

The prayers quoted in this booklet are very much in accordance with the spirit of today. They reveal a natural awareness of things very much stressed by the Second Vatican Council and by modern spiritual writers –the importance of the liturgy, of active participation in the Mass, of praying for the Church and for the needs of others.

We can rely with confidence on the past in our work of renewal and aggiornamento for we possess in the traditions of our people the spirit so much desired by the Church in the twentieth century.

As Father O Laoghaire remarks.

“It is well to remember when we hear so much talk of ‘peasant’ Faith that at least in our forebears the Faith did not lack its proper intellectual basis” (Page 17).

OUR MASS OUR LIFE

Some Irish traditions and prayers

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THE IRISH APPROACH TO GOD

There are signs that Ireland once more is to have meaning for many Irishmen. There is talk of ideas and ideals. There is talk of 'spirit.' A revival of Ireland demands that we cease to be ashamed of what is best in our land, past or present. What we have has come down, much of it, from a far-distant past. Ireland is not of yesterday. A spirit may always be revived, whether for good or evil. A spirit alone can bind the past and the present and itself be unbound by any age. In the Renaissance men saw the revival of the old classical pagan spirit. There will be no end to disputing the good and the evil that that revival brought on the world. For us the point is that an ancient spirit relived in another age.

In Ireland we too can revive a spirit in order to revitalise our own age and we may remark that it is easier to do so if that spirit has not vanished from the land. We do not speak here of restoring old *forms* of the spirit, although that was done, and at times with disastrous results in the Renaissance. In our own time the Church too has judged that a very effective way to revive the true spirit of worship is actually to restore some ancient forms of worship.

I think we should be very bold in reviving our own spirit and not easily yield to talk about 'this twentieth century of ours' as if it were an absolute in the history of the human spirit or the ultimate norm of what is most congenial to that spirit. Nowhere here in Ireland is a revival of our spirit more necessary than in matters strictly spiritual, that is, concerning God and our own immortal selves. We seem to have become, if we may say so without irreverence, a dumping ground for all the spiritualities of the world. From the east and from the west the theologies and the devotions pour in. New ideas and experiments are grasped at eagerly and too often repeated and imitated in parrot-fashion, as if we had nothing of our own or no critical faculty save to berate ourselves for our 'innumerable sins, offences and negligences' and our antiquated 'peasant' religion (again, inevitably, out of step with 'the twentieth century'). True it is indeed, that we fail in many things and that in not a few of us religion has become individualistic and formal and that we need to be shaken up, from no matter what quarter. Yet let us be discerning in our

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self-depreciation. Let us not condemn everything past and present in our Faith. If I may say so, our ancestors in the Faith, who suffered so willingly and so deeply in order that we might inherit it, deserve better of us! They gave us very much and left on what they gave the imprint of a special spirit which should be most congenial to us, something which, if looked at afresh and with great sympathy, would find a deep echo in our Christian heart. If Christ appeared in his time as a Jew of Palestine, he has also appeared as an Indian of the Indians, an African in great variety of the Africans, a Chinese of the Chinese, and in Europe a Spaniard of the Spaniards, an Englishman of the English . . . an Irishman of the Irish. To restore that Irish image of Christ is not a bad ideal.

Where to begin in the effort to present that image effectively in print? Although it is a little arbitrary, I think it would be helpful to begin, not with Saint Patrick, but here and now in our own day. There is a unique corpus of traditional prayer in Ireland. I do not know if it is paralleled elsewhere in Europe. Maybe, for all I know, in Russia, perhaps till recently in Brittany, but I doubt it. When I say Ireland I include the Highlands of Scotland which share our culture and tradition—the magnificent volumes of *Carmina Gadelica* edited by Alexander Carmichael show the common heritage of prayer. As we examine some typical examples of these prayers, it will be obvious to us that many of them go far back in their origins, whether in Ireland itself or, more often, abroad.

Lex orandi lex credendi it used to be said, 'As we pray, so we believe.' Our deeds may not always be in accord with our belief, but at least our prayers will show what we hold dearest. It is sad to have to admit that most of us are quite ignorant of this body of traditional prayer, presumably in the first place because it is in Irish. Very few of these prayers were passed on in English clothing. Had our education both at home and at school been filled with knowledge of and feeling for our greatest and deepest traditions, we would have had a different story to tell.

Earlier I noted that it is easier to revive—or spread—a spirit which has not vanished from the land. These prayers, at very least, embody some of that spirit. It is worthy of note that they have been and are being collected from the lips of Irish men and women in our own time. We can only imagine how vast would have been that collection even a mere hundred years ago. The numbers of them in manuscripts of the last couple of hundred years give us some slight idea. Not a few

of these prayers have been written down from Irish people in other parts of the world. There is only one small collection in Irish* (as distinct from those in *Carmina Gadelica* from Scotland), *Paidreacha na nDaoine*, published for the first time over fifty years ago by Searlóit Ní Dhéisigh. Many other prayers have been published in various journals. This collection was published in translation, *Prayers of the Gael*, by R. Mac Crócaigh, the latest edition being that of 1952. In a book published in America, *The Year and Our Children*, Mary Reed Newland (1956), we read of this translation: 'They (the prayers) are marvellously suited to children—and of course to grown-ups'. (Pp. 125-6). We will refer later to some other comments by the same author on individual prayers. If they are considered so suitable for urbanised Americans, it is not too much to say that these prayers should be more than suitable for the inhabitants of the land of their origin.

One further point I would like to make before giving any examples. The Vatican Council issued a special decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, and in the major Constitution on the Church goes into great detail on the place of the laity in the life of the Church. The spiritual life of the laity is not meant to be a poor imitation of the monastic or clerical life, something essentially inferior. On the contrary, it is a life altogether proper to them and, seeing that the overwhelming majority of the members of the Church are lay people, it is the ordinary way of holiness in the Church and the source of the specific apostolate of the laity. Now it needs to be stressed that these prayers of ours are essentially lay prayers for the laity. There is nothing of the monastic about them, except of course that there breathes through them the breath of the great truths of our Faith that sustain the prayer and action of all Christians. They reveal what the Church so desires today, an authentic lay spirituality or approach to God. Rarely can we name the author of any of them, but undoubtedly the majority were composed by laymen. Most of them also are in verse as was common in many countries, e.g.

*Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on.*

From ancient times man has felt the need to address God in the noblest forms of speech at his command. Hence poetry and verse.

* *Religious Songs of Connacht and Dánta Diadha Uladh* are rather wider in scope, including more than prayers.

We may begin with what is central to our Faith and as such recognised by the enemies of the Faith, the Liturgy of the Mass. This is from Kerry: 'Siúlaimid mar aon leis an Maighdin Mhuire agus leis na daoine naofa eile a bhí ag tionlacadh a haon-Mhic ar Chnoc Calbharai' (*We walk together with the Virgin Mary and the other holy people who accompanied her only Son on the Hill of Calvary*). This is the *Communicantes* of the Canon of the Mass in action. We can well imagine what a training in the very heart of their Faith was inculcated into the young who heard their elders making their way reverently to Mass with such prayers on their lips.

There is a special *Coróin* or Rosary to *Rí an Domhnaigh*, the King of Sunday, and no doubt the above prayer could be an introduction to it. On the large beads was said:

Céad fáilte romhat, a Rí an Domhnaigh bheannaithe
do tháinig le cabhair chugainn tar éis na seachtaine.
Corraigh mo chos go moch chun Aifrinn,
corraigh im béal na bréithre beannaithe,
corraigh mo chroí agus díbir an ghangaid as.
Féachaim suas ar Mhac na Banaltran
agus ar a haon-Mhac trócaireach,
mar is é is fearr a cheannaigh sinn
agus gur leis féin beo is marbh sinn.

