Friday June 15, 2:00-3:30. Workshop Session II: Collectivities I

Title: Communal Worship: Nuns, Laywomen, Agency, Action, and Change
Micheline White (E); Jaime Goodrich (E); Alex Marchbank (H)

Description:

Welcome to the workshop on communal worship!

This workshop seeks to further our understanding of women’s engagement with and responses to the transformation of communal or public worship in the early modern period (1450-1700). Although less studied than private worship, public or communal worship was a vital part of the lives of early modern women of all confessional stripes: nuns sang the Divine Office, attended Mass, performed ecclesiastical music, and participated in special feast days; laywomen attended the Mass or the Lord’s Supper and other public rites (Matins, Vespers, Processions); women sponsored and designed churches as well as various objects and structures found within churches such as artwork, tombs, and altarpieces; women sponsored, bought, and circulated liturgical books; they organised ceremonies such as baptisms, churching, and funerals; they wrote, recited, and sang liturgical or para-liturgical prayers and hymns; they created and paid for liturgical vestments and other artifacts used in communal worship; and they were deeply invested in the profound changes that altered communal worship during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. While women were generally barred from leading the liturgy itself, they nonetheless participated actively in public worship and helped shape communal devotion of all kinds, whether at the level of the local congregation or the national church.

This workshop aims to foster interdisciplinary dialogue about public worship as a key site for thinking about female agency and action, about confrontation (intra- and inter-confessional), and about identity formation. Our pre-selected readings and images cover a variety of confessional identities, with special attention to England. Through these readings, each convener will draw on her ongoing research to offer a case study of how one particular group of Englishwomen participated in or helped reform communal worship:

- Alex Marchbank: Catholic laywomen, church spaces, and wills, 1450-1530
- Micheline White: Protestant and Catholic laywomen and Eucharistic prayers, 1540-1630
- Jaime Goodrich: Benedictine nuns and Catholic liturgy, 1600-1700

Both cross-confessional and cross-temporal, these case studies will enrich one another by providing the necessary material for a wide-ranging conversation about how women contributed to communal worship over the course of two and half centuries. By including both late medieval and early modern readings, we hope to provide a space for rethinking issues of periodization as well as for considering the extent to which the Reformation and Counter-Reformation created new possibilities for women to participate in communal worship.
worship. We will situate these English materials within a broader European context as much as possible. The materials for each of these case studies will be drawn from the original, archival research of the convener, allowing them to share little-known print and manuscript texts with attendees and to spark further research into this new subfield.

Key areas for discussion will include, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- **Topic #1**: Alex Marchbank: Women’s wills are relatively rare, but they give us an important insight into the lives, religious interests and networks in which women played significant parts. The wills selected for this workshop raise questions about how women were able to use formulaic legal documents to shape spaces for public worship whilst simultaneously projecting their own identities into that space. How could women achieve this in their wills, and in what ways did they hope to change the experience of public devotion for future parishioners? How do women’s wills demonstrate a desire to access spaces for devotion or religious rituals from which they would usually be excluded? And what can the wills tell us about the perceived agency of subsequent women in enacting the testator’s wishes?

- **Topic #2**: Micheline White: early modern women wrote or transcribed dozens of prayers designed to help them (and their readers) prepare to receive the sacraments of bread and wine. During the course of the sixteenth-century there was a massive transformation in the way the English church understood the meaning of the Mass or “Lord’s Supper” and women played a role in that transformation. In the traditional Mass, the elevation of the consecrated host was a key moment for lay devotion. In the 1549 BCP, the Host was no longer elevated; in the 1552 BCP, communicants were asked to adopt a reformed, memorialist understanding of the elements; while the 1559 BCP allowed for a reformed or a traditional understanding of the elements. How do the women’s prayers provided here prompt us to think about how women engaged with these theological issues or with other devotional and social/ethical issues? How do the prayers register laywomen’s participation in public ritual? How does the language of these prayers shed light on female agency or confessional identity?

- **Topic #3**: Jaime Goodrich: How do prescriptive texts about liturgical performance (the Benedictine Rule, the Brussels Statutes) square with the actual, lived experiences of nun as described by Prioress Justina Gascoigne in her chapter speech? Based on the pieces by Gascoigne and Constanza Savage, what acts (spiritual or physical) do nuns perform before undertaking the Divine Office or other liturgical rites? Taking Abbess Elizabeth Dabridgecourt’s selection as an example, what are the possible relationships between the physical performance of the liturgy and the inner spiritual experience of the nuns? Finally, we might think of the Catholic liturgy as a static set of rites, performed in a foreign tongue (Latin), and thus affording little opportunity for nuns to take ownership of their liturgical experiences. Based on all of these readings, what kinds of agency are available to nuns as they perform the divine office, processions, or other liturgical rituals?
**Topic #1: Women Shaping Spaces of Communal Worship (Alex).**

**Primary Texts – Extracts from Wills:**

1. Lore Gore (1506) - PRC/17/10/221, f. 221v-222r, 2p.

2. Sybil Tillis (1503) - NCC will register Popy 286, f. 286r-286v, 1 p.

**Secondary Sources:**


*Extract from the Last Will of Lore Gore, Faversham, PRC/17/10/221, f. 221v-222r.*


¹ Farms
² Jointure: joint use by husband and wife
³ Fee simple: a kind of freehold ownership.
price of theseid table vj m[ar]ke⁴ and also the same Margarete and Anne shall pay to the gyldyng of saynte savio[ur] on the high aut[er] within the seid Monastery iiij m[ar]c sterling [and] also to pay to my son James Gore v m[ar]ke st[erling] also I will the said Margarete [and] Anne for the p[ro]fit of thesaid land[es] shall pay to eu[er]yche of my sonne Jamys childryn whene they cu[m]e to the full age of xvij yeres to eu[er]yche of them nowe being alyve xx s and if any of thesaid childryn dy w[ith]in theseid age that then eny of them to be others heire of their p[ar]te and if all the childryn dye then ther moder alice to have all their p[ar]t[es] of theseid money that is to witt iiij li and also that theseid Margarete [and] anne for the p[ro]fit[es] cumyng of the seid land[es] shall kepe the space of v yeres aftur my discease within the monastery of [F]av[er]sh[a]m an yerly obite⁵ to the value yerly of vjs viij d [...]

