning of the sermon itself has got lost due to a lacuna at the transition from the third to the fourth quire (fol. 88v–88r).

20 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 74,2 (310–311 Morin).

21 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 74,2 (310 M.): [...] *nolite despiciere convivium domini vestri, ut vos ille non despiciat in beatitudine regni sui*.

22 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 73,2 (307 M.): *Nam lectiones sive propheticas, sive apostolicas, sive evangelicas etiam in domibus vestris aut ipsi legere, aut alios legentes audire potestis: consecrationem vero corporis et sanguinis Christi non alibi nisi in domo dei audire vel videre poteritis*.

23 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 73,2 (307 M.): *Cum enim maxima pars populi, immo quod peius est, paene omnes recitatis lectionibus exeunt de ecclesia, cui dicturus est sacerdos: Sursum corda? Aut quo-*

The presence of the people at the celebration of Mass is not only the bishop's concern; its importance is also expressed by secular rulers. A capitulary issued during the rule of the Merovingian king Guntram in 585 stresses the importance of the people's presence in church when Mass is celebrated on Sundays and feast days:

Therefore, we ordain with the strength of this decree and of the general law, that on all Sundays, in which we venerate the mystery of the holy resurrection, and during all other solemnities, when according to custom the fellowship of the entire Christian people is gathered together with assiduity to the venerable chapels of the churches, except for what is necessary to prepare the daily food, all bodily labour is to be suspended [...].²⁴

Again, it is difficult to weigh the degree to which prescriptive or exhortative texts such as capitularies and sermons reflect reality, or just depict an ideal situation. However, the division of roles that might be just wishful thinking in the utterings of Caesarius and Guntram is depicted as common practice in other sources. First, Gregory of Tours concurs with Caesarius when he confirms the people's role in the singing of specific parts of Mass in a number of miracle stories around St Martin's tomb in Tours, such as the *Sanctus* in the story on the healing of Palatina (*De virtutibus Martini* 2,14):

And when the prayer of sacrifice came to its end and all the people (*omnis populus*) proclaimed the *Sanctus* in praise of God, her stiffened nerves suddenly loosened, and she stood on her feet, while all the people watched her, and thus, with God's help, she proceeded towards the holy altar in order to receive Communion on her own strength, while no one was supporting her.²⁵

In the story narrating the healing of a lame woman (*De virtutibus Martini* 2,30), the Lord's Prayer is presented as a text recited by all:

modo sursum se habere corda respondere possunt, quando deorsum in plateis et corpore simul et corde descendunt? Vel qualiter cum tremore simul et gaudio clamabunt: Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus; benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini? Aut quando oratio dominica dicitur, quis est qui humiliter et veraciter clamet: Dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris?

24 Guntchramni regis edictum (585) (11,32–36 Boretius): *Idcirco huius decreti ac definitionis generalis vigore decernimus, ut in omnibus diebus dominicis, in quibus sanctae resurrectionis mysterium veneramus, vel in quibuscunque reliquis solemnitatibus, quando ex more ad veneranda templorum oracula universae plebis coniunctio devotionis congregatur studio, praeter quod ad victum praeparari convenit, ab omni corporali opere suspendatur.*

25 Gregory of Tours, *De virtutibus sancti Martini* 2,14 (163,31–34 Krusch): *At ubi, expeditam contestationem, omnis populus Sanctus in laudem Domini proclamavit, statim dissoluti sunt nervi, qui legati erant, et stetit super pedes suos, cuncto populo spectante, et sic, propitiante Domino, usque ad altare sanctum ad communicandum propriis gressibus, nullo sustentante, pervenit.* The *Sanctus* is singled out by Edward Foley as one of the chants of Mass that were sung by the faithful laity: Foley (1997) 207–209; see also Rose (2017) 69–71.

For on a certain Sunday, when Mass was celebrated, she stood in the holy basilica together with the other faithful. Then it happened, when the Lord's Prayer was said, that her mouth as well was opened and she chanted the holy prayer together with the others.²⁶

The question we now turn to is the extent to which and the manner in which liturgical sources *stricto sensu* reflect this performative practice.

