

The Reform of Roman Office

(Comments to Shawn Tribe's article
on the New Liturgical Movement website)

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It is impossible to offer a survey on the past, present and future of the Divine Office, and either if it aims at practical-liturgical and not scientific conclusions. (I tried to explain what I know and think about the theme in the 3rd chapter of my book 'The Bugnini-Liturgy and the reform of the Reform', which has been also published in periodical *Musica Sacra*.) Here only theses can be presented without a detailed argumentation.

First I wish to call your attention to the importance of the theme. In the broad discussion on the liturgical problems of our day participants speak – almost without exception – on the Mass (or even more restricted, to some points of the Mass ordo), but few on the real great loss of the reform, like the Mass proper, the system of readings, the Holy Week rite), and the Office is discussed nearly never. Even in this blog, practically no comment came to the theme 'Reform of the Roman Breviary' initiated by Shawn Tribe. I guess, it is because most people does not pray and know the Office at all, though we all know that the Office constitutes just so important part of the liturgy, as the Mass (yet, in some sense – what I cannot explain now – still more important).

First some words on the term: *Breviarium Romanum*:

'Breviarium' was the reading-prayerbook of persons in clerical status, used when they fulfilled their individual obligation. It is better to speak about (Divine) Office, which term is more comprehensive and refers, first of all, to the public liturgy of sung Hours.

'Romanum' means for most people the Office-book promulgated under the name of Pius V (*THE Breviarium Romanum*), while 'Romanum', in proper sense is better to be taken the proper Office of the Rite of Rome, that includes its branches variants in time and space, provided that they keep the essential features of the traditional rite, what we will see below.

I. Stages of the Office history

1. Origins

The Office Hours originated in different religious context. The Lauds and Vespers was the regular morning and evening prayer of the church; it was also the continuation of the Old Testament prayer hours, furthermore: of a basic religious institution of the mankind. The Vigils (Matins) was originally the time of occasional long prayers and meditation, connected to the feasts and the memorial days of the martyrs. The Terce, Sext and None was short stops during the daily activity, and also commemoration to three moments of the history of salvation. The function of the Prime and Complet was something to organize the daily course of communities, to bless the start and close of the working day. The consequence of these roots is that the structure and character of the Hours differ considerably which cannot be basically disturbed without causing a break in the tradition.

The Office was built on *the Psalmody* which had two genuine forms in the first centuries. In churches where the assembly of lay people and clergy concurred to celebrate the morning and evening Hours, only some few, selected psalms were in use, practically always the same (except making some difference between Sunday and the weekdays). Such were e.g. psalms

92, 62, 66, 148-150 in the morning service, 140 in the evening service, 118 during the day. This method is what I will may call *psalm-pericopes*. – On the other side, monastic communities, whose full-life-program was the praise of God with the use of psalm, recited the Psalter in the order God gave us in the Scripture, starting with psalm 1, and arriving at psalm 150, they started it again. That is what we may call *psalmodia currens*.

In the first centuries the Church adapted the methods of psalm recitation that made the psalmody vivid, reasonable and less burdensome. For that purpose a set of refrains was created, different method of psalm–refrain combination has been introduced. That constitutes the basis of the later *Antiphonary*.

These basic features are common for all Christian Churches, East and West alike.

2. *Office of Rome*

The great historical achievement of Rome was to make a classical synthesis of these features.

The special *character of the Hours* survived in the Roman Office, yet they became deeply more clearly expressed by their structure and length. The number and order of psalms and other parts, the place of the New Testament Cantica (Benedictus, Magnificat, Nunc dimittis) and the Hymn helped the appearance of characteristic entities of specific liturgico-psychological impact. The first witness of this structure is the Rule of St. Benedict, but it was given for him surely as a more ancient heritage. (In my opinion, an estimated time for the origins of the fixed structure can be taken the end of the 4th century, perhaps Damasus' Papacy.)