Sybil Tillis, NCC Popy, f. 286r-287r, 1503

In the Name of gode Amen In the vijth day of Auguste [the] yer[e] of our[e] lord god M CCCCC iij I Sybill Tyllis of Thetford wedowe late the the wyf of William Tyllis gyntilman of hool mynd and go[o]d Remembrance beyng thank to allmyghty god make my testament in this wyse Firste I bequeth my Soule to allmyghty god and to our[e] blyssed lady seynt mary and to all the seynt[es] of hevyn And my body to be beryed by William Tyllis my laste husband before the Image of Seynt Pawle Also I bequeth to [the] hey autyer for my tythesforgoton and not p[re]sitely payed vj s viij d Also I assigne to [the] payntyng of [the] Rood loft[e] v li.⁶ Also I assigne toward a Newe tabernacle⁷ of Seynte Anne in the Chapell of Seynt Anne xij s iiiij d Also I assigne for a tabernacle and an Image of our[e] lady of pety on the Southsyde of the Chapell of seynt Kat[er]ine xxvjs xij d Also I assigne to [the] monastery of this Towne xx s Also I assigne to [the] Freyres prechours xs Also I assigne to [the] Nun[n]ys x s Also I assigne to the Freyres Austiners vj s viij d Also I assigne to [the] gilde of Corp[u]s [Christ]i iij s iiijd Also I will to Freer⁸ Thomas Crosse have a s[ur]vice to syng for me and my husband[es] and our[e] Frend[es] by the space of ij yeris for the wiche ij yer[is] s[ur]vice I assigne to hym viij li Also I assigne to [the] p[ri]or and covente of the Chanonys xs Also I assigne to William Inkepenne xxs Also I assigne to a vestement to seynt kat[er]ines Chapell v li Also I will wheras my moder assigned liij s iiijd toward a

⁴ 1 mark = 13s 4d
⁵ Obit: a mass held to commemorate an individual on the anniversary of their death
⁶ £5
⁷ In this context: receptacle for the pyx (box) containing the consecrated Host.
⁸ Friar
server⁹ for seynt mary Chirch I will and assigne oon¹⁰ pece¹¹ [that] was p[er]teynyng to my moder and also another pece of my owyn with other broke sylv[er] to [the] p[er]formacion of [the] same Server[...]

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⁹ Salver, perhaps?
¹⁰ one
¹¹ Cup, especially a wine cup, dish or bowl (used as drinking vessel). OED.
There is, however, a consideration to be made in these cases, of a modified time-depth invested in the building programme. This is a subtle point, and often open to challenge. It can be expressed this way: frequently, we find a complete rebuild under mercantile or lesser gentry prescription, where the emphasis is on the end product to a greater extent than we might conclude from the episodic additions to seigneurial churches. The Harling example spans well over a hundred years of building at the instigation of one family. At Ashburton there was a complete rebuild, including chapels for guilds of both tin and wool industries. Judging by the fabric, in particular the uniformity of window tracery and a possible date for the roof of the south aisle, the church was started and completed within the second quarter of the fifteenth century. In Tonnes the townpeople shared a church with the adjoining priory. Due to mounting tension between these parties the parish church was completely rebuilt. Here the documented evidence suggests frustration at the depletion of funds requisite to complete the rebuilding (Russell 1984). There was a series of drives aimed at speeding up the process. Eventually enough cash was extracted from the townpeople, through the authority of the mayor and corporations with episcopal encouragement, to complete the church.

The same discourse of building patronage, engaged upon by different interests, presents different requirements. The result is different attitudes to time investment in the building itself. With the manorial example of East Harling, inheritance and legitimacy is almost expressed through the ability to continue or add to previous building schemes. The authority of such building was primarily the generations of tenants reproducing the authority of their lord. In the towns, the audience was the agglomeration of workers and masters. Merchants and town oligarchies instigated rebuilding, and raised the funds. The nature of their authority was more transitory than that of an hereditary lord. A mayor may hold office for only a few years. It is in the nature of such powers that acts which could express prestige for one’s position required greater immediacy of completion. In the Tonnes example we may be witnessing the rejection of the first mayor partly because his failure to raise enough money to finance the operation was indicative of a general lack of authority in civic administration. The manorial example extends into the depths of an historical presence, whereas that of the town is more concerned with the politics of the present.

Implications and effects of secular intervention

To explore the implications of the secular creation of religious space, we must consider that space in the light of the religious practices discussed above.

As the mass began with a procession, we will begin our consideration here. The addition of a chapel through the building programme of a lord, guild or town corporation may have dramatically altered the processional route to which people had previously become accustomed. It would be seen to create, or to rearrange, a hierarchy of altars within the visiting order. A chantry may facilitate or obstruct processional passage according to the wishes of the lay patron. By defining liturgical space in such instances, the lay patron defined aspects of liturgical observance.

When the Church established elaborate processions, which were structured according to rank, they created a means by which the laity could display their own status. It was in the urban communities of the later Middle Ages, in particular amongst the guilds and the town magistrates that the concept reached its most sumptuous and elaborate. The Church had instigated this discourse with the intention of leading the people, but by the time of the great Corpus Christi processions the ritual space of the clergy had often been usurped and the structures which were being reproduced were chiefly secular. Guilds vied with each other to be next in position to the body of Christ and to lavish visible expression of their economic power. If profits flagged, a guild would be demoted in the processional order by the magistracy (James 1983). Thus where the processions of the clergy reflected a static, unchanging order, the secular absorption of procession allowed an organic fluctuation, according to the laws of mercantile capitalism. Similarly, the relations between the constituent parts were based on differing relations, with masters, journeymen and wage-labourers and the ranks of the town corporation. The theme of the social body analogous to the human body in these processions (James 1983) was common to both institutions, but their structures were such that they were bodies working at a different metabolic rate.

It is in the context of civic processions that we might partially understand the emergence of the great churches of the end of the Middle Ages, for it was the profit-making merchants, lawyers, guilds and civic authorities who were pouring money into extensive rebuilding of urban churches. They were, in effect, creating space. Processions took place not only in churches, but around them and on certain days, took routes through the town. The organisation of these routes would lie in a combination of common access and deliberate planning. Urban churches, however, are seldom considered as creative of civic space in terms of townscape. The church of St Peter Mancroft in Norwich (Fig. 3) was entirely rebuilt, extending greatly in length, so much so that a wide tunnel had to be built under its east end to allow processions to pass underneath, just as the western tower incorporated a processional passage. The eastern passage gave access onto the central market place which it dominated. The market place came to be spatially defined between the church and the slightly later Guildhall. Similarly, the church of St John Maddermarket, also in Norwich (Fig. 3), was built so long that its west tower had to have a passage running north-south through it. It is believed that it may also have had an eastern extension spanning a right of way, and that both were used for processions (Mansfield 1976: 167). St Gregory, Pottergate in the same city (Fig. 3), has its chancel carried on a vault over the street to allow passage
and aisles is how perceptions between participants were affected. The priest or chaplain whose duty it was to say mass on behalf of a patron, their family or associates, would be isolated from the liturgical focus of the rest of the building and very conscious of whose altar he was celebrating at. Those who remained worshiping in the nave of a church would be only too aware of the distinction between themselves and anybody worshipping in a chapel. Bossy (1973) has argued that a sense of parish community in the Middle Ages was a frail and fleeting notion, only substantiated at 'moments of ritual petition or festivity, inserted in brackets in the prose of everyday life'. For the rest of the time people regarded themselves as falling into groups of family, friends and associates sharing common interests on the one hand, and enemies, or those with whom one was at feud or in disagreement on the other. Many of the extended kin and interest groups were formed through baptism and the institution of godparentage. As we know from wills and the foundation charters of chantries, the bequests required masses to be said for family, friends and mutual benefactors. The names of such would be pinned by the side of the chapel altar. It would be possible to conceive of these private chapels as a means whereby the local community came to recognize members of such interest groups, and by the same token to find themselves identified as excluded from those groups. Groups whose mutual interests might be based on different relations are familiar as guilds and fraternities. Richmond (1984) has argued that private pews and chapels were a strategy towards 'social distancing' among the gentry. Those perhaps aspiring to gentry status would be keen to employ such a means. The enclosure of a space for such a purpose by the use of parclose screens allowed simultaneously a view of other altars, of the people within, and of the people without.

