

RITE OF BRAGA

OF all the rites of Catholic Christendom, that used in the Archdiocese of Braga in the North of Portugal is probably the least known. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Braga is remote and an end in itself, since it is not passed en-route for anywhere else, such as Lyons or Milan, and few books have been written on the subject.

Of late years the retention of this venerable rite has been made the subject of two decrees of the Holy See. In 1919, since a section of the clergy had forsaken its distinctive Liturgy, Pope Benedict XV declared (*"Sedis hujus Apostolicæ"*) the Rite of Braga to be obligatory throughout the Archdiocese for both Mass and Office, a decree specifically endorsed by the present Pontiff in 1924 (*"Inter multiplices gravesque curas"*). This last decree finds a place in the preface of the latest addition of the Missal (1924), where the rite is referred to as a "Portuguese glory" (*"Lusitaniæ nitidum velut speculum"*).

The ecclesiastical importance of Braga dates from the fifth century, when its bishop was advanced to metropolitanical rank, as the town, after the destruction of Astorga by the Visigoths (433), had become the capital of the Suevic kingdom.

A distinctive liturgy appears to have been formed—Roman in foundation, with Mozarabic, Gallican and local additions—for in the sixth century we find Bishop Profuturus appealing to the Apostolic See for liturgical guidance. Thus, in 538, Pope Vigilius sent the Church of Braga the Roman Baptismal service, the Canon of the Mass and the proper of Easter to serve as a specimen for the formation of other Masses.

This Suevo-Roman liturgy, however, was shortlived, as the fourth Council of Toledo (633), at which the metropolitan of Braga was present, ordered *"Unus modus in Missarum solemnitatibus,"* and that way was the Mozarabic. This Canon was confirmed in 675, when the

eleventh Council (Toledo) enacted "*ut in una provincia diversitas officiorum non teneatur.*"

In 714 Braga submitted to the yoke of Islam, only regaining its full independence in 1071, the very year that saw the initial step in the virtual extirpation of the old Spanish rite. Bishop Pedro, who ruled the Church of Martin and Fructuosus from 1071 to 1093, replaced the Mozarabic rite by the Roman, not the Suevo-Roman destroyed in 633, but the use introduced so zealously in the countries influenced by the Cluniac reform. Pedro's successor, St. Gerald, perfected the execution of the liturgical services, with the addition of Cluniac rites and customs, for a great similarity existed between the use of Braga and that of the Portuguese Benedictines (Tibaes).

After the coronation of Alfonso I Henriques as king of a free and independent Portugal (1143), the metropolitan of Braga claimed primatial jurisdiction, thus entering upon a discussion of centuries' duration, with which the question of a distinctive rite came to be inextricably interwoven.

Some authorities maintain that the newly-formed kingdom re-introduced the old Suevo-Roman liturgy of the sixth century, supplemented by Roman and Mozarabic codices, comparing the adventures of the rite to the behaviour of the river Guadiana, in that it "rises, flows, vanishes, and, finally, reappears."

The reasons adduced for these primitive origins, are however, very slender and direct protests against Arianism and Priscillianism are read into the present rite of Braga without any real justification. Thus, the peculiar form of Blessing—"In unitate Sancti Spiritus, benedicat vos Pater et Filius"—is said to make any denial of the Holy Trinity or of a real distinction of Persons impossible, but the Mozarabic liturgy and the pre-Tridentine Roman missal of 1533 contain a similar formula.

The double genuflections after the Consecration and the three Elevations are alleged to constitute a profession of faith against the Priscillians, who denied the true Body of Christ, asserting that it was apparent rather than real; while the

BLACKFRIARS

rites for the reconciliation of penitents, found in the missals of 1498, 1512 and 1538, are said to prove the great antiquity of the Rite of Braga.