2 The Seventh Century: Evidence from a Celebrant's Book for Mass

Even if the liturgical tradition of early medieval (i. e. pre-Carolingian) Gaul is not the poorest in sources transmitting the material to actually celebrate rites,²⁷ the sources of prayers and rituals that have come down to us are not always sufficient to form a complete picture of a certain celebration in a specific place at a given moment. Books were tailor made for a specific place or person,²⁸ rather than produced in series such as to further or support uniformity.²⁹ Moreover, each single book often concentrates on one type of liturgical information. Thus, texts to be sung or recited are found in one book, while rubrics and explanations indicating the gestures and division of roles are often found elsewhere. The chance to find a set of sources providing both texts and rubrics relating to one place and moment in time is rather small. It is possible nevertheless to find indications on the performance of texts in books of prayers corresponding to the practices described in the adhortative and narrative sources discussed in the previous section. Of this I will present here one example: the *Gothic Missal*, a late seventh-century book with prayers for Mass to be recited by the celebrant (priest or bishop) and made presumably for the cathedral of Autun.³⁰ The information we look for, namely the division of roles between ordained ministry and faithful laity during the celebration of Mass, is not found in the form of verbatim rubrics in this source, but in the palaeographical marking of certain words and phrases, either by using a different colour or a different font. While the bulk of texts collected in this sacramentary were recited by the celebrant, the exceptions to

²⁶ Gregory of Tours, *De virtutibus sancti Martini* 2,30 (170,9–12 K.): *Nam quodam die dominico, dum missarum solemnia celebrarentur, haec in sancta basilica cum reliquo populo stabat. Factum est autem, cum dominica oratio diceretur, et haec aperto ore sanctam orationem coepit cum reliquis decantare.* See also Rose (2017) 70.

²⁷ As compared to Rome; see Bernard (2008) 13–20; for a survey of sources of early medieval Gaul, see Vogel (1986) 108.

²⁸ See, e. g., the case of the *Bobbio Missal*, probably made for or even by the priest that was going to use it in a local parish situation; see Hen/Meens (2004).

²⁹ On the diversity of liturgical practice in Merovingian Gaul, see most recently Hen (2016a).

³⁰ Codex Vaticanus, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, reg. lat. 317. The most recent edition is found in *Missale Gothicum* (Rose). The English translation of the Latin text is provided by Rose (2017).

this rule were displayed in deviant colours and scripts, thus giving information on the performative practice that forms the living context of this book.

The Gothic Missal is transmitted in a single manuscript, now kept in the Vatican Library. The book is written in the uncial that was already archaic when the book was produced, which marks the sacred character of the text.³¹ Due to the age of the manuscript and the alternation of scribes who worked on it, the colour of ink is not stable throughout.³² It is possible nonetheless to discern where the rubricator took over and used a different colour to mark a word or phrase as different in its performative nature from its environment. Another method to mark these distinctions is the use of a different majuscule, while both methods were also used simultaneously. This is the case in many instances where the *Sanctus* is singled out, e.g. on fol. 21r, and in the frequent setting apart of the words *Pater noster* to introduce the Lord's Prayer, e.g. on fol. 23r. A third example of the same procedure is given by the recurrent *Amen* to conclude the *Blessing of the People* before Communion, e.g. on fol. 23r.³³ The palaeographical marking of this repeated *Amen* throughout the book indicates that the word, like the entire *Sanctus* and *Pater noster*, was to be recited not by the celebrant, for whom a book like the *Gothic Missal* was principally made, but by the lay congregation. With regard to the response *Amen*, we can say that its performance by the laity is an old practice. We find it already in a treatise dating to the fourth century and attributed to the anonymous, probably Roman author referred to as Ambrosiaster (who owes this pseudonym to the resemblance of his views to Ambrose's):

An illiterate, listening to what he does not understand, does not know when the prayer ends and does not answer with *Amen*, i.e. "It is true", so that the blessing be confirmed. The confirmation of the prayer is fulfilled by those who answer with *Amen*, so that everything that is said is confirmed with a true testimony in the hearts and minds of those who listen.³⁴

The fourth-century conviction that the people confirm with *Amen* the prayer that the priest expresses remained strong until well into the seventh century – despite the dramatic change in social-cultural circumstances, of which the transition from Greek to Latin as the sacred language of the Western Church is only a small example³⁵ – and beyond, as we will see in the following section.