The addition of chapels as constructional accretions and the division of interior space by enclosure to form chapels, both resulted in dramatic reorganisation of liturgical and perceptual space. Whereas formerly the focus of one's attention may have been the High Altar or the Rood, both building activity and private masses would cause distraction. Secular discourse must have become very active in the creation of religious perceptions. Perhaps the most dramatic reorganisation must have been the installation of permanent pews. If the fluidity of space in the nave had been slowly eroded by enclosure, it was contracted and rigidly defined by rows of seating. The topography of good and poor visibility within a church would become fossilised in such arrangements, only to be broken and rearranged by post-Reformation focus on the pulpit. Indeed it could be argued that seating within private chapels, and generally, is a result of more contemplative lay religious practice than is sometimes suggested. Since many of these pews have book rests we should now consider the means of transmission of late medieval religious concepts and how secular discourse may have penetrated that field. Not least surely through the iconography and plastic decoration of the churches themselves.

As we have seen, fabric and fittings in the parish church were increasingly provided through secular patronage. Thus control over iconography as well as space had passed to secular hands. The dominant symbolism whereby an
authoritative reading of the mass could be made had been usurped by secular symbolism. The saints and biblical sequences adorning wall and window were increasingly commissioned at the behest or bequest of lay patrons. They were certainly not all being commissioned to fit in with an overall explanatory scheme for the mass. Religious martyrs, even Christ and the Virgin shared scenes with donors, their heraldry and that of their kin and associates. In seeking optimum spatial and visual effect through the siting of such images, lay patrons in many churches must have dislodged allegory from the spatial associations the action of the priest in the mass proposed.

Throughout the later Middle Ages lay patrons were becoming increasingly literate themselves. From the texts they purchased or inherited they could choose religious narratives which they considered appropriate in moral or apposite in symbolism. Under such circumstances it is more likely that allegorical meanings, if any were attempted at all, were chosen to fit in with the modified surroundings of the church. The kind of coherent and sequential scheme that suited the aims of earlier church writers would not be available.

The conditions under which people encountered their religion and even the nature of that religion itself, were being created through secular discourse so that most people must have come to expect this integration of secular and religious authority. The conditions under which Christian subjectivities were formed were exclusive of certain groups and admisive of certain privileges.

Not least in this respect, was the issue of literacy itself. Some of the most common texts amongst the literate gentry and middle classes were the primers and texts such as the Lay Folks Mass Book. Such texts were aimed at prompting religious contemplation during those parts of the mass which did not directly engage the laity. Such books did not circulate from central ecclesiastical administration. Richmond (1984) attributes another element in social distancing to an unequal access to literacy which fostered entirely different conceptions of what religion should be about. The primers and similar texts exhorted people to muster their own thoughts, rather than construct a communal memory of the passion through the action of the mass. We should consider these literate groups, already isolated in their pews and chapels, experiencing religion in probably quite different ways from their illiterate neighbours:

There is a distinct frame of mind engendered by books and a bookish education; it includes . . . a dependence on that sort of knowledge, and if not a contempt for non-readers a feeling of difference from them. When this is allied to other frames of mind, which arise from differences created by income, occupation, custom, taste – class differences they might be called – then religion, hitherto for the laity a cohesive leveller because it comprised shared experience in the behaviour of worship, breaks apart [It becomes] for the governing or determining classes . . . privatized.

(Richmond 1984: 202)

This concept can be perfectly captured in the fifteenth-century church at Ashton, in Devon (see Glasscoe 1987). Here, an ornately carved screen divides the church between chancel and nave. The church had been rebuilt to accommodate a north aisle for the local manorial family, and the screen incorporates a parclose dividing the aisle chapel from the chancel. The nave side of the screen carries paintings of saints. All of these are identified by symbols or attributes. On the reverse side, within the north aisle chapel and on two panels of the chancel parclose are the painted figures of men with scrolls. On the reverse of the doors from the chapel into the nave are figures of the Annunciation. Within the chancel are the figures of the Visitation and another man. All have scrolls with texts. Study of these texts (Glasscoe 1987) has revealed them to form part of a sophisticated and erudite programme leading through the Annunciation and Transfiguration to the Salvation of the World. It interweaves reference to John the Baptist, to whom the church is dedicated. The texts are taken from the Sarum rite and from a new feast of the late fifteenth century, that of the Transfiguration. It shows that the lay patron of the church had a knowledge of the most recent liturgical developments and access to them in texts. The contrast between the chapel and the church could hardly be greater. The remaining glazing of the building carries the arms of the manorial family and alliances by marriage, as does the font. Here we have a church entirely dominated by the local secular power. The fabric, and with little doubt the liturgical observances of the church, were defined through the instigation of the manorial family. The family sat visually and physically separated from their tenants and viewed their religion as integrated with the textual form, whereas for the rest, it was dominated by image and action. Only processional usage would unite the two areas; two distinct social identities momentarily conjoined under ‘God’s peace’.

This paper has attempted to show how social space is created out of physical space. It has shown that social space is created through social practice and that rather than space being the subject of study in itself it is the relationships which the use of space helps to set up which are historically of interest. The creation and reproduction of particular kinds of knowledge are integral to the reproduction of these social relations and hence to the maintenance of authority in given contexts. Thus space, its form and use, contribute also to the transformation of such contexts, and to historical change.
Topic# 2 Women’s Prayers and the Mass / Lord’s Supper

Micheline White

Primary Texts:

1. Lady Jane Wriothesley (c. 1545), transcription of “A Devout Prayer to the Blessed Sacrament.” Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 1, fol. 33-37.

2. Lady Frances Aburgavenny (c. 1578), “A Prayer to be said before the receiving of the Lord’s Supper,” Monument of Matrons (1582), vol. 2: 163-4.

Secondary Sources:

4. Eamon Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580 (New Haven, 1992), 117-20 (prayers for the laity to be used during the elevation of the host during the Mass)

A List of Suggested Primary Sources:


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1. Lady Jane Wriothesley (c. 1545), “A Devout Prayer to the Blessed Sacrament.” Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 1, fol. 33r- 1 p. [This is a transcript based on some images that were very hard to decipher. There may be a number of errors. This same prayer was copied into a manuscript Primer, now lost (see Duffy, p.120). Katherine Parr signed Lady Wriothesley’s book]