A hundred welcomes to thee, o King of Blessed Sunday who has come to help us after the week. My feet guide early to Mass, part my lips with blessed words, stir up my heart and banish out of it all spite. I look up to the Son of the Nurse, her one and only Son of Mercy, for He it is who has so excellently redeemed us and His we are whether we live or die. On the small beads:

- V. Céad fáilte romhat, a Rí an Domhnaigh ghlórmhair.
A Mhic na hÓighe is a Rí na Glóire,
R. A Íosa mhilis is a Mhic Mhuire,
déan trócaire orainn.

A hundred welcomes to you, o King of glorious Sunday. O Son of the Virgin and King of Glory, o sweet Jesus, o Son of Mary, have mercy on us.

There are many versions of that prayer, as indeed of most of the prayers (and at times, as is but natural in prayers transmitted by mouth, prayers can intermingle and sense can change and even on occasion be lost). It is noteworthy not least in that it fits in so well with the instruction in the Constitution

on the Sacred Liturgy issued by the recent Council: 'Efforts must also be made to encourage a sense of community within the parish, above all in the common celebration of the Sunday Mass' (42°). Mrs. Newland in quoting this prayer in the book mentioned above, says aptly (and Americanly!): 'Here is a prayer for the family to help them keep a sanctified Sunday. It is a lovely prayer to say in the car on the way to Mass' (126). Our poor 'peasants' were, to use the current term, fully 'post-conciliar' in their reverence and love for the Lord's Day, or perhaps we may say that they had preserved the feeling of the primitive Church in that regard.

Before ending this, as it were, introductory chapter, I should like to note that it is very difficult to translate these prayers adequately into English. There is the danger of sounding quaint or even jejeune. The translation then is mostly an approximation. An effort to convey the thought. In a prayer, however, the words themselves with all their resonance and associations can be of great significance. Irish is extremely (I use the word advisedly) rich in what I may call human vocabulary, that is, in terms of affection and pity. It is a great language to make love in! Here is a small selection of such terms which will be familiar to many readers and even to some who cannot read or speak Irish: 'A ghrá ghil, a rún, a stór, a thaisce, a chuid 'en tsaol, a chara chroí, a chroí istigh, a mhuirnín, a chara na gcarad, a chara na páirte, a chara na n-ae, a chara na n-árann, a chara liom, a chara go deo, a chumann, a mhaoineach, a lao liom, a dheartháirín ó; mo ghraidhn thú, a Mhuire is trua, och mo mhairg, ochón, mo chreach, mo léan, mo léir, mo lom, mo sceimhle, mo chrá, mo bhrón, a chráiteacht, mo chumha, faraoir géar cráite.' They can be formulated at will. Try to translate them into English (or into any other language for that matter), and you will have to be content with such apparent banalities as 'Love, darling, dear' or else you must leave everyday speech and slip into poetry. As for terms of sorrow there seems to be only the (actually obsolete) word 'alas!' We know that Irish speakers felt this great lack in English and forced into English such terms as 'A stór, a rún, a mhuirnín'. However, I mention all this here only to show the difficulty of rendering in English the intimacy and naturalness of such expressions which are so common in our prayers. To render them literally would lead one to be accused of overstatement, exaggeration. We are all familiar with the unnatural ring in English of literal translation of fervent Italian prayers.

MASS, PARISH AND PEOPLE

'Public house' has a special meaning for the English-speaker and the corresponding French term 'maison publique' means something else again . . . For the Irish-speaker 'Teach a' Phobail' conveys something completely different again—the parish church, where the people, 'an pobal' (and the word 'pobal' itself by a natural growth of meaning, can mean 'parish') come together on Sunday for Mass. We are not surprised then to hear that the normal preface to a sermon is 'A Phobal Dé' or 'A Phobal' i.e. 'People of God', a term that has become common since the recent Council, but which still can sound unnatural in addressing a congregation in English. 'Pobal Dé' has a long history in Ireland, it being the common term for the Israelites under Moses. Easy then to show the full significance of this rich, scriptural term, as indeed has been done in the Constitution on the Church of the Vatican Council. Before quoting some of the prayers connected with the Mass it may be of interest to show in what esteem the Mass was held.

'Domhnach ó Aifreann, lá ó scoil,
agus lá ó cheird,
trí ní nach féidir leo casadh go brách'.

*A Sunday from Mass, a day from school, a day from one's
trade, three things that can never return;*

Ní rogha go Rí na cruinne,
ní cobhair go trócaire,
ní beatha bhíothbhuan acht neamh,
ní luach go hAifreann d'éisteacht.

*The King of the universe is the supreme choice,
no help can be compared to mercy,
there is no everlasting life save heaven,
more precious than anything is the hearing of Mass;*

An tAifreann ná tugaigí ar aon phioc,
níl ní ar bith sa saol seo níos fearr.
Tugaimid moladh is mórbhuíochas
leis an Aon-Mhac a rinn' an Aiséirí slán.

*Exchange not the Mass for anything,
there is nothing in the wide world to surpass it.
We give praise and great thanks
to the only Son who rose whole from the dead.*

These are but random quotations from a vast amount of material. We may just note in the last verse the reference to the Resurrection. People were very conscious that Sunday was the Lord's Day, Dé Domhnaigh, and that Christ who died and rose again is King—

Míle fáilte romhat, a Rí an Domhnaigh,
a Mhí na hÓighe a rinne an Aiséirí.

*A thousand welcomes, King of Sunday,
Son of the Virgin who rose from the dead.*

We may note also that 'Rí', King, has always been a favourite way of addressing God or Christ and nothing is more common still than to talk simply of 'An Rí', the King. No doubt when Ireland had kings the expression was of even greater significance and especially the term, 'Ard-Rí', which is still used. There are various prayers that may be said on seeing the church and on going in:

Is beannaithe Teach Dé
is beannaím féin dó.
Mar a bhfuil sé leis an dá aspal déag.
Go mbeannaí Mac Dé dúinn.
Is beannaithe thú, a Athair bheannaithe,
is beannaithe thú, a Mhí an Athar bheannaithe,
is beannaithe thú, a Theampaill an Spioraid Naoimh
is beannaithe thú, a Eaglais na Tríonóide.

*Blessed is the House of God
and I myself greet him
where he is with the twelve apostles.
May the Son of God bless us.*

*Blessed are you, o holy Father,
blessed are you, o Son of the holy Father,
blessed are you, o Temple of the Holy Ghost,
blessed are you, o Church of the Trinity.*

Molaimid Íosa Críost,
molaimid Sacraimint ghlórmhar na haltóra.
Go mbeannaítheair duit, a lic an Aifrinn.
Go mbeannaítheair duit, a mharcaigh bhoicht chéasta
—faoi do bhun a dhéanfar sinn a shaoradh.
Dia is Muire is an tSacraimint naofa
is sagart ar ár ndeasláimh an lá déanach. Amen.

*We praise Jesus Christ,
we praise the glorious Sacrament of the altar.
Hail to you, o Mass stone,
hail to you, o blessed Sunday.
Hail to you, o poor crucified Rider
—at your foot we will be saved.
May God and Mary, the Blessed Sacrament
and the priest be at our right hand on our last day.*

Perhaps the reference to the Mass stone could date from Penal times when it would be visible on the temporary altar of rock or wood. Christ crucified considered as the Rider of the cross is found centuries earlier in the bardic poetry.

Go mbeannaítheair duit, a altóir,
a chros bhreá dhuilliúrach ghlas.
Nár lige tú m'anam thart;
go gcoinní tú mé ar dea-staid,
go bhfillle tú sinne ar ár leas,
go méadaí tú ár gcroí le glóir a fháil,
go líona tú ár súile le deora na haithrí,
go dtuga tú ár gcion dúinn de gach Aifreann
dá léitear sa Róimh inniu
agus ar fud an domhain mhóir. Amen.