³¹ On the palaeographical characteristics of the manuscript, see Mohlberg (1929).

³² On the various hands that worked on the *Gothic Missal*, see Rose (2005) 13–15.

³³ For a description of the prayers occurring in the Mass ordo of early medieval Gaul and the *Gothic Missal* in particular, see Rose (2017) 44–65.

³⁴ Ambrosiaster, *Commentarius in epistulam Pauli ad Corinthios prima* 14,16 (153,22–154,2 Vogels): *Inperitus enim audiens quod non intelligit, nescit finem orationis, et non respondet: amen, id est verum; ut confirmetur benedictio. Per hos enim impletur confirmatio precis, qui respondent amen, ut omnia dicta veri testimonio in audientium mentibus confirmentur.*

³⁵ On this transition, see Mohrmann (1965) 72–74; Klauser (1946); Rose (2015).

3 The Eighth Century and Beyond: Mass Commentaries

As the third and final type of sources to be included in the present discussion I will turn now to early medieval Mass commentaries.³⁶ The “genre” of the *expositio Missae* became very popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when it almost always took the form of an allegorical explanation of Mass in imitation of Amalarius of Metz’ early example. It has become well known through the work of people like Hugh of St Victor († 1141) and William Durandus of Mende (1230–1296). Explanations of the texts and rituals of Mass are found in earlier forms already in the earliest centuries of Christianity, when they were addressed primarily to the (adult) baptismal candidates. The Mass commentaries that relate to the period central to the present article are almost all found in manuscripts that contain material directed towards a clerical audience, and aiming at their instruction. In what follows, I will discuss the role of the people in the celebration of Mass as it is brought forward in three Mass commentaries of the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries. As we will see, the active participation of the people during Mass and their contribution is a central notion in these explanations of the liturgical celebration. The three texts I selected are, in chronological order:

1. The treatise known as *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, dated to the later seventh century and authored by Isidore of Seville;
2. The anonymous treatise in the form of two letters, formerly attributed to the sixth-century bishop Germain of Paris but now dated in the late eighth or early ninth century, which I will refer to as *De ordine*;
3. The anonymous treatise *Dominus vobiscum*,³⁷ the popularity of which is testified by the large number of manuscripts from the ninth century as well as later centuries.³⁸ Despite efforts to attribute the work to a specific author, like Alcuin,³⁹ Amalarius of Metz,⁴⁰ and Hrabanus Maurus,⁴¹ the issue of authorship is as of yet unresolved.

³⁶ See the fundamental and still valuable article by Wilmart (1924–1953); see further Vismans (1965–1968); and, more recently Bernard’s introduction to his edition of *De ordine* (2007).

³⁷ *Dominus vobiscum*: edited by Johann Michael Hanssens.

³⁸ Keefe (2002) 1, 126–127.

³⁹ Nason (2004).

⁴⁰ Contested by Hanssens (1948) 108–110; see further Nason (2004) 87.

⁴¹ As in Migne’s edition (PL 112 [Hrabanus Maurus, *De sacris ordinibus, sacramentis divinis et vestimentis sacerdotalibus ad Thiotmarum*]); see McKitterick (1977) 115.

3.1 Isidorus of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*

Isidore's treatise is addressed to bishop Fulgentius of Astigi in his diocese Sevilla (now Écija) and was immensely popular throughout the Middle Ages if we count the manuscripts transmitted from the eighth century onwards.⁴² The work is divided into two books, the first discussing the feasts and observations celebrated by all (*in communi ab ecclesia celebrantur*),⁴³ while the second book is dedicated to those who carry out the *ministeria religionis*, in other words, the clergy.⁴⁴ Isidore's work consists mainly of a compilation of older works, as he indicates in the prologue.⁴⁵

The importance of the people in the liturgical celebration is found in roughly three categories of *De officiis*. It appears first in Isidore's definition of Church; then in his remarks on the importance of the people's presence during Mass and their participation in or contribution to this celebration, scattered through the work; and third in general remarks about Christian doctrine and practice which, as Isidore's wording suggests, appear to be valid for all members of the community.