Hail holiest body of the Lord Jesus Christ, that art now soothfastly contained here in this most excellent Sacrament. I ? thee my Lord God with my mouth, I love thee with all my heart and I desire thee with all the ? and affection of my soule. I beseech thee sweet Jesu that thou vouchsafe of thy sovereign goodness this day so benignly and graciously to visit my sick soul, desiring to receive thee ghostly, our healthful sacrifice and well of all grace, so that I may with gladness find medicine and health in body and soul by virtue of thy blessed presence. Behold not lord Jesu my wretchedness and manifold negligences & many great unkinldesses, but rather look to thy sovereign mercies and endless goodness. Soothly, thou arte that Lamb, which without spot of sin this day is offered to the
everlasting father of heaven for the redemption of all the world. O thou sweetest manna, Angel’s food. O thou most liking ghostly drink bring into mine inward mouth that sweetest honey of thy healthful presence and kindle in me the fervour of thy charity. Quench in me all manner of vices. Send into me the plenty of virtues. Increase in me the gift of graces and give me health both of body and soul to thy pleasure. My god I beseech thee that thou wilt so graciously bow thee from the high heaven now to come down to me, that I knitted and joined to thee may be made one spirit with thee. O thou worshipful sacrament I beseech thee that all mine enemies be put away from me by strengths of thee & and all my sins forgiven & all wickedness excluded by the blessed presence of thee. Good purpose lord give thou me. My manners correct & amend, and all my works and deeds dispose in thy will. [Let?] my wit and understanding by thee sweet Jesu be made pure and clean with a new light of grace. Mine affection be enflamed with the fire of thy love, and mine hope be comforted and strengthened with thy blessed sacrament, so that my life here profit ever in amendment to better, & at the last from this wretched world with a blessed departing that I may come with thee to the life everlasting Lord Jesu by the virtue and grace of thy life blessed be thou without end, Amen. Lord by thy blessed life help me, comfort my wretched life. Amen.
The Second Lampe

A prayer to be said before or after the
Sermon.

O mighty GOD, which by thy word hast
made all things, whose voice the fouds and
hills do know, whose heart both quicke and
dead, heaven and hell obey, at whole displea-
sure the diuels in hell do tremble; let thy word so ligh-
ten our harts, that by our good works we may testify
our profession, seeing that the tree which beareth not
fruit shall be cut downe, & thrown into the fire.

Grant that I may not onelie be a hearer, but also a doer of
thy holy word, that so smallie I may be partaker of
thine everlasting joye and bliss.

O Lord grant me wilforme to knowe the, and grace
to follow the, in true humilitie; that as thou didst suffer
to be spitted at, and smitten of thine enemies, so we
may beare the displeasures of the world, and rage of
our enemies with patience. Thou hast blessed the lit-
tle ones, and revealed unto them the things hidden
from the wise. For thou wilt haue mercie where it
pleaseth thee. O let thy fear arise before mine
eies, make me to understand wiltome secretie; and
draffe thy faith to my hart, that I may both knowe
thee, and love thee, and glorifie thy holy name for ever:
Amen.

A prayer for faith.

Blessed Saviour Jesus, sonne of the ever-
ling God, the fullpeaceable ioe of thy fe-
lants, most present comforto to sinners, which
came into the world to save offendors,
which so louedst the world, that thou sparingst not thy
most precious blood to redeem the loffe of our first fa-
ther Adam, and to make bys coherence of the forfeited
inheritance with thy selfe; that all which believe in
the night be saued. God Lord, which hast promised
to

of Virginitie.

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to them that knocke, it shall be opened; and that they
which seeke shall find: grant I beseech thee, that I may
search thy holy lawes, and finde the truth of thy holy
word; that I may alwaies contemne contesse and
thee and thy goodnesse, as well in my words as li-
uing. Inspire me with thy holy spirit, that I may
knowe the fredaftie, tryst in the, and serve the in
prayers and well-doing, all the time of my life.

O most mercifull Lord and Saviour of the world, for the glo-
rie of thy name sake, I beseech thee to heare my pra-
iers. My soule reioice in God my sauing health. for he
hath been good to thee, he bath kept thee from the snare
of the hunter, and blessed thee. The Lord is a mercifull
God, let all the earth heare him: let the mouths of all
men sound praises unto him. God is a good Lord, and
doile increafeth his good gifts to his servants: the
Lord will increase my faith in him, and I shall be sa-
ued: so be it.

A prayer to be said before the receiving of the
Lord's Supper.

O omnipotent GOD and father everlasting,
whole mercie is infinite, and whole kingdom
bath none end; touchfafe I beseech thee, of
thine exceeding goodnes, to increa our faith,
that as thy ghesles repaire to the table of thy sonne
Jesus Christ, who hath left unto vs, before he gave
his body to be cruised, and his blood to be shed large-
lie on the crosse for our redemption, as a pledge of his
great love and abundant kindness, the celebration of
his glorious supper, wherein as it were in a looking
glade, the death of our great master, the high kep-
thead of our soules Jesus Christ, is most sublie let
forth unto vs. Give vs grace therefore from above,
rightlie to understand the divine mysteries offered
unto vs thereby, and not to wrest or using the same
M. iii. con-
contrarie to thy will.

Let it be far from our thoughts, good Lord, to leave thine eternal benedic, and to build on the doctrine of men, who following their own imaginations, run headlong to the gaping gulf of danger and destruction. Pluck the scales of ignorance from our eyes, that we may cleerly discern and behold, by the light of thy glorious Gospel, how we may truly communicate and participate the fruits of thy grace, represented in us in this comfortable Sacrament. Indue us plentifully with such pure knowledge, that we may not once think or faile after a mere good soune, or carnall maner, we see upon, or eate thy flesh reallie, or carnallie; but make us alwaies constantlie to belie, that thy glorious bodie is ascended by into heaven, and set on the right hand of thy Father, concerning thy humanitie; and cannot be thence removed, till the time that thou shalt come with legions of Angels, to judge the quick and the dead, before whose presence shall run a consuming fire.

And moreover, we do most humbly beseech the to conforme us in the truth of thy blessed testament, that we may confesse thy divine nature to be equal with the Father and the holie Ghost; and to belie, that thy power is not a power particular, but a power general, and such as both and shall govern in heaven and earth, in the deep and lowe waters; peace in the nethermost parts of hell. Strengthen us therefore good Lord, that handlest that in faling from the true knowledge of thee, we perish everlastinglie.

And let thou hast called us by thy word, as thy ghets to this blessed banker, wherein mouths of our carnall bodies are fostered and fed with bread and wine; so Lord conforme our faith in thee, that the mouths of our soules may fed spiruitallie upon the sweetest flesh, and drink the dearest blood, and so be nourished to everlastin.

lasting life, and heavenlie blessednesse. Which reward as a double due, thou hast promised to all those that faithfullie build upon thee, which are the rokke and strong pillar of our salvation.

And as these most holly mysteries must set forth unto us most true and the death and passion; so make us thankful to thee for the same: and thereby give us grace, to print in our harts thy great love and exceeding clemencie, that sparedst not to give thy bodie to the most vile, shamefull and slanderous death of the Cross; and thy blood to be dyed for our offences.

Indue us with love and charitie to all men; make us readie to forgive, to love, and pardon our enemies, persecutors and slanderers. Turne our harts to minds from all impietie, couetousnesse, blasphemies, pride, gluttonie, fornication, and all other detestable evils. And if at any time we have defeated the fatherlidlfe of his right, the widowes of his dowrie, or gathered togeter our goods wrongfullie, by violence, oppression, fraud, collusion, or deceit: give us grace to make restitution, and to aite with zoxfulplantes and floods of tears, from the bottome of our harts, pardon and stesoignelesse of thee, for such and all other our offences whatsoever we have done, or committed in thought, word, will and deed, against thy divine statute, and anie other our brethren and sisters.