The Liturgy of Rome created a fine synthesis of the two procedures of *psalm distribution*. The principle was that the full Psalter (with all its 150 psalms) should be prayed during the course of one week. (In Milan this period was extended to two weeks.) In Rome the daily Hours preserved the ancient *psalm-pericopes* (selected psalms; same for the given Hour each day. (Exception are the „morning-psalm” and the daily Old Testament Canticum at the the place of the 2nd and 4th psalms of the Lauds, which attached to the single days of the week; St. Benedict refer to just the Canticles saying „sicut psallit Romana Ecclesia”). All other psalms were recited as *psalmodia currens* in two Hours throughout the week: 1–108 in the Vigils, 109-147 in the Vespers (psalms 148-150 were reserved for the Lauds). This distribution of the psalms resulted in a system of fine balance, practical stability, spiritual richness. The number of psalms was in good proportion with the meaning and importance of the individual Hours: three very short and stable psalms for each short daily „stop-Hours”, five psalms for the solemn congregational celebration at the dawn and sunset, longer psalmody with 12 psalms during the meditative night Vigils.

Rome settled two main methods of reciting the psalm (antiphonal and responsorial psalmody) and created a collection of refrains. As I count, the number of the antiphons was originally not more than about 800-1000 and that of the responsories about 5-600. Some few melody type was adapted to the texts, following the length and grammar of the free biblical prose, and no individual music was composed for each. So this collection (what I may call: *Antiphonarium Parvum*) was easy to learned even in the without music notation.

The essence of the Roman Office can be defined this way: character and structure of the Hours + the principle of psalm distribution (pericopes and currens) + antiphonary. These together makes what we call *Officium Romanum*. In other parts (as the selection of the readings, inclusion/rejection of the Hymn, the composition of the Hymnarium etc.) the local churches, monasteries lived with some freedom.

3. *Middle Ages*

The 'essential features' of the Roman Office has not changed during the Middle Ages: (1) The character and structure of the Hours remained as was earlier; (2) no essential changes has been made in the distribution of psalms; (3) the „Antiphonarium Parvum” remained the basic layer of the Antiphonary, but a great accretion emerged during the centuries: as the liturgy developed and new feasts emerged, hundreds of new antiphons and responsories were added to the basic stock. The beautiful texts and melodies composed during this period enriched the repertory, while making it, more and more the business of professionals. In spite of this increment, the columns of the edifice (the chants of weekly psalter, old feasts and festal seasons) remained mostly in the state inherited from the old Roman usage.

The most attracting feature of the Middle Ages is the crystallization of the proper Office of ecclesiastical centers (dioceses, religious orders). They adhered to the Roman heritage and the unity of the Rite was not in danger. But on points which remained more or less free, divergent traditions evolved and became standardized. In this sense we speak of the Office of Salisbury, Paris, Verona, Cologne, Mainz, or Cistercians, Dominicans etc.. Their study is beyond our scope, but the partial restoration of these rite should have been a charming manifestation of the 'pluralism' mentioned repeatedly by Vatican II.

4. *Trento*

Trento brought nothing new in the history. The Post-Trento Office is a variant of the Roman Office. In the Middle Ages the Papal Court choose one of the Italian local variant for itself, simplified it somehow (e.g. omitted the marvellous Easter „gloriosum officium” of the ancient Christian Rome), and used as a material of 'private' pray. The Ritus Curiae was different in details from the great Papal Basics! The first who took it over were the Franciscans, then some Italian dioceses turned over to the Curial rite. In the consequence of the special conditions during and after Trento, however, the Breviarium Curiae became the base of a new edition of the Officium Romanum. This was not obligatory, and other branches of the Roman Rite could have kept their own usage. In the historical conditions, however, let one church after the other leave her rite abandoned and take the 'Roman' (in fact, Curial) breviary. After some decade everybody supposed that the Trento Breviarium is the authentic rite of Rome, and the others are 'suspicious' deviations. I say, breviary: this is the period when the Divine Office became the silent prayer of the priests; to sing it in the choir became an exceptional form of it. People did not realize, that „Roman Rite” is all what lived together for centuries and was basically identical. The proof of being a good Catholic became to follow the Trento rite.