As far as the first category is concerned, we find a relevant definition of *ecclesia* in the first chapter, where the word *catholica* is explained as including the whole human race, both rulers and ruled, both learned and illiterate.⁴⁶ A second passage shows Isidore's thinking about the quality of the celebrating community (indicated alternately as *populus* and *plebs* in his work), as essentially united with Christ. Quoting Cyprian, Isidore explains how the union of the ecclesiastical body with Christ is reflected in the ritual of mixing water and wine before Communion. Celebrating Communion with wine only would be useless, for it would represent Christ without "us" (*nam si vinum tantum quis offerat, sanguis Christi incipit esse sine nobis*),⁴⁷ where *nobis* clearly refers to *plebs*; celebrating the ritual only with water would represent a community without Christ (*si vero aqua sit sola, plebs incipit esse sine Christo*).⁴⁸

In the second category, we find remarks on the mere presence of the faithful during the celebration of Mass, e.g. as recipients of the readings. Prior to the reading, the deacon requires silence to further concentration and understanding.⁴⁹ More actively the people contribute both to texts to be recited during Mass and to the Eucha-

⁴² Lawson (1989) 19*–33*; see Hen (2001) 5.

⁴³ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 2, *prol.* (51,2–3 Lawson).

⁴⁴ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 2, *prol.* (51,4 L.).

⁴⁵ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1, *prol.* (1,8 L.): *Ex scriptis uetustissimis auctorum*, among which Augustine's oeuvre plays an important role.

⁴⁶ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,1 (4,6–22 L.): *De ecclesia a vocabulo Christianorum: [...] Catholica autem ideo dicitur [...] vel propter omne hominum genus ad pietatis subiectionem tam principum quam etiam qui principantur, oratorum et idiotarum.*

⁴⁷ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,18 (20,45–46 L.).

⁴⁸ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,18 (20,46–47 L.).

⁴⁹ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,10 (9,20–23 L.): *Ideo et diaconus clara voce silentium ammonet ut, sive dum psallitur sive dum lectio pronuntiatur, ab omnibus unitas conservetur, ut quod omnibus praedicatur aequaliter ab omnibus audiatur.*

ristic offering itself. The people's contribution to those texts that are recited or chanted during Mass comes to the fore first in the discussion of the *Creed*. The *Creed* is presented as an important instrument to counter heresy and blasphemy. Precisely for that reason it is vital that it is recited "by the people" (*a populo praedicatur, a populo proclamatur*), as Isidore states twice:

The Creed [...] is proclaimed by the people at the time of sacrifice [...]. Its teaching of the true faith excels in mysteries of such great doctrine that it speaks about every part of the faith, and there is almost no heresy to which it does not respond through individual words or statements. It tramples on all the errors of impiety and blasphemies of faithlessness, and because of this it is proclaimed by the people in all churches with equal confession.⁵⁰

Apart from reciting texts, such as the *Creed*, the active contribution of the people consists in their offering of the oblations, which we find expressed in the second of the seven *orationes* of the Mass Ordo.⁵¹ Isidore's commentary on the text states that the faithful (*fideliūm*) offer not only their intercessions (*preces*), but also their oblations (*oblationem*), i. e. the gifts of bread and wine.⁵² Finally, the participation of the people is expressed by their reception of Communion, which is received by all (*ab omni ecclesia*).⁵³

In a more general way, Isidore includes many phrases in his treatise from which it becomes clear that in his thinking about Mass and other ritual celebrations the participation of the entire Christian congregation is required, rather than only the ordained clergy. To this points Isidore's frequent use of terms like *universa ecclesia* and *omne genus humanum*. This, in combination with the first person plural that he quite consistently uses, suggests that he generally addresses "us Christians" rather than "us clergymen", e. g. in the call that "we should (*solemus*) celebrate Christmas each year to recall to remembrance that Christ is born".⁵⁴ The same exhortation directed to the entire community of faithful is expressed in passages on the observance of fasting, such as in chapter 37. Here, Isidore gives the Old Testament precept of giving tithes, which concerned "the whole people" (*universo populo*), as a typological