Take awaye from us all bitternes, cursed speaking and backbiting. Give us grace to come worthlie, by the virtue of a true and fruitfull faith, to this holly and blessed supper, that our soules feeding faithfullie on the sweetest flesh, and drinking the dearest blood, we may both in bodie and soule be nourished by thee to everlastin and endless glorie in heaven, where with the and the fellowship of thy chosen Saints, we shall enjoy the fruition of the everlastin kingdom, which thou hast ordained for all those that ouerlie and alone, without
without wafering do build upon thee.

Sanctifie and make cleane our harms and minds by the power of the holy Ghost, the verie comforter of the chosen. Purge thou our carnked conscience, infected with sinne, by the working of thy good grace, lest that by the presuming to this thy table, O Lord, we incur thy displeasure; and being unrepentent for our offences, we be found unmeet guests to come to thy holy banquet, and so we eat and drink to the bitter consolation of our soules and bodies. Give thy grace therefore good Lord, to convert us wholly unto thee, and we shall be turned from all our sinne and iniquitie. Give thy grace to rest onlie upon thee, and we shall be made lye. Give thy chine aid from above, we beseech thee, by faith to streue with the man of sinne, and so to banish him, that he may die to us, and we may live to thee, which art the quier of life. Grant this, O most gratious God, for Jesus Christ his sake, to whom with thee and the holy Ghost be gien all praise, honour and glorie, for ever and ever: Amen.

A prayer or thanksgiving to be said after the receiuing of the Communion.

E give thee most hartie thanks, O heauenlie Father, that hast at this present fed vs, and refreshed our hungerie soules with the flesh and bloud of our Savior Christ, not carnallie, but spiritualie. Give thy grace therefore continualie, by the meane of an increasing and fruitfull faith, to beleue that thy flesh is meate indeed, and thy bloud is drinke indeed: and that whethers we eat thy flesh, and drinke thy bloud, we can not enter into thy kingdom, nor be fauned in the daie of thy comming. Give thy grace therefore, being impossible servants, and unworthylie called, by the reason of the multitude of our sinnes, to bankester at thy table, whereas the celebration of thy supper hath beene bled, and thy death by the visible elements of bread and wine represented unto vs, to offer by boute the continallie the fruits of true, repentant, and sorrowfull hartes, that thy name may be glorified, we by thy grace comforted, thy displeasure turned to love, thy wrath to compassion, our sinnes pardoned and forgotten, and our names written in the booke of life.

And as it hath pleased thee at this present to account vs for thy guests, and not onlie to feed vs with visible creatures, namelee bread and wine: but also in soule, which is thine owne furnisment, to cherish vs with thy flesh and bloud, wherof by the vertue of a linellie faith we have to our great comfortes most plentifullie fed: so now, O Lord, we beseech thee of thine abundant godnesse, to incease our faith, that it may war strong in the, and fruitfull to exercize the works of charitie and love to all men; that thereby as we have now been at the celebration of the glorious and blessed supper, to vs may, whencesoever it shall please thee to call vs to thine heavenly bankester, be found furnished: not empty, not naked, but armed and covered with fruitfull faith and truth, and so, as thy gshelkes or vessells of honour enioie the participation of thy heauenliie and rich palacie, whereas ioies never bade, but continuallie endure. Take from vs the burden of our corruption: let vs fee from the cursed clog of sinne; deliver vs from the nares of death and destruccon. Give vs willing minds to obeye and heare the commandements, cleanse thou our harms from all iniquitie, and give thy grace henceforth to walke in newness of life, and godlie conversation, that thy name may be glorified, and we saued in the daie of thy comings to judgement.

Grant this for Jesus Christ his sake our mediatoare and advocate: Amen.
THE STRIPPING
OF THE ALTARS

Traditional Religion in England

c. 1400 – c. 1580

EAMON DUFFY

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According to Lyndwood, the canon of the Mass was recited by the priest in silence “ne impediatur populus orare”, so that the people might not be hindered from praying. As that explanation reveals, it was not thought essential or even particularly desirable that the prayer of the laity should be the same as that of the priest at the altar. According to John Mirk, the parish priest should teach his people that

whenne they doth to chyrche fare,
Thenne bydde hem leve here mony wordes,
Here ydel speche, and nyce bordes,
And put a-way alle vanyte,
And say here pater noster & here ave.

While at Mass they were neither to stand nor to slouch against pillars or walls, but to kneel and pray meekly and quietly on the floor. There were certain moments in the Mass when they might rise:

whenne the gospelle i-red be schalle
Teche hem thenne to stonde up alle,
And blesse feyre as they conne,
Whenne gloria tibi is begunne.

These were the fundamental requirements for the laity at Mass: to kneel quietly without idle chatter, saying Pater and Ave, to respond to certain key gestures or phrases by changing posture, above all at the sacring to kneel with both hands raised in adoration, to gaze on the Host, and to greet their Lord with an elevation prayer. Mirk supplies a sample:

Ihesu Lord, welcome thow be,
In forme of bred as I the se;
Ihesu! for thy holy name,
Schelde me to day fro synne & schame.
Schryfte & howsele, Lord, thou graunte me bo,
Er that I schale hennes go,
And verre contrycyone of my synne,
That I lord never dye there-Inne;
And as thow were of a may I-bore,
Sofere me never to be for-lore.

78 LFMB, p. xx.
79 Instructions for Parish Priests, 9, lines 265–81.
But whenne that I schale hennes wende,
Grawnte me the blysse wyth-owten ende. Amen.⁸⁰

A century on, Richard Whetforde gave the devout Tudor householder almost identical advice, telling him to instruct his children that the church was "a place of prayer / not of claterynyng and talkynge...charge them also to kepe thyght yrynge in the chyrche clore upon theyr bokes or bedes. And whyle they ben yonge / let them use ever to knele / stande or syt / and never to walke in the chyrche." They were to hear the mass "quetyly and deuytouly / nche parte knelynge. But at the gyspell / at the preface / and at the Pater Noster, teche them to stande / and to make curtysy at this worde Jesus as the preest dote."⁸¹ This was indeed a modest requirement. It demanded from the laity no more than decency in church and the recitation of the rosary while the priest got on with the sacrifice at the altar. His liturgy and theirs converged only at the climactic moment when Earth and Heaven met in the fragile disc of bread he held above his head, and everyone found some heightened form of words to greet and to petition the sacramental Christ for salvation, health, and blessing. The parishioners of Woodchurch in Kent, complaining about their neighbour Roger Harlakinden in 1511 that "he jangthly and talketh in the chyrche when he is there and letteth others to say their divociones" give us a glimpse of that modest ideal actually in practice.⁸²