*Hail to you, o altar,
o beautiful, flowering, green cross,
let not my soul pass you by.
May you keep me in the state of grace,
may you convert us to the right way,
may you enlarge our hearts to be filled with glory,
may you fill our eyes with tears of repentance,
may you give us our share of every Mass
that is celebrated in Rome today
and throughout the whole world. Amen.*

Here we have an echo from the Good Friday liturgy in the salutation to the cross from the hymn *Cruix Fidelis*—'Faithful cross, a tree all beauteous . . . not a grove on earth can show us such a leaf and flower as thine'. In the reference to the Masses at Rome we see how the age-old and deep veneration of our people for Rome still remains. We are reminded of St. Brigid of whom we are told in one of her Lives that although in Ireland, she 'heard and beheld Masses celebrated in the city of Rome and at the tombs of the apostles, SS. Peter and Paul . . . I am also able to hear every day those sacred Masses which are offered to the Almighty in different parts of the world, as if I were present at their celebration.' One other point we may mention, well-illustrated in the above prayer. It is, that a prayer may sometimes begin in the singular and quite unconsciously, as it were, slip into the plural. In fact the vast majority of these prayers of the people are in the plural. The consciousness of being a community was very deep and of course nowhere more manifest than in the House of the People.

In the different versions of the above communal prayers on the way to Mass there are ones that bring special invocations also of Our Lady:

Is beannaithe thú, a Bhanríon na n-aingeal,
is beannaithe thú, a Bhanríon na glóire,
is beannaithe thú, a ghoibhearnóir an Spioraid Naoimh.

*Blessed are you, o Queen of the angels,
blessed are you, o Queen of glory,
blessed are you, o ruler of the Holy Ghost.*

What a telling invocation the last one is! It is an instance too of how frequently Our Lady is joined in prayer to the Holy Ghost.

There is one other interesting little variant (from Mayo) on the last part of the prayer above:

Toradh agus tairbhe an Aifrinn seo go dtuga tú dúinn
agus gach uile Aifreann atá á rá ar fud an domhain
mhóir,
dúinn féin agus dár gcomhchréatúirí.

*The fruit and benefit of this Mass may you give us,
and of every Mass that is being said throughout the world—
may you give
to us and our fellow-creatures.*

A generous prayer.

We may round off these examples of prayers before or on the way to Sunday Mass with the following advice to the faithful:

Téirigh chuig an Aifreann gan aon bhróg¹
agus ná déan aon bhród as do bhrat.
Imigh amach in ainm na Tríonóide
agus beannaigh faoi dhó do na boicht,
mar bhí Mac Dé ina riocht.
Gach 's a bhfaca tú ariamh d'airgead agus d'ór
agus a gcuala tú de cheolta cruit,²
ní fheicfidh tú Flaitheas Mhic Dé go deo
gan beannacht³ agus deirce na mbocht.

'Go to Mass shoeless and make no show of your clothes. Go out in the name of the Trinity and greet twice over the poor, for the Son of God was in their guise. No matter what you have seen of silver and gold and heard of music on the harp, you will never see the Kingdom of the Son of God without the blessing of the poor and alms to them.'

We can appreciate the spirit of those words even if in our well-shod and well-clad days we are unlikely to meet such poor people on our way to Mass. It were contradictory to go out to take part in the Sacrifice of Him who emptied Himself and became poor for our sakes, while ignoring those in whose guise he came, as the prayer says. If we lose sight of poverty we lose sight of Christ and of Calvary.

1. 'Cork 12 December 1721. The very extraordinary Devotions, Fastings and Penances among the Irish all over the County (remarkable even in this City) in so much that many hundreds of them have been seen by Protestants of good credit going to the churches every day bare footed, yea some who had not been able to stir out of doors or their bedds for a long time are forced to comply with these injunctions. A very sensible honorable Gentleman who saw many of them told me upon enquiry what all this was for, was answered that they were commanded to do it for the good of their souls and the advantage of another person. Ja. Osburne. To Jas. Busted'. (Magistrate's Report in *Irish Priests in the Penal Times*, 1660-1760 p.380 by Rev. William P. Burke, 1914).

2. Or 'agus dá mba leat ceo na gcnoc'—if you owned the mist of the hills

3. Or 'leaba'—bed (i.e. giving them lodging).

PRAYING THE MASS

The Mass is the centre of our Faith and if it has come down to us as such, we owe it to the fidelity of our forebears, especially those who suffered persecution for the Mass. Great care was taken in instilling a knowledge of and reverence for the Mass. Our traditional communal prayers alone bear witness to that fact. A layman, poet and schoolmaster who did great and apostolic work in imparting solid knowledge of the Faith and love for it was Pádraig Den of Waterford. He flourished in the first half of the last century. A small selection of some of his works was republished in Dublin sixty years ago—*An Phaidir agus an tAifreann Naomhtha agus Aitheanta Dé mínighthe*. In a preface to the work Father Muiris Ó Faoláin, later Abbot of Mount Melleray, wrote, speaking of the use that was made of Pádraig's work in one church in the Decies: 'Sé chuma a chuirtear ar siúl é ná, nuair a bhíodh an pobal cruinnithe chun an Aifrinn, bheartaíodh an sagart paróiste ar bheirt d'fhearaibh óga an phobail agus chuireadh sé suas ar an altóir iad, duine ar gach taobh, agus chuireadh duine acusan na ceisteanna amach agus dhéanadh an duine eile na freagraí a thabhairt. Ní baol ná go raibh an *Míniughadh* buailte isteach go daingean in aigne lucht an phobail sin'. (This is the way it was done. When the people were gathered for Mass the parish priest would beckon to two young men from the congregation and put them up at the altar, one on either side, and one of them would give out the questions and the other the answers—i.e. from Pádraig's *Míniughadh* or Explanation of the Mass. There is no doubt but that the *Míniughadh* was well fixed in the minds of the people of that parish).

We have now reached the beginning of Mass and here is a prayer from the North as the priest ascends the three steps of the altar to remind us of the part we are to take in the death of our Saviour and of the presence of the Blessed Trinity at that death:

Na trí coiscéimeacha a tháinig in airicis tórramh mo
Shlánaitheora go dtaraí in airicis m'anama:
Coiscéim don Athair, coiscéim don Mhac
agus coiscéim don Spiorad Naomh.

May the three steps that came to meet the funeral of my Saviour come to meet my soul: the step of the Father, the step of the Son, the step of the Holy Ghost.

On seeing the priest come out vested for Mass, the people have this prayer:

Dé bheatha-sa chugainn, a shagairt, a theachtaire Dé ar an talamh, faoi do chulaith órshnáth agus faoi do chulaith airm.

Welcome in our midst, o priest, messenger of God on earth, in your golden vestments and your armour.

The phrase 'teachtaire Dé', messenger of God is a venerable and beautiful one. In the eighth century glosses on the epistles of St. Paul we read (on I Thess. 2, 7) 'ammi techtiri ártphersine,' 'we are the messengers of a high personage.' The phrase 'teachtaire Dé' is quite commonly used of a priest and I suppose refers mainly to his work of spreading the gospel of Christ, but it has too, I think, that deeper significance which we would expect it to have as used here in the beginning of Mass, namely that at the word of the priest Christ is rendered present on the altar in the Blessed Sacrament. Here the phrase brings to mind the messenger of God at whose word, accepted by Mary, Christ came into the world as man in the womb of Mary. The reference in this prayer to 'armour' also brings us far back in our spiritual history, for the image of the armour or breastplate of God, taken doubtless from St. Paul, was a favourite from early times in Ireland and gave rise to a particular type of prayer, the 'Lúireach' or 'Lorica' or Breastplate, the most famous being the one attributed to St. Patrick. The type is still extant.