In the apologia for the Bragança reform of the missal, undertaken by Canon Francisco Pereira (*ob.* 1763), it was categorically stated that "the rite of Braga is none other than the Mozarabic rite," but, despite this very positive assertion, examination of the liturgy shows that the greatest resemblance lies in the Marian beginning and end of the Mass, a mediæval rather than a Gallican feature. Indeed *Pietas Mariana* was the first evolution after the composition of the mediæval rite of Braga, and in 1717, when King John V urged the Bishops to keep December 8th as a great solemnity, the Archbishop of Braga replied that his Church had observed it as such from "remote times." The farcings in the "*Gloria in Excelsis*" for Masses of Our Lady were only omitted in the present missal (1924).

The Braga liturgical books were first printed at the end of the fifteenth century, but, until the Holy See in 1919 definitely ordered the *exclusive* use of the Portuguese rite, many attempts were made to adopt the ordinary Roman usages.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the Rite of Braga is only a mediæval variant of the Roman rite that has been suffered to remain by the *Quo primum* Decree (1570). A like privilege was also claimed by the Portuguese Benedictines, alone out of all the Black Monks to adhere to distinctive usages, for until the "Liberal" persecution in 1834 this Rite of Tibaes, as it was called from the Mother House, was observed in nineteen houses in Portugal and five in Brazil.

In an article of this compass anything like a detailed account of the Rite and Ceremonial of Braga would be impossible, but certain distinctive features may be noted. Thus, four prophecies are said on Holy Saturday, in place of the customary twelve (*cf.* Lyons). On Easter Sunday morning a Procession of the Blessed Sacrament takes place in honour of the Resurrection (*cf.* Dominican). As in the

ancient Cluniac rite and in that of Lyons, grapes are blessed on the Feast of the Transfiguration, but the missal of 1924 orders the ceremony before the beginning of Mass, not at "*per quem haec omnia*" in the Canon. The rite is especially rich in Votive Masses, for, in addition to those found in the Roman Missal, Braga provides for St. Raphael, Angel Guardian (of Portugal), One Apostle, All Apostles, Evangelists, Holy Name and Dolours of Our Lady (two). The Nuptial Mass has a blessing in the form of a dialogue, preface, versicles, responses and collect during the "Libera nos"; while special Requiems are provided for each weekday. The Lenten veil conceals the altars of the Archdiocese from first Vespers of the First Sunday in Lent. An ancient custom of the Church of Braga was for four or six assistants in copes to assist at solemn Masses, although the present missal is silent on the point. Incense is put into the thurible at solemn Masses in the sacristy. The Mass begins, as in the Mozarabic rite, with the "*Ave Maria*," the priest saying (kneeling) the first half and the people ("*minister et circumstantes*") responding with the second. The "*Confiteor*" takes the unusual form of: "*Confiteor Deo omnipotenti, et beatæ Mariæ Virginis, et Sanctis Apostolis Petro et Paulo, et omnibus Sanctis, et vobis, fratres: quia peccavi nimis cogitatione, locutione, opere et omissione, mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. Ideo deprecor beatissimam Virginem Mariam et omnes Sanctos et Sanctas Dei, et vos, fratres, orare pro me.*" On great feasts the Introit is trebled (*cf.* Carthusian, Carmelite and Norbertine rites). The prophetic lesson, retained on the Vigil of Christmas, the three Masses of the Feast, and the Epiphany and its Octave Day, is sung by the ceremoniarus. At low Mass the *oblata* are prepared before the liturgy begins, but on solemn occasions between the Epistle and Gospel, as in certain of the rites of Mediæval Europe. The sacred ministers *kneel* by the side of the priest, facing each other, for the mixing of the chalice, and the prayer resembles many of the mediæval forms. The prayers at the Offertory differ from those in the Roman missal, but they are only

mediæval variants. An unusual rubric and prayer, however, are found in the 1924 book: "*Ad Offertorium populi, Celebrans offerenti dicit: Centuplum accipias, et vitam aeternam possideas in regno Dei. Amen*"; while the rubrics at the beginning of the missal state that if any offerings are to be made the celebrant goes to the "lowest step or other customary place," where he gives the end of his stole or maniple for the donors to kiss, saying to each "*Centuplum accipias*" (cf. Offering of Vecchioni, Ambrosian rite).