In fact this minimum requirement was frequently felt to be inadequate both by the church authorities and by the laity themselves. Texts to assist the devout laity to a fuller participation in the Mass were produced throughout the later Middle Ages, of which the best known is the rhyming Lay Folk's Mass Book, perhaps originally produced in Norman French, and Englished in the fourteenth century. Lydgate produced a somewhat more elaborate but essentially similar work for the Countess of Suffolk in the mid-fifteenth century, and Caxton published a lengthy prose guide, "the Noble History of the Exposition of the Mass" at the end of his version of the Golden Legend.⁸³ None of these works is a translation of the Mass itself, though they all contain paraphrases of some of the prayers in the outer sections of the mass, such as the "Gloria in Excelsis" or the Lord's Prayer. All adopt essentially the same method, offering moralized or allegorized meditations on the stages of the Mass, in which the more distinctive actions of the priest, such as ascending or descending the altar steps, changing position at the altar, extending his arms, or turning towards the congregation, are related to the incidents of Christ's life and Passion, or to generalized aspects of Christian doctrine. So at the offertory the Lay Folk's Mass Book provides a prayer which recalls the gifts of the Magi, while Lydgate moralizes the priest's departure at the end of Mass as recalling Moses' leading of Israel through the Red Sea.⁸⁴ In some later medieval Mass devotions, such as those associated with the Brigitine house of Syon, the correspondences with the Passion are very closely worked out, on the premise that "the process of the mass representeth the very process of the Passyon off Cryst." Thus as the priest places the minster on his arm the devotee is to recall the rope with which Christ was led "fro Tyrant to Tyrant", while the chasuble is to recall the purple vestment in which Christ was mocked.⁸⁵

Devotion at Mass on this method became a matter of inner meditation on the Passion, using the stages of the liturgy as triggers or points of departure, and Margery Kempe's visionary practice shows how far it could be carried. But all fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century methods of hearing Mass, however reflexive or comparatively learned, were essentially elaborations of the basic method outlined by Mirk. Intense prayer at the elevation, preceded and followed by private prayers keyed to a few significant moments in the ceremony - the confession of sins, the Gloria and Sanctus, the offertory, the commemorations of the living and of the dead before and after the sacring, the receiving of the pax. And these few moments did, in fact, encompass the essentials of Christian prayer - praise and self-surrender to God, confession of sins, intercession for one's own needs and those of one's "even-christians", and for the building of community in charity. All these were focused on the event which made all of them possible and meaningful, the consecration which renewed and gave access to the salvation of mankind on Calvary.

The overwhelming majority of prayers provided for the laity at Mass were, therefore, elevation prayers. The primers invariably included a range of such prayers in Latin, many of them with indulgences; some sixteenth-century printed primers supplied dozens. Though often repetitious and litany-like in form, these prayers offered a remarkably balanced and comprehensive Eucharistic theology. Linked firmly to the death of Christ on the altar of the

⁸⁰Ibid. lines 290–201.
⁸¹Works for Householders, p. 34.
⁸²Kentish Visitations, p. 160.
⁸⁴LFMB, pp. 22–3.
⁸⁵Tracts on the Mass, pp. 19–21.
cross, they nevertheless emphasized the glorious and risen character of the body on which the devotee gazed. The prayers invoked Christ not only by his death but by his resurrection, by the descent of the Spirit, by his coming again in glory. His flesh was seen as life-giving “salus, victoria et resurrectio nostra”, and the Host was seen as the pledge of delivery from every type of evil afflicting humanity, spiritual or physical. The primers were generally in Latin, but vernacular prayers proliferated, often in verse for easy memorization; they follow fairly closely the pattern found in Mirk’s Instructions. Lay people attending Mass regularly collected such vernacular devotions for their own use. A manuscript Sarum primer compiled in London about 1500, whose owner was a member of the Jesus gild at St Paul’s, has an English prayer of adoration of the sacrament for every day of the week copied into blank spaces on the back of the illuminations which precede the Hours. The prayers typify the tone of this Eucharistic piety, and the cult of spiritual communion by gazing on which it was built:

O thu sweettest manna auungyl mete o thu most likyng gostly drynke brynge in to myn inwarde mowthe that honyfyl tast of thin helthful presence and also thin charite. Quenche in me alle maner of vices, send in to me the plente of vertues, encresce in me giftis of grace and give to me hele of body and sowle to thi plesyng.

One preoccupation in particular is especially notable in vernacular elevation devotions, though it is also found in many of the Latin prayers. This was prayer for delivery from sudden and unprepared death, without the benefit of communion. Late medieval believers, gazing on the Host, were often moved to reflect on the last moment when they would gaze on it, the hour of death. Petitions for “schrift, housil and good ending” are one of the most frequently encountered elements in such prayers, and it was believed that for those who did die suddenly, the mere sight of the Host that day would be accounted to them as housel. It may be significant that the sight of the Host was thus linked instinctively with the solitary communion of the deathbed, and the lonely journey into the other world for which it was preparation. But there was here no necessary contradiction with the communal character of most Eucharistic experience. Communal and individual experience could be held together without tension as the rhythm of the Mass, from pro-

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86 Hor. Ebor. pp. 70–4.
88 See below, chapter 9, “Last Things”, pp. 311–3.
91 See below, pp. 295–8.
**Topic #3** Cloistered Women and Performance of the Liturgy

Jaime Goodrich

Primary Texts:


4. Constantia Savage [Dunkirk Benedictines], “A Preparation before Any Great Feast or Patrones Day” (c. 1638-1687), pp. 59-62, Box T VI 4, Douai Abbey.

5. Abbess Elizabeth Dabridgecourt [Pontoise Benedictines], “Procession on St Mark’s Day,” Ceremonial (1692), pp. 47-51, Box T IV 1, Douai Abbey.

Secondary Source:

Of Piety

1. Where as the chiefest scope and end of Every Religious Order is to advance the Professours there of to the Salvation and spirituall perfection of their Soules, therefore all that enter this Congregation, must dilligently apply themselves, that by meete and convenient, meanes, they may attayne to the proposed end of their Vocation: the cheife meanes where of are, the exercises of true piety, and devotion, as often prayer, me[d]itation, confession of their Sinnes, the holy Communion, and the Mortification of themselves; …

19. They shall say or sing their howers, and the devyne office, according to the Romane use, they shall say the little Office of our blessed lady, the Office of the deade, the Graduall Psalmes, the seven penetentiall Psalmes, and Litanies, in such sort as is appoynted in the breviary of Rome;

20. They shall sing the Mattines, laudes and the rest of the howers uppon the principallest Feasts of the yeare, kept either by the [10] precept of the Church; or uppon Custome, uppon the Feasts of their Patrones; and Patronesses, both of their Order and of their perticuler Churches, and of the Feast of the dedication of the same, alsoe they are to sing every day their conventuall Masse, except the Abbesse for just causes for a tyme ordayne otherways, both in these latter, as alsoe in the former Solemnities; Once every weeke a Masse of the holy Ghost is to bee sung, or sayd, and as often as the Office of the blessed Virgin is sayd on the Saturdayes, soe often a Masse is to bee celebrated of our blessed Lady, for this end that the Convent may obtayne of our lord spirituall progresse and advancement

22. Whyle they sing, or say the devyne Office, lett them observe due gravitie and Modesty, and decent composition of their cariage, neither may they post over their service, but they must pronounce each worde with moderate leisure, distinctly, and truly, and with soe loude a voyce, that they may bee well herd and understoode by those that are out of the Quire;