5. *Humanism, Neo-Gallicanism*

Our age manifest, that two opposite extremities are regularly walking together. In the period of the highly uniform Trento rite some people fabricated new breviaries alien from the continuity of the tradition. (The farest was the one by Cardinal Quignonez, used over decades.) Later, the French dioceses created new and new offices, divergent not only from the Roman tradition but also from each other. They clearly mirror the spirit of the Neo-Gallican movement. What is common in all of them: the break of the organic development in the life Roman rite.

The story makes clear, that though 'Roman Office' is not one thing (composition of partial rites) but, on the other hand, not everything used in the Church of Rome (approved or tolerated) can be rightly called 'Roman' Office. The Roman Office is the sum of the varieties described above. They are basically the same, what is their common quality makes the essence of the Roman Office. Other constructions, however, are basically different from this 'common property', even if they take over *some* elements of the Roman tradition. They are not

simply innovations (innovations happened during the long history of the Roman rite); but they are new rites, with insertion something of the old one.

The Neo-Gallican rites are what, as a reaction, called forth the reform movement of Dom Prosper Guarenger OSB, and in some sense, just these became the „scandal”, which required the whole process of liturgical renewal.

6. Breviary of Pius X

The main goal of the 1911 reform (under the name of Pius X) was to lessen the daily portion of the Office, that is, to alleviate the burden of the pastoral clergy. Since the architects wished to keep the a principle of 'whole psalter in one week', the only way remained was to give up the other principle: the duality of „psalm pericopes” and „psalmodia currens”. This new breviary removed the set of stable psalms of the daily Hours: no psalm returns during one week. At the many points which have been made 'free' this way, was filled up with nocturnal psalms. So not only the quiet rhythm of the daily Hours has been rejected, but also the psalmodia currens of Matins has been tumbled. The character of the Hours was greatly harmed: the daily Little Hours became long and it became impossible to pray them by heart at the short stops of the daily activity. The very ancient columns of the Lauds (psalm 50, 62 and 148-150; on the place of the first, third and fifth psalm of the Hour) has been removed.

The consequence of this reform was that the clergy lost its experience and sense concerning the essence and historical continuity of the Roman Office and faced to the subsequent changes having no norm beyond the obedience to the rubrics. This became extremely open when they accepted without any opposition, when the Psalterium Pianum was introduced (under the name of Pius XII). This new translation replaced the Vulgate text with new wording, was full of curious expressions, neglected the liturgical associations and cut the ties with the theological reflections, explanations, meditation, prayerful spirituality of one and half thousand year.

7. Liturgia Horarum

And then came the Liturgia Horarum: a totally new breviary, with no link with the Roman Office (except separated elements of that). It is a private prayer-book, and, in spite of its „modernity”, is in some sense the descendant of the 'privatized' Office of the late Middle Ages, the Humanistic and Neo-Gallican constructions, partly also the Breviarium Pius X and Psalterium Pianum. It is 'Roman' in legal sense, but is a Neo-Gallican Office in its content and spirit.

Disappeared all three essential components of the Officium Romanum: 1. The Hours lost their character ('standardized' to 3 psalms; the structure of the Lauds and Vespers has been blurred; the 'normalization' was extended to the peculiar features of the liturgical seasons, e.g. of the Triduum Sacrum); 2. Both principles of psalm distribution has been rejected and replaced by a for-week system lacking any perspicuity; almost all factual assignments inherited from the 4-5th centuries disappeared; 3. Most of the Antiphonarium Romanum should be replaced by new texts without tune; the few lost has been transposed to other points.