As regards the priest, here is a quatrain that shows accurately the people's ideal of a priest:

B'áil liom sagart breá sultarach pléisiúrtha,
lán de chreideamh is carthanach nádúrtha,
a bheadh báidheach le bochtaibh is cneasta lena
thréadaí,
ach níorbh áil liom stollaire fé chulaith mhín an
Aon-Mhic.

I would like a fine, pleasant, cheerful priest, full of faith charitable and kindly, who would have sympathy for the poor

and be gentle with his flock, but I would not like a good-for-nothing in the fair livery of the Only Son.¹

So the priest is seen as clad in the clothes of Christ. The people were familiar as, indeed, are many of us today, with the symbolism from the Passion of our Lord attached to the Mass vestments. Above all it is perhaps from *Eochair-Sciath an Aifrin*, the defence of the Mass and the Faith composed by Fr. Séathrún Céitinn in the seventeenth century that that familiarity derives. Pádraig Den's explanation of that symbolism seems to come from that work. I do not know exactly how many manuscript copies of the *Eochair-Sciath* there are or how many have been lost, but the total number dating well into the last century must have been considerably more than a hundred. I have no doubt that it² played a great part in strengthening knowledge and love of the Faith and above all of the Mass in the minds and hearts of the people. It is well to remember when we hear so much talk of 'peasant' Faith, that at least in our forebears the Faith did not lack its proper intellectual basis. To return then to this symbolism of the priest's vestments, it helped to keep the people united with the Mass as the sacrifice of Calvary.

As regards the early part of the Mass, up to the Offertory we may quote a number of representative prayers. We are blessed in particular in having a little series of five such, all from the one area and even parish. First of all, a word on the notable book in which we find them in print. In 1928, after her death, was published *Dánta Dé* by Úna Ní Ógáin. On the title-page we read also 'I n-Onóir na Tríonóide's i Sióthcháin na Páise' (a line from one of our prayers)—In honour of the Trinity and in the peace of the Passion. The book is a collection of Irish hymns, ancient and modern, with their music. The editor to whom every Irish man and woman should ever be grateful was a Protestant from County Antrim. She was one of a number of Irish Protestants who filled with a great love for the language and traditions of Ireland, and not least for the religious heritage preserved in its beauty and vigour in the language, strove

1. Interesting to compare with what Vatican II wishes to find in a priest: "... priests will find great help in the possession of those virtues which are deservedly esteemed in human affairs, such as goodness of heart, sincerity, strength and constancy of character, civility..." (*Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 3).

2 In addition to such works as *Scáthán Shacraiminte na hAithrige* and the many catechisms. Unnecessary to emphasise the great work of the Franciscans in this regard.

to inspire others by word and pen to cherish and further that language and heritage. Before going on to the prayers we have mentioned, it will not be irrelevant to quote some of the editor's preface: 'B'fhéidir nach bhfuil ar druim an domhain pobal eile do ghnáthlean chomh dílis dúthrachtach den Fhilíocht Dhiaga is do lean Clanna Gael di, ó bhreacadh lae an Chreidimh in Éirinn go dtí an aois atá anois ann. Bhí an Creideamh ina lóchrann shoilseach acu i dtráth agus in antráth, agus bhídís ag canadh faoi mhórgacht Dé, faoi Pháis Chríost agus faoi umhlacht uasal na Maighdine Beannaithe. Do mhair na dánta agus an ceol diaga ó aois go haois, trí shoineann agus doineann, i ngach áit a bhfuil fíor-Ghaeil ann nár chaill a n-oidhreacht dhiaga riamh. Tá anam agus creideamh ár sinsear iontusan' (Perhaps there is no other people on the face of the earth who cultivated religious poetry with such zeal and fidelity as did the Irish from the very dawn of the Faith in Ireland till this day. In season and out of season the Faith was for them a brilliant light and they sang of the majesty of God, of the Passion of Christ and of the noble lowliness of the Blessed Virgin. The poems and the sacred music have lived on from age to age, through good times and bad, wherever the truly Irish are to be found—those who have never lost their religious heritage. In them we have the soul and faith of our ancestors). She adds then: '... maireann an tseansprid álainn uasal i gcoíthe ár muintire fós, lasair den tine a las Spiorad Dé iontu ar dtús; agus mairfidh sin go deo le cúnaimh Dé ina hoidhreacht luachmhar naofa an fhad agus a mhairfeas an teanga inar cumadh na Duanta seo' (The ancient spirit, noble and beautiful, lives still in the hearts of our people, a flame of fire which the Spirit of God kindled in them originally; and it will ever live, with the help of God, as a precious and holy heritage, as long as the language itself in which these songs were composed).

She tells how she got these five prayers: 'Pilib Ó Bhaldraithe, Druimbán, Maigh Eo, dea-chara dom, is é do chuir chugam na cúig ranna diaga seo gona gcuid ceoil as leabhar luachmhar d'urnaithe na ndaoine do thiomsaigh sé san Iarthar. Is fiú sonrú faoi leith a chur sna duanta seo, mar go maireann siad i gcónaí i mbéal na ndaoine agus go mbíd á rá ag an bpobal os íseal le linn an Aifrin. Deir Pilib liom: "Fuairéas na hamhráin úd ó dhaoine nach raibh mórán Béarla acu; ach bhí seanphaidreacha a sinsear acu agus na dánta úd, agus bhí dán nó amhrán beag mar sin acu le haghaidh gach uile pháirt den Aifreann. B'shin é a chuir i mo cheann gurbh Aifreann Cantata

a bhíodh ag muintir na sean-Éireann. Chualas na daoine á ngabháil ar nós crónáin. Tháinig siad anuas ó ghlúin go glúin; níl a fhios cé a chúm iad nó cé a cheap an ceol dóibh." Deir Pilib gur chuala sé iad ina pharóiste féin' (Pilib Ó Bhaldraithe of Druimbán, Maigh Eo, a good friend of mine sent me these five religious verses and the music with them from a valuable collection of prayers of the people which he has collected in the West. These poems are worthy of special attention for they are still living among the people and are recited by them in a low voice during Mass. Pilib says: 'I got these songs from people who had not much English; but they had the ancient prayers of their ancestors and these poems and they had a poem or a little hymn in that style for every single part of the Mass. It is that which made me think that the Mass in the Ireland of old was a sung one. I have heard the people singing them like a low-voiced refrain. They have come down from generation to generation; I do not know who made them or who composed the music for them.' Pilib says that he heard them in his own parish).

This is the first prayer, a touching one:

A Dhia ghléigil na féile
 's a Athair na ngrás,
 le do réidh-thoil do céasadh
 is a cuireadh chun báis,
 a Aon-Mhic do shaor sinn
 ó pheacaí 's ó bhás,
 réitigh na Gaeil bhocht'
 is riar dóibh a gcás.

Dear God of generosity and Father of graces, who of your free will was tortured and put to death, o Only Son who saved us from sin and from death, relieve the poor Irish and help them in their need.

The music for this prayer is the well-known air 'Úna Bhán'. We may be surprised at a hymn being set to a secular air and particularly to one for a love song. Yet this was common practice as a glance at the airs to which Tadhg Gaelach Ó Súilleabháin set his religious songs will show. That such a practice was not felt to be incongruous says much for the sense of reverence and mystery contained in the music and is no small tribute to its dignity and universality. Not many (if indeed any) love songs of our time could pass such a test.