⁵⁰ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,16 (18,2–9 L.; trans. following 41 Knoebel): *Symbolum autem, quod tempore sacrificii a populo praedicatur [...]. Cuius verae fidei regula tantis doctrinae mysteriis praecellit, ut de omni parte fidei loquatur nullaque paene sit heresis cuius per singula verba vel sententias non respondeat; omnes enim errores impietatum perfidiaeque blasphemias calcat, et ob hoc in universis ecclesiis pari confessione a populo proclamatur.*

⁵¹ In a number of ninth-century priest manuals this part of Isidore's treatise is found in combination with the treatise *Dominus vobiscum*, to be discussed below.

⁵² Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,15 (17,8–9 L.): *Secunda [oratio] invocationis ad deum est ut clementer suscipiat preces fidelium oblationemque eorum.*

⁵³ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,18 (20,23–24 L.): *Ab universa autem ecclesia [...] semper accipitur.*

⁵⁴ Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,26 (30,26–28 L.): *Quemque ideo observare per revolutum circulum anni festa solemnitate solemus ut in memoriam revocetur Christus quod natus est.*

model for the Christian fasting.⁵⁵ The Old Testament obligation to give tithes valid for “the whole (Jewish) people” implies that the Christian obligation to sacrifice one tenth of the days of the year in fasting likewise concerned the whole Christian people. The universality of fasting also becomes clear in chapter 41, where the reprehensible presence of both sexes (*utriusque sexus*) at pagan-inspired celebrations in honour of Janus is countered with a public fasting (*publicum ieiunium*) installed by the *patres*.⁵⁶

3.2 *De ordine*

Let us now turn to the second treatise, *De ordine*, transmitted in only one manuscript.⁵⁷ Like Isidore’s *De officiis*, *De ordine* is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the liturgical rituals, in particular the celebration of Mass.⁵⁸ According to the treatise, this celebration rests essentially on the contributions of both ordained ministers and lay faithful. The treatise, which is clearly dependent on Isidore’s *De officiis*,⁵⁹ gives a more detailed discussion of the individual elements of Mass⁶⁰ and, thereby, offers a more specific impression of the role of the people⁶¹ than Isidore does.

The contribution of the people comes to the fore first in the comments on two dialogues between the minister and the congregation in the celebration of Mass.

55 Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,37 (43,29–31; 44,37–39 L.): *Lege enim Moysaica generaliter universo populo est praeceptum decimas et primitias offerre domino deo. [...] Atque his diebus quasi pro totius anni decimis ad ecclesiam concurrimus, actuumque nostrorum operationem deo in hostiam iubilationis offerimus.*

56 Isidore of Seville, *De officiis* 1,41 (46,1–47,19 L.).

57 Codex Autun, Bibliothèque municipale, S 184 (G III). The dating of the manuscript varies slightly (9th century, second third; 9th century, second or third quarter; middle 9th century); see Bernard (2007) 18–19. The second part of this manuscript consists entirely of material that we would classify under the usual contents of a Carolingian priest manual; see Bernard (2007) 34–48.

58 Referred to as *ordo Ecclesie* and *kanon ecclesiasticus: De ordine, prol.* (337,5.6 Bernard). The terms are interpreted by Philippe Bernard in his translation *cum* commentary: Bernard (2008) 35. In the present context, *ordo* indicates, according to Bernard, the course or organisation of liturgical celebrations: “le déroulement, la disposition ou l’organisation des célébrations liturgiques”. Bernard’s interpretation of *ecclesie* in this element of the prologue as the church as institution, coming forth, as Bernard phrases it, from the author’s exclusively clerical point of view, seems to me to be too hasty. I cannot but understand the word *ecclesie* here as referring to the full body of ministers and lay participants alike.

59 See the elaborate annotation in Bernard’s edition: *De ordine* (337–365 B.) or, for a quick overview, the *index fontium*: *ibid.* 376.