This done, he is directed to give his blessing to the people and return to the altar. When there is a sermon the use of Braga places it after the censuring and before the lavabo, but the truth of "*Quomodo vero prædicabunt nisi mittantur?*" is very symbolically shown, for the preacher, having said "*Munda cor meum*" before the altar, comes to the sedilia for the celebrant's blessing. This is given with the words "*Dominus sit in corde tuo et in labiis tuis, ut digne et competenter annuntiare valeas sanctum Verbum suum: in nomine . . .*" The bell is not rung either at the "*Sanctus*" or at the "*Hanc igitur*." It has been already noted that this rite enjoins a double genuflection while the Blessed Sacrament is on the altar, and the pall remains on the chalice when it is elevated (cf. Mozarabic rite). The second elevation takes place at the "*Oremus*," before "*Praeceptis salutaribus moniti*," when the celebrant, holding the chalice in his left hand, elevates the Host with his right, the bell being rung to arouse the devotion of the faithful. Both Host and Chalice are slightly ("*parum*") elevated at "*Per omnia saecula saeculorum*" before "*Pax Domini*" and two alternatives are given for the commixture prayer, the first similar to that found in the Dominican rite. A further choice ("*quam voluerit Celebrans*") is given in the first of the four (sic) Communion prayers, where one of them more definitely relates to the kiss of peace: "*Domine Jesu Christe, qui es vera pax et vera concordia: fac nos pacificari in hac sancta hora.*"

At "*Domine non sum dignus*" is the third showing of the Blessed Sacrament for the adoration of the people, when the

rubric orders the priest to turn his body slightly (towards the Gospel side, with his left elbow on the edge of the altar), so that those who are by may be able to see and adore the sacred Host ("*et paulisper corpus deflectens, ita ut circumstantes sacram Hostiam videre et adorare possint.*")

In this rite "*Ita missa est*" has two "*Alleluias*" not only in Easter Week, but also throughout the Paschal season and in the Octave of Corpus Christi."

From Christmas to the Circumcision (inclusive) and on the Epiphany variants may ("*si placuerit*") be sung to the "*Ite*": "*Verbum Patris hodie processit ex Virgine; virtutes Angelicæ cum canoro jubilo benedicunt Domino.*" R. "*Pacem nobis omnibus nuntiavit Angelus, refulsit pastoribus veri solis claritas, reddunt Deo gratias,*" for Christmas, and "*Stella fulget hodie, quæ ducit ad præsepe magos ab Oriente: qui invento Puerio benedicunt Domino.*" R. "*Adorantes Puerum, offerentes thus et aurum, myrrhamque mortalium, reversi sunt ad patriam, reddunt Deo gratias,* for the Epiphany.

The Blessing, which is similar to that found in the Mozarabic rite, has been already mentioned ("*In unitate Sancti Spiritus benedicat vos Pater et Filius*"), but if the Mass requires "*Benedicamus Domino*" the people are blessed, *without any form of words*, immediately after "*Dominus vobiscum.*" Thus the rubric says: "*Quando dicitur Benedicamus Domino, datur antea Benedictio, omissis tamen verbis In unitate.*"

As in the Mozarabic and Calced Carmelite rites a commemoration of Our Lady follows the Last Gospel, consisting of an antiphon, versicle and response and prayer.

The now extinct rite of Tibaes was very similar to that of Braga, but the Benedictines who have been allowed to return to Portugal under the beneficent rule of Salazar have made no attempt to restore their ancient liturgy, although Fr. Antonio Coelho of Falperra directs the monthly journal "*Opus Dei,*" a magazine devoted to the maintenance of the ancient Rite of Braga in its liturgical exactitude.

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