The next prayer or hymn is before the Epistle:

Míle moladh leat feasta
 a Athair 's a Uain,
 míle ollghlóire gheanúil
 do Mhac Dé na mbuaidh;
 míle onóir, glóir is moladh
 le Scoth-Thoradh na ndúl,
 an tAthair, an Mac is Naomh-Spioraid
 go liath-lá an Luain.

Be you praised a thousand times now, o Father and Lamb; great and loving glory a thousand times over to the Son of God of victories; a thousand times honour, glory and praise to the Surpassing Fruit of creation, the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, till the grey day of Judgment.

The 'Surpassing Fruit' refers to the Incarnation and Humanity of Christ. We may note a looseness at times in composition or an ellipticism (always common in Irish) which may be due to a slight distortion inevitable in what is passed on orally. However, that does not, as a rule, take from the orthodoxy or true devotion and nobility of the prayer. Our next prayer, notable for its exalted tone, would be sung softly, I suppose, while the priest says the *Munda Cor Meum* before the Gospel:

A Íosa, glan mo chroíse
 go gléghlan gach lá,
 a Íosa, cuir m'intinn
 faoi léirsmacht do ghrá.
 Déan mo smaointe go fíorghlan
 agus briathra mo bhéil.
 Is a Thiarna, 'Dhé dhílis,
 stiúraigh choíche mo shaol.

O Jesus, cleanse my heart in perfect purity every day. O Jesus, put my mind under the full sway of your love. Make my thoughts truly pure and the words of my mouth, and o Lord, dearest God, guide always my life.

Next we have a prayer at the Gospel:

A Dhé na trócaire, níor leor dhuit
 ár dteagasc tríd' Fháith'
 ná tríd' aspalaibh naofa,
 dá dhílse a ngrá,

gur labhrais linn trí Íosa,
 tríd' Aon-Mhac na ngrás
 a gineadh ó Mhuire Ógh
 's a d'fhuing an Pháis,
 a mhair inár ngaobhar
 's a céasadh 'r an gcrann
 lenár saoradh ó phiantaibh
 coir Éabh' agus Ádhaimh.

O God of mercy, it was not enough for you to teach us through your prophets nor through your holy apostles however faithful their love, but you spoke to us through Jesus, through the Only Son of graces who was born of the Virgin Mary and suffered the Passion, who lived in our midst and was crucified on the tree to save us from the punishment of the crime of Eve and Adam.

Perhaps above we should read 'aithribh' 'fathers' or 'patriarchs' for 'aspalaibh' 'apostles'. It is a very scriptural prayer with its echo from the Epistle to the Hebrews which we read in the Christmas liturgy in the Latin Church.

The last of these prayers is a Creed. It is to the beautiful air of the hymn called 'Seán Ó Duibhir a' Ghleanna,' but of course could be sung also to the fine music of the better-known song of the same name. As with the other four prayers the Irish seems to me to pertain to Munster rather than to Connacht and it is interesting to note that another copy of the Creed, almost word for word as it is here, has been recorded in Baile Mhac Óda, County Cork.

Creidim i nDia an tAthair
 a chruthaigh neamh is talamh,
 's in Íosa Críost a Mhacsan
 a rugadh ó Mhuire Ógh,
 a d'fhulaing páis is peannaid
 faoi Phoingtias Píolóid sealad,
 do céasadh is do greadadh
 ar ardchrois gan ghó.
 Fuair bás de bharr an pheaca
 do rinne Éabha chlaon is Ádhamh,
 chuaigh faoi dhéin na n-anam
 go hIfreann na mbrón.
 Ar theacht don tríú maidin
 d'éirigh tréan ó thalamh
 is tá 'na shuí go dearbh
 ar dheasláimh Dé na gcomhacht.

As san arís a thagann
 ag marcaíocht ar na scamail
 chun breith do thabhairt ar mhairbh
 is ná déanfaidh sé éagóir.
 Don Naomh-Spiorad géillim feasta
 is do Theampall naofa Pheadair
 tá suite dlúth ar charraig
 agus ná luasfaidh go deo,
 go bhfuil an diabhal is a aingil
 a d'iarraidh choíche feacadh
 do bhaint is leagadh aisti
 gan buachtaint dar ndóigh;
 i gComaoine na Naomh is na nAingeal,
 i maithiúnachas na bpeacaí,
 in aiséirí na marbh
 agus sa tSíoraíocht gan ghó.*

I believe in God the Father who created heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ his Son who was born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered passion and torment once under Pontius Pilate, who indeed was tortured high upon a cross. He died because of the sin of perverse Eve and Adam and went into Hell of the sorrows to visit the souls. When the third morning came he rose mighty from the earth and sits in truth on the right hand of the God of power. From there he comes again riding on the clouds to pass judgment on the dead and no injustice will he do. I yield further to the Holy Ghost and to Peter's holy Church placed fast on a rock and never to sway, which the devil and his angels ever try to move and bring down, yet always in vain; (I believe) truly in the Communion of the Saints and Angels, in the forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection of the dead and in Eternity.

Here is another brief Creed, rather a 'creed of a creed.' It was composed by Pádraig Ó Callanáin in County Galway in the mid-nineteenth century (cf. *Filíocht na gCallanáin*, Seán Ó Ceallaigh, p. 63). It is very succinct and emphatic:

A Thiarna, creidim cruinn
 iomlán gach uile ní
 a chreideas is a choinníos le háthas

* Acknowledgments to the following who helped to provide this second verse:

An tAthair Aodh Ó Néill, S.P., Droichead na Banndan, Piaras Mac Siacais, Pádraig Ó Dargáin.

an Naomh-Eaglais ghlinn
 fhíor aonda Chatoilicí
 Rómhánach do chuir Críost ar lán-bhun.

'S go háirithe gach ní
 tá ainmnithe síos
 i gCré na nAspal gcaoin ón ársacht.
 Lánghéillim féin de bhri,
 fadó 'do shaol go fíor,
 gur fhoilsís féin dúinn iad go láncheart.

Creidim gach tráth dem shaol
 go diongbháilte im chroí
 in aon Dia amháin i dtrí pearsanaibh,
 an tAthair glé síoraí,
 an Mac rónaofa sítheach
 's an Spiorad Naomh ón Dís do tharla. Amen.

Lord, completely I believe the sum total of all that with joy the holy, pure, true and one Catholic Roman Church founded by Christ firmly believes and holds. And particularly everything that is named specifically from of old in the Creed of the gentle Apostles. I yield complete belief, because in your lifetime long ago you really and with full certitude revealed them to us. Every moment of my life I believe unshakeably in my heart in one God in three Persons, the bright eternal Father, the most holy Son of peace, the Holy Ghost who from them both came.

This is a prayer that might be said before the Gospel:

Bronnaim m'anam duitse, a Rí na ngrásta
 agus go bráth nár lige tú mé ar ais.
 A fhianaise seo ortsa, a Mhaighdean Bheannaithe
 gur chuir mé féin m'anam ar lámh do Mhic;
 a ghnúis is gile ná an ghrian,
 ná fulaing mé i bhfad i bpian. Amen.