60 The treatise, though dated to the end of the eighth century, follows the Mass *ordo* as it was celebrated in late antique and early medieval Gaul (represented by late seventh- or early eighth-century sources such as the *Gothic Missal* and the *Bobbio Missal*). This might explain its limited distribution. See also Hen (2001) 7.

61 On the term *plebs* and its meaning, see Bernard (2008) 56–57.

In the discussion of the first, *Dominus vobiscum [...] et cum spiritu tuo*, the author underlines the contribution of the people, for the blessing pronounced by the priest is depending on the people's response: "The priest is all the more worthy to bless the people, as the people, with God's grace, with one voice receive the blessing".⁶² The comment on the second dialogue, *Sursum corda*, brings forward the active part of the people. This dialogue, introducing the Eucharistic prayer and the whole Communion rite, was given by Caesarius of Arles as an example of the necessity of the people's presence during Mass, as we have seen in section 1 above. The present comment on this element of Mass accentuates the relevance of the dialogue for all involved in the celebration. The division of roles between priest and faithful in this dialogue implies that the possessive *nostris* (*in pectoribus nostris*) refers to all faithful: "The priest admonishes [us] to lift up [our] hearts, so that no earthly thoughts remain in our hearts (*in pectoribus nostris*) at the moment of the sacred offering".⁶³

The readings from Scripture and the *Lives of the Saints* are entirely directed towards the faithful: they serve the understanding of the people (*ut populus intelligit*).⁶⁴ The chapter on the homilies read from the legends of the saints is concerned with the issue of comprehensibility. It indicates that the homily, i.e. the explanation of the readings by the bishop,⁶⁵ should find a happy mean between simplicity and eloquence, lest the learned be offended by coarse language and a burden of verbosity obscures the message for the illiterate.⁶⁶

The second part of *De ordine* is less relevant for our present investigation since it deals more specifically with the various tasks of clergy and other ordained people: *De commune offitio*.⁶⁷ But even in this part of the treatise, the constant interplay between ordained ministers and faithful lay people is emphasised. An example of this is found in the last section of part 2, where the vestments of priest and deacon are discussed. Even though these chapters underline the difference between various members of the one ecclesiastical body as expressed in daily dress,⁶⁸ the focus is still on the people. It signals the ritual blessings as one of the main tasks of the *sacerdos* and the fact that his garments are adjusted to this task. Thus, the *casula* of the *sacerdos* is sleeveless, so that the celebrant can make the appropriate gestures accompanying the blessing more easily.

62 *De ordine* 1,2 (338,30–32 B.): [...] *ut tanto magis ille dignus sit populo benedicere, quantum, favente Deo, de ore totius populi recipit benedictionem.*

63 *De ordine* 1,20 (349,203–206 B.): *Sursum corda ideo sacerdos habere admonet, ut nulla cogitatio terrena maneat in pectoribus nostris in hora sacre oblationis.*

64 *De ordine* 1,6 (340,67 B.).

65 *De ordine* 1,11 (343,110–111 B.): *doctor vel pastor Ecclesiae.* On the use of these words to indicate the bishop, see Bernard (2008) 143–144.

66 *De ordine* 1,11 (343,108–113 B.). Cf. the contribution of Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann in this volume.

67 *De ordine* 2 (353,2 B.).

68 See the interpretation of *casula* as the daily mantle, rather than the liturgical chasuble: Bernard (2008) 548. On the early medieval dress of clergy, see Miller (2014) and Hen (2016b) 204.

When going through those elements in *De ordine* in which the faithful laity play a prominent role, I come to the conclusion that the author of this treatise has one main perspective on the liturgical celebrations he describes: performed for the benefit of the people (*pro populo*) and attuned to their spiritual profit, Mass as the most important of the liturgical celebrations does not profile the faithful as spectators, but as active participators and contributors.

