

the same, the Jews withdrew and withdrew. Such is the idea that Our Lord would have conveyed, but it is probable that He did not command the repetition of the Paschal Supper during the year since it could have no meaning except on the Feast itself. Now the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles state that the report of the Breaking of Bread took place very often, perhaps daily. That which was repeated was, therefore, not the liturgical feast of the Jewish ritual, but the event introduced by Our Lord into this feast when, after the drinking of the fourth cup, He instituted the Breaking of Bread, the Eucharist. To what degree this new rite, repeated by the faithful, departed from the rite and formula of the Paschal Supper, we have no means of the present time of determining. It is probable, however, that in repeating the Eucharist, it was deemed fit to preserve certain portions of the Paschal Supper, as much out of respect for what had taken place in the Old Law as from the impossibility of breaking roughly with the Jewish Paschal rite, so intricately linked by the circumstances with the Eucharistic one.

This, at its origin, is clearly marked as temporary in its intention, a fact attested by the most ancient testimonies that have come down to us. Our Lord, in instituting the Eucharist, used these words: "As often as you shall eat this Bread and drink this chalice, you shall show forth the Lord's Death." Nothing could be clearer. Our Lord chose the means generally used in His time, namely, the funeral banquet, to bind together those who remained faithful to the memory of Him who had gone. We must, however, be on our guard against associating the thought of sadness with the Eucharistic Supper, regarded in this light. If the memory of the Master's Passion made the commemoration of these last hours in any measure sad, the glorious thought of the Resurrection gave this meeting of the brethren its joyous aspect. The Christian assembly was held in the evening, and was continued far into the night. The supper, preaching, common prayer, the breaking of bread, took up several hours; the meeting began on Saturday and ended on Sunday, thus passing from the commemoration of the sad hours to that of the triumphant moment of the Resurrection, and the Eucharistic feast in very truth "showed forth the Lord's Death", as it will "until He come". Our Lord's command was understood and obeyed. (From a three-column article by H. Loderer.)

Altar in Liturgy

NECESSITY.—In the New Law the altar is the table on which the Eucharistic Sacrifice is offered. Mass may sometimes be celebrated outside a sacred place, but never without an altar, or at least an altar stone. In ecclesiastical history we find only two exceptions: St. Lucian (312) is said to have celebrated Mass on his breast whilst in prison, and Theodore, Bishop of Tyre, on the hands of his deacons (Mabilion, *Prat. hist. sac.*, n. 79). According to Radulphus of Oxford (*Prop.* 257), St. Sixtus II (257-259) was the first to prescribe that Mass should be celebrated on an altar, and the rubric of the Missal (XX) is merely a new promulgation of this law. It signifies, according to Amalarius (De Eccles. Officiis, I, xxiv) the Table of the Lord (*mensa Domini*), referring to the Last Supper, or the Cross (St. Bernard, "De Coena Domini"), or Christ (St. Ambrose, IV, "De Sacram.", xii; Abbot Rupert, V, xxx). The last meaning explains the honour paid to it by incensing it, and the five crosses engraved on it signify His five wounds.

POSITION.—In the ancient basilicas the priest, as he stood at the altar, faced the people. The basilicas of the Roman Empire were, as a rule, law courts or

meeting places. They were generally composed of the interior area was separated by two or at most by four rows of pillars, forming a central nave and side aisles. The end opposite the entrance had a semi-circular shape, called the apse, and in this portion, which was raised above the level of the floor, sat the judge and his assessors, while right before him stood an altar upon which oracles were uttered before beginning any important public business. When these public buildings were adapted for Christian assemblies slight modifications were made. The apse was reserved for the bishop and his clergy; the faithful occupied the centre and side aisles, while between the clergy and people stood the altar. Later on the altar was placed in churches in the apse, against, or at least near, the wall, so that the priest when celebrating faced the east, and behind him the people were placed. In primitive times there was but one altar in each church. St. Ignatius the Martyr, Irenaeus, Irenaeus, and Jerome, speak of only one altar (Benedict XIV, "De Sac. Missae", § 1, xvii). Some think that more than one altar existed in the Cathedral of Milan in the time of St. Ambrose, because he sometimes uses the word *altaria*, although others are of opinion that *altaria* in this place means an altar. Towards the end of the sixth century we find evidence of a plurality of altars, for St. Gregory the Great sent relics for four altars to Palladius, Bishop of Saintes, France, who had placed in a church thirteen altars, four of which remained consecrated for want of relics. Although there was only one altar in each church, minor altars were erected in side chapels, which were distinct buildings. It is the custom in the Greek, and some Oriental Churches even at the present day) in which Mass is celebrated only once on the same day in each church (Benedict XIV, *ibidem*). The fact that in the early ages of Christianity only the bishop celebrated Mass, assisted by his clergy, who received Holy Communion from the bishop's hands, is the reason that only one altar was erected in each church. After the introduction of private Masses the necessity of several altars in each church arose.

CIHORUM OR CANOPY.—From the fourth century altars were, in many instances, covered by a canopy supported on four columns, which not only formed a protection against possible accidents, but in a greater degree served as an architectural feature of importance. This canopy was known as the *cihorium* or *tegium*. The idea of it may have been suggested by *memoria* such as those which from the earliest times protected the graves of St. Peter and St. Paul; when the basilicas of these Apostles were erected, and their tombs became altars, the appropriateness of protecting structures over the tomb altars, bearing a certain resemblance to those which already existed, would naturally suggest itself. However this may be, the dignified and beautifully ornamented ciborium as the central point of the basilica, where all religious functions were performed, was an artistic necessity. The altar of the basilica was simple in the extreme, and, consequently, in itself too small and insignificant to form a centre which would be in keeping with the remainder of the sacred edifice. The ciborium admirably met this requirement. The altars of the basilicas erected by Constantine at Rome were surmounted by ciboria, one of which, in the Lateran, was known as a *fastidium*, and is described with some detail in the "Liber Pontificalis" (I, p. 172, and the note of Duchesne on p. 191). The roof was of silver and weighed 2,025 pounds; the columns were probably of marble or of porphyry, like those of St. Peter's. On the front of the ciborium was a scene which about this time became a favourite subject with Christian artists: Christ enthroned in the midst of the Apostles. All