Concomitantly, the ancient system of biblical reading (along with the appropriate set of responsories, the so-called *Historiae*) has been disturbed, the text of many Hymns re-written, the Hymnarium was completed by many newly composed texts, a huge hundreds of *Preces* has been hastily created in the spirit of the 'New Theology'.

A dry, 'even regularity' seems to be the supreme norm of the Liturgia Horarum. And result is: Hours of nearly equal length, the same structure for all liturgical times, the same minimalized breviary to all communities and persons living in different stands. As opposite to Trento, traditional Offices of ancient bishopric sees or orders got no permission to keep their rite, and stil less to return to them. The same book was mandated to be prayed by

contemplative communities, chapters, religious houses, parish priest, laymen, confraternities, parish communities – regardless to their different disposition. The uniform Office had to be defined on the lowest level of capacity.

That means that of the ancient heritage of the Roman Office

- (1) the character and structure of Hours remained practically untouched until 1970,
- (2) the principles of psalm distribution until 1911, and
- (3) the Antiphonary until 1970.

8. After Vatican II

Liturgia Horarum has been translated into the languages – on the level as other texts during the postconciliar period. It is prayed more or less regularly by the clergy, according to their discipline or laxity. The LH remained a 'breviary' in the sense, that, except a Liber Hymnarius, no choir-book has been published. Where it is sung at all, local compositions have been adapted in vernacular, or, in a few places, the old Antiphonarium Monasticum, Liber Usualis remained in use for a Latin Vespers, celebrated in rare cases *iuxta ritum Pianum*. The wish of the Council concerning the parish Offices remained unheard. Nearly nothing happened for a deeper understanding of its contents, the spiritual reading of the psalms.

A strange duality is manifest in today liturgical life. The official demand, on one side, was a strict uniformity. The few proper Offices still in use (those of the Orders) was gradually eliminated, there remained no place for restoration of the noble heritage of dioceses. Efforts or even desire for maintenance of the centuries-old Roman tradition was banned – only some African tribes have the right to integrate their (pagan) rites in the liturgy; the same was denied from the ancient churches of Europe.

The elimination of the legitimate diversity went together with the huge dissemination of illegitimate diversities. Communities, priests, monasteries vindicated them the right to create their own Office, and there is no veto against them – except if they are conform with the preconciliar tradition.

The Catholic community even lost its knowledge about the Roman Rite, and the old maxim 'sicut psallit Romana ecclesia' has got used by some obtrusive priests as a protection for the new inventions, rather than for classical Office of the *Mater et Magistra*.

II. Perspectives

1. Tensions

We are, however, in error, if all what happened regard the work of bad spirits, and think the return to the Breviary Pius V a simple medicine. Though the Breviarium Romanum was a great treasury of the Church and the spiritual food for generations, there were, in fact, serious problems about it. I can sum this in the form of some 'tensions':

Tension between the *uniformity* of the Office and the *diverse life conditions* of those who actually pray it or are destined to pray (communities of contemplative orders, religious orders of active life, cathedral and collegiate chapters, parish priests, parish congregations, confraternities, groups of lay people, private use by lay people, etc.);

Tension between the *uniformity* and the richness of *liturgical traditions*;

Tension between the principle of '*full Psalter* per week' and the Roman principle of *psalm distribution*;

Tension between the *Curial-Trento* form and the *traditional Office* of cathedrals, parishes, monasteries;

Tension between the Office as a *public* celebration and as a *private* prayer-book;

Tension between the venerable *sacred language* and its *decreasing knowledge* even among people in clerical status, and still more among lay brothers and sisters of orders, secular congregations and laymen;

Tension between the size of the *full Breviarium* and the poor extracts of *Officia Parva* (practically without any link to church year);

Tension between the *liturgical ideals* (Mass and Office as two columns of liturgical life) and *realities* (Mass and folk devotions);

Tension between the Office as a *chanted liturgy* and a *read liturgy*;

tension between the *high demands* of its full musical vestments and the low level of *musical learning*, taste, provision.