3.3 *Dominus vobiscum*

The third and final treatise in our analysis, *Dominus vobiscum*, is an even more detailed, word-for-word commentary⁶⁹ focusing on the prayers of the *canon missae*, the heart of the Eucharistic part of Mass. It occurs in more than twenty ninth-century codices containing Carolingian priest manuals and was clearly meant to instruct young priests about the rituals of Mass. The treatise was copied frequently in later medieval manuscripts as well as in early modern printed versions.⁷⁰

More than the other two treatises, *Dominus vobiscum* gives evidence of its intended audience, referring to “us priests” and emphasising the priest several times as the main agent in the celebration of Mass.⁷¹ More pronouncedly than *De officiis* and *De ordine*, therefore, and in line with its didactic purpose, *Dominus vobiscum* approaches Mass from the perspective of the celebrant. At first sight, Dix’s idea of a tendency of clericalisation of Mass could be recognised here. However, a closer look reveals quite the opposite. What this treatise aims to convey to young priests, even more explicitly than the other two treatises, is that in the celebration of Mass ordained ministry and lay faithful have equally important roles to play. The laity’s participation and contribution are presented as indispensable, as both parties rely on each other for the liturgical ritual to be actually performed.

This interdependence is visible in the very first part of the treatise, where it discusses the dialogues between priest and congregation. The comment on the first dialogue, *Dominus vobiscum*, makes clear that the effectiveness of the prayer recited by the priest is dependent on the people’s plea that God’s Spirit is with him.⁷² The pray-

⁶⁹ Bernard (2007) 40. I follow the text as found in Codex St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 40.

⁷⁰ Bernard (2007) 35. Susan Keefe found the treatise in sixteen of twenty-seven Carolingian manuscripts containing an *expositio missae*: Keefe (2002) 2, 126–127. Ongoing research by my Utrecht colleague Carine van Rhijn has enlarged the number to 22 ninth-century manuscripts so far; Van Rhijn also lists 26 later manuscripts. One of the manuscripts is Codex Autun, Bibliothèque municipale, S 184 (G III), which also includes *De ordine* (see footnote 57 above). On the relation between *De ordine* and *Dominus vobiscum*, see Bernard (2007) 40–41.

⁷¹ *Dominus vobiscum* (Codex St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 40, 315,20; 315,21–22): *Memores esse nos sacerdotes profitemur; Ideo sacerdotes fideliter memores esse debent quia ipsi missam celebrant [...]*.

⁷² *Dominus vobiscum* (Codex St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 40, 306,13–15): *DOMINUS VOBISCUM salutatur sacerdos populum, et orat ut dominus sit cum illo. ET CUM SPIRITU TUO responsio est*

er is not ended without the confirmative *Amen*, which script is to be performed by the faithful: “AMEN is the confirmation of the prayer, to be recited by the people, and must be understood to mean, in our language, that all say that it be so as the priest prayed”.⁷³ The word is, perhaps for that reason, explained in *nostra lingua*.⁷⁴ In the second dialogue, *Sursum corda*, a similar interplay between minister and congregation is expressed: “Faithful and priest together give thanks”.⁷⁵

The same sense of acting together is expressed in the sections that focus on the Eucharistic sacrifice itself, most of all in the comments on the anamnestic (or commemorative) function of Mass, which is central in the section *Vnde et memores*. As we have seen already, this passage presents the priest as the one who celebrates Mass, but that is not all. Both priest and people share in the anamnestic act of Mass as the commemorative repetition of Christ’s passion, “for Christ did not die for the priests only, but also for the people”.⁷⁶ What the treatise teaches young priests here quite clearly is to understand the liturgical celebration, in particular of Mass, as a shared performance in which the body of the Church takes part as one *ecclesia*, defined elsewhere in the treatise as the unity of all those who believe in God and who, therefore, form one congregation.⁷⁷

This is precisely the reason why, just as Caesarius of Arles did, *Dominus vobiscum* wishes that the people remain in church until the very end of Mass, when the deacon dismisses them: *Ite missa est* and they respond *Deo gratias* – the faithful have the final word.⁷⁸

4 Conclusion

Now that we have examined a variety of sources from the early sixth to the beginning of the ninth century to hear what they have to say about the role of the faithful laity

populi atque oratio ut sicut sacerdos oravit quod dominus esset cum populo, ita et populus orat quod dominus sit cum spiritu sacerdotis. Dum dicit sacerdos: OREMUS, rogat omnes orare, ut oratio eius a domino et audiatur.