I offer up my soul to you, o King of graces, and may you never permit me to go back on that. Bear witness to this, o Blessed Virgin, that I have put my soul in your Son's hands; o Countenance brighter than the sun, suffer me not long to rest in pain.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE MASS

Naturally many prayers centre round *the* moment of the Mass, the Consecration. One who lived in Lios Póil in Kerry fifty years ago used to hear the people say at the elevation of the Host: 'Fáilte romhat, a Shlánaitheoir Íosa Críost' (Welcome, Jesus Christ, Saviour). That custom was not confined to Lios Póil and another remarkable example is worth mentioning here. It may be read in the *Irish Rosary* Sept.—Oct. 1961, p.268 and the writer is Eilís Ní Chorra. She describes a Sunday Mass she attended in Achill 'a long time ago': 'The church was packed and never before (or since) have I seen and heard such fervour. The congregation attended Mass in every sense of the word, making the responses aloud with the altar boys, and at the Consecration there was such a cry of welcome to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament—"Céad míle fáilte, a Thiarna"—that the tears came to my eyes—and I am not an emotional person. I don't know whether this practice is still observed in Achill . . . But I have never forgotten it.' I think a few comments here will be in place. First of all there comes at once to mind the strong recommendation in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: 'To promote active participation (in the liturgy) the people should be encouraged to take part by means of *acclamations* (italics ours), responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes. And at the proper time a reverent silence should be observed' (30°). If we refer back to the previous article with the hymns there mentioned for singing at the appropriate times in the Mass and if we recall that in the west Cork Gaeltacht (to mention no other) it was not uncommon for the people also to raise their arms in welcome to the Saviour at the Consecration, we see that as far as our traditions go, the Constitution in this particular article was doing no more than confirming the true liturgical instinct of the people. Another thing that must be emphasised, here we have the authentic and deepest tradition of the Irish people. Where the medium of that tradition was lost the people were to all intents and purposes struck dumb, not least in the spontaneity and fluency of their liturgical expression. If any-

one considers that a small loss or to have been compensated for by other gains in their liturgical, religious or cultural life, I have no more to say. I am afraid we will have a long wait before we will find our people so gripped in their heart and soul by the wonder of the great Sacrifice and so united with Christ and with one another that they cry out spontaneously in welcome to the Lord made present on our altars. (The other language does not lend itself to such natural and unaffected demonstrations, and we are moulded in thought, outlook and expression by the dominant and prestigious element among those who use that language.)

Another point of some importance. The whole idea of using the vernacular and gestures in the liturgy is to unite us in heart and will with Christ in his great Sacrifice. Strictly speaking no words or gestures on the part of the people are necessary at Mass. Obviously it is the words of consecration spoken by the ordained minister that are alone necessary. However, we, the whole people of God, Pobal Dé, are involved in the Sacrifice, and for it to be effective for us the first essential, as Pope Pius XII said in *Mediator Dei*, is that we 'have that mind which was in Christ Jesus', otherwise all our words and gestures are mere formalism. How well those people in Achill realised what the Mass was, the great *Act* of Calvary, and generations before the Dialogue Mass, how well they joined in the Latin responses! *A fortiori* we with our actual understanding of the words used in the Mass, should at least equal them in fervour, but I think if that congregation were present in this very day at a Mass in French or German they would behave in exactly the same way and with the same realisation that they were taking part actively, as far as they could, in the same Sacrifice.

Here is another short prayer at the Consecration, perhaps to be said out loud also:

Míle fáilte romhat, a Linbh a rugadh sa stábla
agus fáilte agus fiche roimh Leanbh do Mháthar.

*A thousand welcomes, o Child born in the stable,
a warm welcome to your Mother's Son.*

Here we have that delicate and homely touch which we find in all Irish literature. Even in the most formal of bardic poetry we are delighted by some such sudden turn of phrase. We may also note how the salutation at the coming of Christ in the

Eucharist is akin to the greeting for the Child at Christmas, thus making actual for us always the Incarnation, Birth and Redemption in the truest Christian tradition.

This is a more personal prayer at the Consecration, although it could easily be put in the plural:

A Íosa, a chuir brí
insan Sacraiméid,
go líona tú mo chroí
le grásta Dé.
Do thug tú maithiúnas
do na mílte dár shaoraigh tú.
Go saora tú m'anam
ar gach peaca dá ndearna mé. Amen.

O Jesus, who put efficacy in the Sacrament, may you fill my heart with God's grace. You granted forgiveness to the thousands you saved. May you save my soul from every sin I have committed.

There are a number of other welcoming prayers at the Consecration of the Mass. This is one Father Ó Gramhnaigh heard the people in Inis Meáin say just after the Consecration:

Míle fáilte romhat, a Choirp an Tiarna,
a Mhic do shíolraigh ón Óigh is gile 's is míne.
Is é do bhás-sa
ar chrann na Páise
d'fhuascail síol Éabha agus bhascaigh coir.
Ós peacach bocht mé atá ag déanamh ort,
ná nocht orm an chóir;
cé do thuill mé t'fhearg, a Íosa Críost,
fill orm agus fóir.

A Íosa 'cheannaigh muid,
A Íosa 'bheannaigh muid,
A Íosa an Phaidrín Pháirteach (*sic*),
ná déan sinn a dhearmad
anois nó ar uair ár mbáis.

Ó a Chríost do céasadh Dé hAoine,
do dhoirt do chuid fola dár maitheamh 's dár saoradh,
grásta an Spioraid Naoimh inár gcroí 's inár n-intinn,
gach achainí dá n-iarraimid, Mac Dé dá réiteach.

Douglas Hyde translates as follows in his *Religious Songs of Connacht I*, 385:

A hundred thousand welcomes, thou Body of the Lord,
Thou Son of her the Virgin, the brightest, most adored,
Thy death in such fashion
On the tree of the Passion
Hath saved Eve's race and put sin to death.

I am a poor sinner to thee appealing,
Reward me not as my sins may be;
O Jesus Christ I deserve Thy anger,
But turn again and show grace to me.

Jesus who bought us,
Jesus who taught us,
Jesus of the united prayer,—i.e. the Rosary
Do not forget us
Now nor in the hour of death.

O crucified Jesus, do not leave us,
Thou pouredst Thy blood for us, O forgive us,
May the Grace of the Spirit for ever be with us,
And whatever we ask may the Son of God give us.

We may note the phrase 'agus bhascaigh coir'—'and who conquered sin', the great joy of the Crucifixion completed in the Resurrection and made permanent on earth in the Mass. This is another welcoming prayer. The word 'fáilte' cannot be repeated too often:

Céad míle fáilte romhat, a Cholann bheannaithe,
céad míle fáilte romhat, a Choirp do céasadh,
céad míle fáilte roimh do Chorp, a Thiarna,
a Aon-Mhic Dé, 's é do bheatha.
Is tú géag gach ratha,
A Chrainn nár chríon blátha,
mar scríobh Marcus agus Matha.
Ó a Dhia, más fiú leat muid a ghlacadh,
go mba saolach slán ó do lámha.
Tá mise ag iarraidh trócaire agus grásta
dom féin agus do shíol Eábha agus Ádhaimh
dár ordaigh Dia agus an Eaglais dúinn iarraidh dóibh.
Amen.

A hundred thousand welcomes, o holy Body, a hundred thousand welcomes, o Body that was crucified, a hundred thousand welcomes to your Body, Lord, o Only Son of God, hail to you. You are the branch of all grace, o Tree whose flower never withered, as wrote Mark and Matthew. O God, if you deem it worthy to accept us, may we live and be saved by your hands. I am asking for mercy and grace for myself and the race of Eve and Adam, for whom God and the Church have ordered us to ask.

In these prayers there are often sudden transitions, as above perhaps, where the Cross itself is addressed, as well as Christ. Typical is the universal note in the end of the prayer. The neighbour, in the fullest sense of the word, is never forgotten. A 'paidir ghann'—'stingy prayer' was not appreciated. There are a number of metrical versions of the *Pater*, the best-known being the one contained in 'Aithrí Sheáin de hÓra', the Repentance of Seán de hÓra, the eighteenth-century blacksmith from County Clare. The music that goes with it (and also of course with the *Ave Maria* in the same poem) is very beautiful and deserves to be sung during Mass:

Ár nAthair atá sna Flaithis go hard,
go naofar tráth t'ainmse,
go dtige do ríocht, do thoil ar an saol
mar a déantar i gcric Pharthais.
Ár n-arán laethúil tabhairse dúinn
is maith dúinn ár gcionta ainbhis
mar mhaithimid do chách, is ná léig sinn i dtlás,
ach saor sinn ó bhás anabái.