2. Rite and Consuetudo

When in this situation a solution is wanted, I think a *punctum saliens* to make distinction between Rite and Consuetudo.

For the question about the unity (or uniformity) in content and diversity in life conditions, four answers can be given.

(1) To keep the high-level uniformity and accept if many people and communities, unable to adapt this standard, will fall outside this part of liturgy (the pre-conciliar way);

(2) To reject the Roman Office and create a new one on a modest level, a „minimum” measured to the capacity of many (in ideal case, all) Catholics (the conciliar way);

(3) To create many kinds of Offices, one for every type of users (post-conciliar way).

(4) To maintain the traditional Roman use, – make changes for adapting it organically to our time, without a sharp break in its continuity; and – permit varieties within the unity in regard the use of it. In other words, to make a distinction between the standard form of the Roman office distinguish and the Consuetudines proper for individual communities or persons of different conditions. The Office itself is basically the same for the whole Church, identical with the Office in use for at least sixteen centuries; but it is different, what parts and how are prayed by the individuals and individual communities, who, however, enter differently in the same stream of prayer.

This is the way the Office lives in the Eastern Churches. Very few changes has been made during the centuries in it. Everybody may know what the Byzantine Office is; its venerable construction stands without harm. Its full form is prayed in some monasteries; while the morning and evening prayer is kept in each church. Vigils are celebrated also in parish churches at certain days. The obligation for monks, priests are defined; but also the lay people know how to join the celebration. Also the single Hours can be shorter or longer, not at one's own pleasure, but following some consuetudines.

This method preserves the heritage in its entirety, but makes the use of it somewhat more flexible. And it makes the reform program very simple! It is not a new Office what should be created, only make the changes in the old one which are useful for the spiritual benefit of the Church. If the general outline is given, also those having a venerable old tradition of their own – inspired and controlled by the unbroken liturgical life of the Church – may restore the valuable elements of their proper rite, in a well-ordered way, without the harm of needed unity. Some general directives should be added and the bishops and order's authorities may to define particular rules (or frames) how to of adapt the common Office in the life of individuals and communities. In such a construction also the parish-Office may get its decent role and form.

The following list of 'possible changes' is, of course, no more, than an illustration of how the Office can be adapted to the modern requirement without the demolition of the old Rite.

3. Possible changes: the structure of Hours

The function of changes to be done is to serve the survival of the ancient Office of Rome for further centuries. We can survey here these changes only in general outlines.

As seen above, the first quality of the Roman Office is the clear-cut shape and structure of the Hours. I think, no great change must and might be happen in this respect. There can be, however legal relief permitted for individuals or groups at some points. The basic structure of the Hours (Vigils: invitatory, psalmody + readings; Lauds and Vespers: psalmody + capitulum, hymn, canticum, prayer; Little Hours: hymn, psalmody, a short close) can be saved even if the number of psalm is a little different from case to case. The Vigil which is celebrated with the regular twelve psalm in cathedrals, contemplative monasteries, can be prayed with six psalm by others and even with three psalms in parish churches. The number of psalm of the Lauds and Vespers can be reduced to three in some communities.

The Office itself, however, is not curtailed – who prays the short form keeps in hand the integer text. While the Office as the liturgy of the universal Church stands there in its full integrity, special regulations may tell which are the Hours someone is obliged to.

4. Possible changes: the distribution of psalms

The old system is not outdated, just the opposite. The duality of fixed set of psalms and psalmodia currens is, as it were, invented just for the man of our days! Even a layman can easily pray the stable psalms (even by heart) in the appropriate times of day canonical, and read the psalter (or a good selection of it), when his schedula permits him/her to stop and absorb in the *opus Dei*. But different types of ecclesiastical communities can also adapt the system easier than a set of rigid assignments.