73 *Dominus vobiscum* (Codex St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 40, 305,23–27): *AMEN confirmatio oracionis est a populo et in nostra lingua intelligi potest, quasi omnes dicant ut ita fiat sicut sacerdos oravit.*

74 Whenever the author of *Dominus vobiscum* refers to *nostra lingua*, he has Latin in mind as opposed to the biblical languages Greek (also the original language of a number of the liturgical prayers discussed) and Hebrew.

75 *Dominus vobiscum* (Codex St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 40, 306,24–25): *Populus cum sacerdote simul gracias agit deo [...].*

76 *Dominus vobiscum* (Codex St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 40, 315,25–26): *Plebs sancta ideo meminere debet quia Christus non solum pro sacerdotibus passus est sed et pro plebe.*

77 *Dominus vobiscum* (Codex St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 40, 312,8–10): *Ecclesia Grece, latine congraegacio dicitur. Catholica universalis dicitur. Quia universi qui in domino credunt in una debent [esse] congregacione; see also McKitterick (1977) 118.*

78 *Dominus vobiscum* (Codex St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 40, 322,15–16).

in the celebration of Mass, a picture emerges that modifies earlier assumptions of clericalisation. Most sources we analysed are either written by clergy or address a clerical audience or both. Caesarius' sermons, just as a liturgical source like the *Gothic Missal*, are initiated, written, and/or used by ordained ministers. The same can be said about sources as different in character, aim, and audience as the miracle stories of Gregory of Tours and the Mass commentaries. Many of the sources also have a clerical audience in mind, in particular those Mass commentaries. Nevertheless, all sources discussed give the faithful laity a specific and active role in the celebration of Mass. This role is not confined to the recitation of certain textual elements, not even to the preparation of the oblations in the form of home-made bread, and wine. The active role and contribution of the people is described in terms of the indispensability of their presence. Without the laity, the performance of Mass cannot be completed.

How does this relate to the development of the private Mass, which could (but should not) be celebrated by a priest alone for a specific, requested purpose, in this same period of the later eighth and the ninth century?⁷⁹ And how does the role of the people in the responses, such as the confirmative *Amen* which is visualised in the Gothic Missal and stressed in *Dominus vobiscum*, function in the development of the priest reciting part of the prayers in silence?⁸⁰ Silent prayer and private Mass are traditionally seen as the most drastic changes of the celebration of Mass in the early Middle Ages, and are generally considered to have dramatically changed the face of this core ritual of the Christian Church from a public and corporate act of thanksgiving (Eucharist) to a private and clerical celebration of sacrifice (Mass).⁸¹

The latter presentation of a fundamental shift in meaning, impact, and essence of the celebration of the Eucharist in the early medieval period is modified by the sources analysed in the foregoing. If we look at the reception of the sources discussed in the third section, the early Mass commentaries, we must acknowledge that these writings do not represent, ephemerally, the private opinions of one or two commentators. The manuscript transmission of Isidore's *De officiis* and of the anonymous Mass commentary *Dominus vobiscum* shows the long-lasting relevance of these treatises. Moreover, the fact that both were found primarily in manuals made to instruct young priests, training them to preside over the liturgical celebrations indicates that "clericalisation" is not the most adequate term to present the early medieval view on the meaning of Mass and its participants. Quite the contrary, the treatises all show and underline the celebration of Mass as a corporate performance, in which the faithful laity had their own distinctive and indispensable role to play.

⁷⁹ See Angenendt (1990) 333.

⁸⁰ Angenendt (2008) 457.

⁸¹ Angenendt (2008) 456.

We must conclude, then, that despite the changes that the celebration of Mass undeniably underwent in the period that we discussed, there was a clear continuity in the understanding of the laity as *sancta plebs*, encouraged to be an active participant in the liturgical ritual. The contribution of the faithful to the liturgical act, culminating in Mass as “the most important and most frequently performed ceremony of the religious cult”,⁸² remained vital and constructive and was, in the ninth century, considered at least as central as it had been in the time of Caesarius of Arles and the Merovingian king Guntram.

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⁸² Angenendt (2008) 458.

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