23. None may intreate or labour to have leave to intone or reade any thing, but as it shall bee appoynted her, neither may shee any wise refuse any thing that shee is willed to sing or reade, except shee first make know [11] her impediment to the Superiour; to whose Commaundement shee is wholly to submitt her selfe;

24. They may some tymes use Musicke in the devyne office, yet it must bee with great Moderation, togeather with the good edification of the hearers, and only such Songs they are to sing as are truly grave and modest;

25. If uppon just hindrance any shall bee absent from the other Canonicall howers, yett all must bee present at Complyne, except some urgent Cause shall excuse them, or that the Abbesse shall judge some other businesse to bee more necessary and important;


Deare Sisters, I wish you all to observe well this Chap[ter] of our holy Rule concerning the Divine Office [see reading #3]. The great Reverence, devotion & diligence with which you ought to performe it at all times, if you observe what our holy Father, heare teaches, it is so plain that it needs no explication. And therfore you ought to have a singular care to discharge your Dutys well. For our Rule, & holy Church, hath laid an obligation upon us: and this obligation, (if we performe it as we should,) will be a great help, & advancement to our spirit [169] in the way of vertue; & the holy Love of God. And for this end it was instituted & ordain’d by holy Church; & the Founders of Religious orders, that the Religious Communitys should recite & say the Divine office publickly not only for the edification of others, & to move them to praise, & honour God the more, (as questionless it doth much,) but allso for the good of their own soules, to rais & enflame their own harts towards the Divine Love; and dayly therby, to encreas their affection & desire of their soules, to be united, & conform to his sacred will. And doubtless those soules that endevour to dispose them selves in the best manner they can to make right use of their vocall prayers they are oblidged to, will in time (with continuance) find the good effects of it. Therfore now good Sisters, have a true resentment of this great honour & dignity, that His infinite Goodness has daign’d to [170] Call you unto in a perticular manner; I mean, has chosen you amongst thousands to dedicate your selves to this noble kind of exercise & service; and know that you ought to seek with all possible care & diligence to perform your duty with as much purity of hart, & intention as you are able. And if it seem sometimes to be werisome & tedious to you, (as it may well happen when you are indisposed in mind or Body,) yet even then, it will be very gratefull to God, if we will only doe what we can, though it seeme not so to us; ney, perhaps it is much more acceptable in the divine sight: and more meritorious to us when we find less satisfaction in it, (if that we persever with a will & desire unfaignedly to praise God his Divine Majesty therby), then if we had much comfort & sensible devotion. Nevertheless, [171] when it pleases God to give comfort & devotion in the Divine office, we must use it as a mean to sett forward our affection towards His holy Love. And when He pleases to withdraw devotion, & that we find nothing but werisomness, we must have patience, & doe the best we are able: and it will be no less profitable to us, nor less gratefull to god.

Our holy Father admonisheth us all, that we be allways mindfull what the Prophet saith; Servite Domine in timore, serve yee our Lord in fear. And again, Psallite sapienter, sing yee wisely. And, in conspectu Angelorum psallam tibi. In the sight of angells I will sing unto thee. And why doth our holy Father, cite unto us all these places of [172] holy Scripture? But to the end to excite & stirr us up to a great veneration, Zeall, fervour & reall desire to doe our duty, with the greatest, care, & in the best manner we are able performing the Divine Office, which our holy Father calls (for the excellencie of it,) the work of God. Therfore good sisters, every one, endeavour to do your parts, as god requires of you, & have a high esteem of it; for it is, (as I may call it) the exercise of Angells: and that which I hope through the great mercy of God, we shall All do everlastingly in heaven. And with the greater love, we Praise God hear on earth, with the greater love, we shall Bless & Praise Him, for all eternity. …
Of the order and discipline of singinge.

We beleevve the divine presence to be in all places, and the eyes of our Lord continually to behold both the good & the bad: But then especially and particularly, when we ar at the worke of God. Therfore let us be allways mindfull what the Prophet saith: Serve yee our Lord in feare and again; Singe yee wisely, and In the sight of Angells I will sing unto thee. Therefore let us consider in what manner, and with what reverence it behoveth us to be in the sight of God and the Angells, and let us soe sing in the quire that our mind and voyce accord together.

4. Constantia Savage [Dunkirk Benedictines], “A Preparation before Any Great Feast or Patrones Day” (c. 1638-1687), Miscellany, 59-62, Box T VI 4, Douai Abbey.

[59] The night before your Saincts Eve you may make a quarter of an howers meditation in the purgative way to consider your manyfould and dayly defects stiring up affections of ad[60]miration that God should have the patience to prune and trime dayly and for so many yeares a tree which bringeth forth corruption. Compare your selfe with a gardin full of weeds; and your thoughts and actions with a weaver who after a hundred threads of heaire doth cast in perhapes a thread of gould, and yet you hope for an eternall reward.

2. Come neerer and draw your imperfection, from one or tow heads or fountaines, a delight to be imployed in what you have a mind to, dejection of mind in time of desolation, willingnes to take in hand any mortification when it is sweetned with internall comfort, but loth to strayne when it is absent, less pure respects in your intentions [61] disquiet of mind, or freting without presently making recourse to God, a great esteeme of sensible devotion, not marking what is more solled, nor reflecting that all comes from Gods providence and loving hand. Aske affections of contristion and resolve what you meane to amend. You must also cast your eyes towards your saint as well to immitate his example as to implore his helpe by colloque.

Your meditation for the morning may be of the love of God. After dinner towards night a quarter of an hower of the practis of the love of God.

You may with leave; one your Saints eave abstayne from recreation [62] make a disciplin, and doo some humble office or tell your fault.

You may reade your saincts life revive your fruits and good purposes discus the state of your soule, redress breaking of rules, You may also frame to your selfe a little Pilgrammage of five severall visits unto divers Aulters at divers howers but they must be very short as halfe a quarter of an hower with intention to beg five perticuler vertues of this sainct such as you shall choose best suteing to your devotion and necessity; before you begin these short stations kiss the ground in your cell in honnor of your sainct and the like at your returne.
5. Abbess Elizabeth Dabridgecourt [Pontoise Benedictines], “Procession on St Mark’s Day,” Ceremonial (1692), 47-51, Box T IV 1, Douai Abbey.