The first task is to restore the original shape of the Little Hours. They were not burdensome obligations (as in the Breviary of Pius X), but short breaks of the daily activity. The monks of St. Benedict when working on the fields surely could not do more, than to say a short hymn and a similarly short set of psalms, recited by heart. The selection made by St. Benedict is perfect for this purpose: the little groups from the 'gradual psalms' 119–127 (the same three for each Hour every day, cf. the 'complementary' psalms of the Liturgia Horarum) takes 4-5 minute, and include the main points of Christian spirituality. The series used in these Hours in the secular form of the Roman office, i.e. psalm 118 could be assigned for the Sunday and Saturday. The Terce, Sext and None in private prayer could be reduced to hymn + the 3 short psalms + Pater Noster (omitting Capitulum, responsorium, versiculus, collecta). Though Little Hours have some parts which follow the course of liturgical year, in the lack of a book, the same text might be prayed. Also the Complet includes always the same psalms (so communities could pray it in the darkness; privately it can be prayed by heart while going to bed). I incline to keep up the Prime (which is quite different in meaning from the Lauds), but in easy way. The magnificent psalm 117 is a good preparation for the Sunday Mass; the divisions 1-4 of psalm 118 could mark at least the start of the week (on Monday, repeated *ad libitum* on any weekday).

Taking psalms 119-127 out of the Vespers and rearranging them accordingly, length of the the five (considerably shorter) psalms (psalm-divisions) is moderate and can be kept. The standard psalms of the Lauds (92 on Sunday, 50 on weekdays; 62/66 and 148-149-150), go back to the most ancient period of Christian piety and intone the deepest motives of Christian start of day. For an ease, psalm 62 and 66 can be alternated during the week, 148-149-150 connected only on Sunday, taken apiece on the weekdays. On the second place stands the „morning psalm” and on the fourth the Old Testament canticum, proper for the single days. So the Lauds became a little shorter, without harming the either the principle or the assignments. But it can be permitted to the user to reduce the number of psalms by a well-considered order to three.

And now, the most problematic point will be the simplest: all other psalms are prayed as *psalmodia currens*. For those who are obliged to the Office, the Superiore defines the number of psalms (traditionally 12 or 6, or at least 3); others are free when and how to proceed in the Psalter.

In sum: the modified Roman system would be:

Lauds: 92/50, morning psalm (Sunday: 99, from Monday on: 5, 42, 64, 89, 142, 91), 62/66, Old Testament Canticle, 148/149/150.

Prime: Sunday 117, weekday(s) 118/1-4.

Terce: Sunday 118/5-7, Saturday 118/ 14-16, weekdays: 119-121

Sext: Sunday 118/7-10, Saturday 118/17-19, weekdays 122-124

None: Sunday 118/11-13, Saturday 118/20-22, weekdays 125-127.

Complins: 4, 30/1-6,90, 113 full, or alternating: 4, 30/1-6, 133 and 90.

Vespers: *psalmodia currens* 109-147 (except those occurring in other Hours)

Vigils: *psalmodia currens* 1-108 (except those occurring in other Hours)

And knowing this, anybody could fulfil the essence of the Office using only a Psalterbook (and the Bible for Vigils readings).

5. Possible changes: the Antiphonary

If the Roman Office is restored, there is no theologico-liturgical reason for a radical change in the Antiphonary. The basic layer of it is not 'outdated'. The antiphons and responsories of the *Liturgia Horarum* does not reflect more the „spirit of the Council” than the old Antiphonary did. The only field where LH wanted to make a radical innovation is the coordination of responsories with the preceding readings. But just this is an erroneous liturgical requirement, which cannot be justify by any historical or other argument.