Our Father who art in Heaven high, hallowed now be your name, may your kingdom come, your will be on earth as it is done in the land of Paradise. Our daily bread give us and forgive us our ignorant sinning as we forgive all, and let us not fall, but save us from unprovided death.

The music is in several books, including *Dánta Dé*. To Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin, 'Eoghan an bhéil bhinn', Eoghan of the sweet mouth, the famous eighteenth century Kerry poet, is popularly attributed a beautiful *Pater* which can still be heard on Irish lips:

Ár nAthair atá ar Neamh
do cheap sinn féin ar dtúis,
go naomhaithear t'ainm

is go dtagaimid go léir id dhún,
t'aon-toil bheannaithe
ar an dtalamh go ndéanam súd
fé mar dheineann gach neach ar Neamh
nuair a théid id dhún.
An t-arán geal do cheapais féin dúinn tabhair
is ár gcionta ar fad go maithir féinig dúinn,
fé mar a mhaith an Mac don fhear gan néall 'na shúil,
Ná lig sinn sa ríocht san as nach féidir teacht,
in aon drochní ná i dtintibh daora i dteas,
ac amen, a Chríost, agus lig sinn go léir isteach.

Our Father who art in Heaven who fashioned us in the beginning, may your name be made holy and may we all enter your house, your holy and only will may we do it on earth as does everyone in Heaven who enters in. The bright bread you made for us, give us, and all our sins may you yourself forgive as the Son forgave the man of the sightless eyes. Let us not go into that kingdom whence there is no return, no, nor into any evil thing nor into the fierce-some fires, but amen, o Christ, do you admit us all.

That was taken down in our own day in the poet's own county. We move on now towards the Communion and as one would expect there are many prayers. Here is one (in the plural) from County Waterford:

A athair ghil do cheannaigh sinn
agus athá mar ghrian ar muir,
go maithe tú gach peaca dhúinn
a rinneamar riamh 'gus inniu.
Ar Neamh go maithe tú, a Dhia, ár gcoir,
gur taitneamhach go nglacaimid ár dTiarna inniu.

Dear Father who bought us and who art like the sun on the sea, may you forgive us every sin we have ever committed till this day. In Heaven, o God, may you forgive our crime so that we may with delight receive our Lord today.

This next is a common one and I think the first couple of lines of the one just given stem from it, suffering some 'corruption' or change in the process. It is interesting in itself to see this change in passing from mouth to mouth. It leads sometimes to obscurity and sometimes to a fresh concept and perhaps to enrichment of thought or expression:

Ó a Thiarna a dhealbhaigh grian 's muir,
maith dhom ar pheacaigh mé riamh 's inniu.
Maith ósna Flaitheasaibh anuas mo choir
chum go nglacfaínn go taitneamhach mo Thiarna inniu.

Lord who fashioned sun and sea, forgive me all the sins I have ever committed till this day. Forgive from Heaven above my crime that I may receive with delight (or pleasingly) my Lord today.

Here is a more elaborate prayer in prose:

A Dhia, a charthanacht gan teora agus a thrócaire gan miosúr, is é do ghrá do bheir duitse teacht go dtí mé agus is é mo dhóchas do bheir domhsa tú do ghlacadh. Tugaim mo chorp duit mar theampall, mo chroí duit mar altóir agus m'anam duit mar phixus. Ó a Thiarna a Uain neamhchiontach, a Fhuascaltóir na trócaire, a Leibh uasail, a Íosa, clúdaigh mé led fhallaing; tabhair lóistín dom id chroí, slog mé id ríocht; leigheasaigh mé led chumhracht agus carthanacht; athbheoigh mé led bhás; folmhaigh mé id loitibh; glan mé led chuid fola; táthaigh mé led ghrá agus déan mé go hiomlán taitneamhach de réir do Naomh-Chroí, a Thiarna.

O God, charity without limit and mercy without measure, it is your love that causes you to come to me and it is my hope that brings me to receive you. I give you my body as a temple, my heart as an altar and my soul as a pyx. O Lord, innocent Lamb, Redeemer of mercy, noble Child, Jesus, cover me with your mantle; give me lodging in your Heart, envelop me in your kingdom; cure me with your fragrance and charity; enliven me by your death; hide me in your wounds; cleanse me with your blood; bind me with your love and make me utterly pleasing, according to your Holy Heart, Lord.

This beautiful and intimate, even mystical, prayer comes from County Waterford, where formal devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord was first introduced into Ireland. That devotion was greatly fostered by the poet Tadhg Gaelach Ó Súilleabháin and we can perhaps see some similarity in the prayer above with the famous song Tadhg wrote in honour of the Heart of Christ (The music is to be found in *Dánta Dé* and elsewhere).

It is notable too that our prayer joins, as is most fitting, this devotion with Christ in the Eucharist. This is the (first) verse from the poem of Tadhg Gaelach:

Gile mo chroí do chroíse, a Shlánaitheoir,
is ciste mo chroí do chroíse d'fháil im chomhair;
ós follas gur líon do chroí dem ghrá-sa, a Stór,
i gcochall mo chroí do chroíse fág i gcomhad.

Here is a metrical translation as given in *Londubh an Chairn*:

*Light of my heart Thy Heart, dear Lord divine,
My treasure bright Thy Heart to keep in mine,
Since Thy Heart filled, dear Lord, with love for me,
Let mine be a cloak to fold and comfort Thee.*

We notice in the prayer too an invocation or two from the well-known *Anima Christi*.

AFTER COMMUNION

This is a prayer said by the woman of the house at Easter and Christmas when she would go to the door to meet the priest bearing Holy Communion to the sick:

Naoi gcéad fáilte romhat, a Thiarna, a ré gheal, solas mo chroí.

Welcome, welcome, Lord, bright and noble one, light of my heart.

An tAthair Peadar Ó Laoghaire in his autobiography, *Mo Scéal Féin* (p. 125) tells of his own experience in bringing the Viaticum:

Nuair a chuirinn an Ola Dhéanach ar sheanduine acu, agus nuair a thugainn an Corp Naofa dhó, agus nuair a deireadh sé ansan ó chroí amach, 'Mo ghrá mo Thiarna Íosa Críost! Mo ghrá go daingean É!' stadadh m'anáil orm agus thagadh luas croí orm agus scinneadh deoracha óm shúile i dtreo go n-iompaínn i leataobh beagán.

When I anointed one of the old people and gave him the Sacred Body and then when he would say, 'My Lord Jesus Christ is my Love! My lasting love is He!' my breath would catch, my heart beat faster and tears pour down from my eyes, so that I would have to turn aside a little.

I am afraid the translation of those words of endearment is very soft and halting, with little of the warmth and vigour of the original.

Here is another prayer recorded more than once, and said also before receiving our Lord as Viaticum:

A Íosa, a mhuirín dílis, ní suíochán duit mo theanga
ná ní lóistín duit mo chroí,
ach bronn orm do bheannaitheacht
is go bhfana sí agam choíche.

Jesus, dear heart, my tongue is no throne for you nor is my heart fit lodging. Only give me your holiness (grace) and may it ever remain with me.

On receiving Holy Communion this profound prayer might be said:

Míle fáilte romhat, a Choirp an Tiarna,
tá tú agam anois;
glan an áit 'na bhfuilir,
díbir rúta an pheaca;
is a Mhaighdean ghlórmhar,
tar im choinleacht.