[47] At the Martirologe Ring the 2nd peal to the Procession, at the end of Prime the last, which end’d Begin the littenys:

At Sancta Maria, the signe given, the Procession goes out, as in our Seremoniall folio: 29:
The Bell Rings at Sancta Maria & allmost all the time; but towards the midle of it, stoop
[stop] a considerable space & then ring againe; till it enters, & then tool [toll] to mass;
some of our Sisters that dos not goe the Procession, may help to ring, & Informe the time
Keeper of it: [48]

In all Processions, goe equally, answering to on [one] an other, at a Distance of 2 paces
between the formost & the follower, and 2 yards between each side:
The sacristin caryeth the cros, who placeth her selfe in the midle of the Quier, before the
Aulter, the crucifix turn’d towards the procession on each side of her 2 novices with light’d
candles;

Just before the cros goes the 2 Banners, & before them, on of our Sisters with holly
watther: the novices carrieth the cros Banners:

next to the 2 candle Bearers: goes our sisters, either scholars or Novices, or profest, next
to our Profest sisters goes the Quier novices, then the Juniors, & each on in those Rancks: all in
their great [49] habitts: if there be scholars; for the Quier thay goe next to thos of our sisters:
The 2 chantreses goes clos togethther in the midle, next to the Antients; Behind them a
Banner, caried by on of the midle Ranck, the Banner is of the Immaculat conception, After it an
Image of our Blessed Lady, by on of an Eminent ranck or antients; each side of her: 2 yong
profest with candles: All theses goes just before the Deans:
The Abbess goes last, by her selfe, her crosier borne by her chaplin, in both her hands,
lipt’d up from the ground; if the Abbess be not present the crosier is not caried:

if there be any Reliques, or Image to be caried the Mistress of Seremonys orders who is
to doe it; [50] The Mistress of Seremonys goes all alone, in the Midle, or in her ranck, as she
sees convenient, her ceremony stick in her hand, when the Procession goes out, let her put them
in order, & see them goe 2 & 2 before her, & soe at all turnings into any walk or place;

if ther be but on novice, let her goe, in the Midle between the 2 yongest Dames, & if but
on scholar, between the 2 yongest sisters, next the cros; when thers on od Dame, let her goe in
the midle in the last rank;

Let all endeavour, to keep near the sids or hedges of the walk, & the distance above
specifi’d;

Both on St Marks, & the Rogation days, At Sancta Maria, all rises, the signe given, & goe
from the Epistle side to the gospell side, both round the Quier, & garden or court or cloister; [51]
on St Markes day, sing Sancti Marci 3 times, raising the tune, the same at Sancti Pater
Benedicti, & on the 3 Rogation days, Per Admirabilem Assentionem; Repeat thrice Sancte Mater
Scholasticae;

The Procession being return’d, & enter’d the Quier, at the end of the Procession peal, the
sacristine tools to masse, without any other ringing to it;

The Procession being enter’d the Quier, the cros is plac’d in the Midle, & Banners on
each side the Image & candles on the Aulter, the Community entering with usual Seremony…. 
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Of the three places connecting the inner and outer worlds, the convent church represented, more than the other two, the key focus of religious devotion, both for nuns and outsiders. Because nuns had to be separated from the public, a wall divided the convent church into two halves, or two churches. Each of the two churches was equipped with an altar and together they formed the so-called ‘double church’, an architectural solution already found in the Middle Ages. While the public church was easily accessible to all outsiders, the nuns’ church—their choir—was part of the internal, cloistered, space. It was connected to the public church by one wide window, with grilles, sometimes placed right above the altar, so that the nuns could hear the mass. Two other small windows enabled contacts with the external space, and allowed nuns to confess and take Holy Communion. Different iconographic motives might decorate the two sides of the separating wall: for example, in the church of San Maurizio in Milan—beautifully frescoed by Lombard artists including the sixteenth-century painter Bernardino Luini—on the internal side the nuns looked at scenes from the life of Christ, and images of male and female saints which were depicted on the walls and the vaults. On the other side of the wall, men and women gathering in the public church looked at a wider variety of holy scenes, some of which included the effigies of donors and patrons. Notwithstanding its architectural separation from the public church, the choir was an obvious link for the nuns, which allowed for their spiritual reconnection with the world. From their choir, through the window that opened into the external church, they followed religious ceremonies. They heard the words of the priest, and joined the public in simultaneous singing, or watched the elevation of the Eucharistic bread and body of Christ. Both the nuns and the public could see the Eucharist as it was placed on the altar, without seeing each other and in full respect of enclosure. When the priest turned his back to the nave and elevated the host, both groups were presented with the view of the most important moment of its consecration. By participating in the same religious rituals the two groups became part of the same community of the faithful.

This combination of separation and connection within the convent church expressed the integrity of the female contemplative experience, conveying a sense of isolation from society as well as continuity with it. The convent church epitomized the ambiguity of the nuns’ position in society: they were a group apart, but remained linked to the outside world. Many examples of convent architecture attest to the nuns’ social presence and inclusion in social events. Take for instance Clarissan architecture, the product of an early tradition of strict enclosure pre-dating Trent. In the Neapolitan convent of Santa Maria della Sapienza, designed by the architect and Theatine father G. B. Grimaldi, the choir’s arch, located above the altar in the public church, was open and visible. Grimaldi’s architectural solution underlined that, although separated from the public and trapped inside enclosure, the choir was still accessible for the people outside, though only visually. In other words, nuns were enclosed, yet integrated.

Other areas of the convent attested to the continuity between the secluded female religious community and outside society. In order to know more, we need to look at other parts of the building inhabited by the nuns, areas associated with more private and domestic functions. Indeed, nuns did not confine their existence to communal and liturgical spaces only and their convents also contained living spaces, both internal and external, that gave the monastic interior some resemblance to the domestic interiors of family houses and palaces. Gardens of varying sizes could be found in monastic houses, together with patios adorned with flowers, fountains spilling fresh water, and orchards, like those which were found for instance in some convents in sixteenth-century colonial Cuzzo. Nuns kept herb gardens, where they grew plants and flowers for the medical lotions they sold outside the walls. Additionally, according to widespread custom, nuns enjoyed the use of personal cells, which they used as their own private quarters, sharing them with their relatives, circles of friends, allies, servants, or slaves. Sometimes built over multiple floors, the cells comprised several fully furnished rooms, separate kitchens and fireplaces, and restrooms. In upper-class convents, cells’ furnishings consisted of all sorts of valuable objects, mainly received from their families and friends, comfortable furniture and furnishing, like rugs and tapestries, embroidered pieces of fabric, and pillows, together with pictures, crucifixes, agnus dei, and various devotional objects.
34. Lorraine N. Simmons, 'The Abbey Church at Fontevraud in the Later Twelfth Century: Anxiety, Authority and Architecture in the Female Spiritual Life', Gesta, 31/2 (1990), 103.
35. Borromeo, Regole.
38. Helen Hills, 'Cities and Virgins: Female Aristocratic Convents in Early Modern Naples and Palermo', Oxford Art Journal (1999), 48-50; ed., Invisible City: The Architecture of Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Neapolitan Convents (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). It is not clear to what extent this architectural model was typical of countries such as Italy or Spain or it was found in other Catholic countries too; on this see Mafalda Magalhaes Barros et al. (eds.), Struggle for Synthesis: The Total Work of Art in the 17th and 18th Centuries (Lisbon: Ministério da Cultura, 1999). I would like to thank Helen Hills for this suggestion.
41. On the material and dynamic aspects of convents' interiors see Helen Hills, 'Enamelled with the Blood of a Noble Lineage: Tracing Noble Blood and Female Holiness in Early Modern Neapolitan Convents and their Architecture', Church History, 73/1 (2004), 1-40. Sánchez, La Clausura Imposible, at 109-10; Guimariès Sá, 'Between Spiritual and Material Culture'.
42. Hills, 'Housing Institutional Architecture'.
45. Ibid. 122.