The problem with the old antiphonary is something else. The Roman Antiphonary sung in a choir cause insurmountable task with its size and technical difficulties. The most ancient layer of the Antiphonary was not large, and the melodic types made the learning easy. From the 7-8th centuries, however, new antiphons and responsories were added to the Roman Office and their music quality was much more demanding. This difficulties could be and were solved in two possible ways: the pieces were either assigned to well-trained medieval singers (Middle Ages), or became simply read prayers (from the 16th century on). Both tracks are false and against the welfare of the liturgical life. What is a solution in this tension? I think, the distinction between rite and consuetudo might be a remedy again.

The full treasury of the Roman Office should be preserved, moreover, it is desirable to bring back the most valuable offices abolished after Trento. This „great repertory” could be grouped in two. A relatively smaller part, practically the ancient „*Antiphonarium Parvum*” of the 5-6th century, constitutes the common *minimum*. A full „*Antiphonarium Magnum*” would be the store-house of the great heritage, and it could be used partly in the read Office, partly in the sung Office according to the different conditions and aspirations of the individual communities. To this *Antiphonarium Magnum* the orders and bishopric sees may add the pieces taken from their historical tradition.

In the Old Roman Antiphonary and also in the earliest Gregorian choirbook (Albi 44) we find a very instructive way of editing the material. The essential set of antiphons or responsories (the antiphons of the Lauds, the Vigil antiphons of great solemnities) are recorded integrated into the daily office. After those, follows a collection of antiphons and responsories without an accurate distribution. Later choirbooks show that these pieces were adapted in the local rite with some freedom. As an example: in Albi 44 the responsories of the Vigiles and the antiphons of the Lauds are fixed for the first Sunday of Advent; then follow 14 antiphons, to be used during the week. The Lauds antiphons are mostly the same in all

sources. The added antiphons are assigned by the Old Roman Antiphonary to the Vigils. If the Antiphonarium Romanum is edited this way, the collections (added to the cardinal items) could be used somewhat differently by communities on different level of musical training. In some places just one single antiphon could be sung during the whole week.

The use of 'antiphona sola super psalmos' was an accepted custom during the Middle Ages. In this case a cycle of psalms were concluded under one antiphon; so only one antiphon should be learned and the psalm-tone remained the same during the full cycle. An ideal arrangement for a less-trained community!

Another old practice offers technics also for preserving the richer selection. In some feasts (e.g. St. Paul, Lawrence) the antiphons were sung with 'versus ad repetendum', i.e. a selected verse, sung on psalm tone before the antiphon returned. An extended use of this technics permits to include the psalms under one antiphon, but the omitted pieces could be recited on psalm tone at the end of each psalm by a solo singer or all together.

For one more example see the responsories. In simple days they could be adapted to the tune of a *responsorium breve*; on the solemnities sung on their own tune. If the number of responsories is not oversized, the type-melodies can rather easily learned. In early times probably a cycle 'Responsoria de Psalmista' was sung in the Vigils during the *tempus per annum*. Later on the biblical books read in the Vigil got a proper cycle of responsories (these are the Historia de Adam, Noe, Abraham, Regum, Sapientiae etc., and the Psalmista became closed in the post-Epiphany weeks. If it is so, the Responsoria de Psalmista may constitute a minimal collection of Responsories, and the great (and more difficult) Historiae 'de Scriptura occurrenti' would be an enrichment, sung in better-trained communities. Of course, if someone adheres to the principle of the LH ('proper responsory to each reading'), there is no reasonable solution for the problem.

6. Conclusion

This consideration is intended no more than to demonstrate that the Roman Office *could* be resituted in a way, were its core remain intact, while the requirements of our day are respected. I am going to explain the potentiality of this method in the second volume of my book on 'Reform of Reform'.

The rite of Office was always less fixed in the Roman Rite than that of the Mass. This is a warning not to force a too rigid uniformity in the Office practice, while, its essence should, of course, be retained. The experiences, however, gained on the field of Office could be transferred in a special way also to the matter of the Mass liturgy. The right aspirations of the II Vatican liturgical reforms might be fulfilled by a *good* reform, without turning against the traditional Roman liturgy, or rather: when turning back to this heritage.