A thousand welcomes, o Body of the Lord, you are with me now; purify the place in which you are, expel the root of sin; and o glorious Virgin, be with me.

This is a similar prayer:

Tá tú agam anois,
go bhfanair agam go brách!
Ó a Neamh ar talamh,
maith agus mórshláinte
go ndéana tú dom anam.

'Íosa mhilis, a dhianghrá,
coimirce m'anma ar do dheasláimh
anois agus ar uair mo bháis,
ar eagla, an uair dheireanach,
ná tiocfadh liom é 'rá.

You are with me now, may you remain with me for ever! O Heaven on earth, goodness and great health (salvation) may you bring to my soul. Sweet Jesus, my great Love, I put the protection of my soul on your right hand now and at the hour of my death, lest in my last hour I cannot do so.

Here is another and rather unusual welcoming prayer which could be said at the Consecration or at Communion:

Fáilte mharthanach mhúinte chóir romhat, a Thiarna,
fáilte mar an taoile tuile romhat,
fáilte an athar roimh an leanbh atá i mbroinn go fóill
romhat,
fáilte gan imeacht ach fanacht linn féin go deo romhat.

A lasting, kindly, fitting welcome, Lord. Welcome to you as to the incoming tide. Our welcome is like that of the father for his child still in the womb. A welcome to you never to leave us, but to stay for ever with us.

Impossible to translate effectively that prayer.

There are many beautiful hymns of welcome to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament among the bardic poems. One perhaps with which some of us are familiar is 'Fáilte romhat, a Rí na nAingeal,' by Aonghus Ó Dálaigh (died 1570). It will be found with its beautiful air in *Dánta Dé* and elsewhere. It has not come down to us orally, so I will not give it here. The following, however, which was obviously one of the strict metre poems, was recorded after many centuries by Douglas Hyde in Mayo. The music is in *Dánta Dé*:

Dia do bheatha, a Choirp Chríosta,
Dia do bheatha, a Rí na bhfeart,
Dia do bheatha, a Thríonóid Naofa,
Dia do bheatha, a Chirt na gceart.

Dia do bheatha, a Rí na ngrás,
Dia do bheatha, a Fhuil 's a Fheoil,
a Thríonóid Naomh gan tús gan deireadh,
ná bí i bhfeirg liom níos mó.

Ná bí i bhfeirg liom níos mó,
báith m'anam i bhFuil do ghrás.
A Dhia-Dhuine, céad fáilte romhat
anois agus ar uair ár mbáis.

*Hail, Body of Christ, hail King of wonders, hail Holy Trinity,
hail Justice of all justice. Hail King of graces, hail Blood and
Flesh, o Holy Trinity, without beginning without end, be not
angry any more with me. Be not angry any more with me, wash
my soul in the Blood of your grace. O God-Man, a hundred
welcomes now and at the hour of our death.*

We notice here once more the slipping from the singular of the individual to the plural of the community. We may note too that it is common to link up the receiving of the Body with our last receiving of it as Viaticum and ever we pray that we may share in the eternal life whose beginning we taste already in receiving that Body.

We have already quoted from Tadhg Gaelach Ó Súilleabháin and once again we may quote from his very popular *Duain an tSlánaitheora* (Hymn to the Saviour), a fitting prayer of thanksgiving. The music is to be found in *Dánta Dé* and *Londubh an Chairn*. From the latter we give a metrical translation of the verses below. There are five other verses in the poem:

Mo ghrá-sa mo Dhia, mo gharda, mo liaigh,
mo ghrá geal mo Thiarna trócaireach.
Mo ghrá milis Críost agus gráim uile a Chroí,
mo ghrá ar fad tú, a Rí na glóire.
Mo ghrá-sa do shúil, mo ghrá-sa do shiúl,
mo ghrá-sa do chló 's do chomhachta.
Mo ghrá thú le fonn cé táim bunoscionn
's ná dearna, mo chumha, do chomhairle.

Mo ghrá-sa go léir do ráite 's do réir
's do Mháthair mo réilteann eolais.
Banríon na n-aingéal, Banríon na n-apstal,
Banríon na bhFlaitheas n-órdha,
Banríon an tsonais, Banríon an tsolais,
Banríon na gcros, Banríon na gcoróineach,
Ó Banríon na ngrás in am sceimhle an bháis.
Mo chrann dídin 's mo ghrá-sa an Ógh ghlán.

Mo ghrá-sa na h-uird naofa id chúirt,
mo ghrá-sa do chúm* 's do chló geal,
mo ghrá-sa do thréad d'fhágfadh na séad,
mo ghrá-sa do mhéinn is do mhórgacht.
Mo ghrá-sa do phearsa id Pháis sinn do cheannaigh,
mo ghrá-sa do Chathair cheolmhar.
A Íosa na bhfeart, ná daor me led cheart,
is tú mo shoilse, mo neart, mo dhóchas.

*My God is my Love, my Guard from above,
My bright Love, my Lord most holy,
My sweet love is Christ, His Heart my delight,
My whole Love, great King of glory.
My Love, Thy soft eye, Thy walk is my joy,
My love is Thy name and power,
My strong love Thou art, though I've wandered apart,
and sinned in an evil hour.*

*My love every day Thy word and Thy way,
And Thy Mother, like star beholden,
The Apostles' bright Queen and the angels' unseen
The Queen of the Heavens golden,
The Queen of all light, of happiness bright,
The Queen of the Cross and glory,
O bright Queen of grace, when grim death I face,
Still aid me, though sad my story.*

*My love are all those Thy bright courts enclose,
My love Thy bright form and features,
My love is Thy flock who at earth's riches mock,
My love Thy great love for Thy creatures.
Thy Person has sought us, Thy Passion has bought us.
In Thy city of joy reward us.
Oh Christ! do not yield to Thy justice, but shield
Thy sinner in need, and guard us.*

Here is one final prayer of welcome recalling the source of all grace:

'Íosa uasail, an Tiarna
a d'fhulaing dúinne an Pháis,
an tsleá nimhe a dhul trí do thaobh

* or 'Chroí'—heart.

gur tháinig as fuil agus uisce.
Ó 'Íosa, Mac Muire,
déan trócaire orainn.

A thousand welcomes, o noble Jesus, the Lord who suffered for us the Passion and through whose side the sharp spear passed till blood and water flowed out. O Jesus Son of Mary, have mercy on us.

On leaving the church we have these simple verses which are sung to the air of *Sancti Venite*:

Beannacht leat, a Mhuire,
beannacht leat, a Chríost,
go gcumhdaí sibh ár n-anam
go dtige sinn arís.

Beannacht leat, a Theach Dé,
agus beannacht Dé inár dtimpeall;
nár scara uainne grásta Dé
go bhfillimid chun a theampaill.

Farewell Mary, farewell Christ, may you guard our soul till we come back. Farewell, House of God, and may God's blessing be about us; may the grace of God not part from us ere we return to his church.

Finally, perhaps we are familiar with the custom of taking a drink—or three sips—of water after Communion. Here is a beautiful prayer that goes with it. How many of us have any prayer to Saint Patrick or would think of bringing him into such a prayer as this? Incidentally there are quite a number of prayers to the Saint. This particular prayer is said (to mention only two places) in Mayo and Kerry:

Sláinte an Ard-Mhic do leath a ghéaga
ar chrann na Páise chun sinn a shaoradh
agus sláinte na mná mánla do rug a Mac gan chéile
agus sláinte Naomh Pádraig do bheannaigh Éire.

Health to the noble Son who spread his arms on the tree of the Passion to free us, and health to the gentle woman who without man gave birth to her Son, and health to Saint Patrick who blessed Ireland.

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