

Common Origins, 1922-1937

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Our common origins have been, without a doubt, characterized by the classic Liturgical Movement as we have seen it in the Abbey of Maria Laach in Germany, and by its coronation in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council.¹ As one of the consultants of the Commission for the realization of the Liturgical Reform,² desired by the Council, I witnessed the redaction of the first great document published by this "consilium" during the summer of 1964, *Inter Oecumenici*.³ This document stated with great emphasis: "The intention of this reform is not so much to change forms and texts of the liturgy, but to obtain a pastoral activity that could make the liturgy the summit and source, and the great force of such a pastoral activity would be, "*ut mysterium paschale vivendo exprimat*ur," so that the Paschal Mystery may be expressed in life.⁴

In these words the Council clearly expressed the deepest intentions of the liturgical theology that has been the ideal for us in Maria Laach: the ideal not only during the midst of the German Liturgical Movement in 1921 when Father Damasus and I were together, but for subsequent times as well. I wish to summarize our common origins during the years 1922 until 1938 in the following way:

- 1918: the beginning of the concrete liturgical apostolate in Maria Laach
- 1921-24: the novitiate of Damasus Winzen and Burkhard Neunheuser
- 1924-30: their study of philosophy and theology in San Anselmo, Rome

- 1928: both ordained priest in Maria Laach (August 12)
- 1930: both teaching philosophy in the high school of Maria Laach
- 1937: Father Burkhard called to Rome/San Anselmo, as professor
- 1938: Father Damasus called to the U.S., helping as professor
- 1951: foundation of Mount Saviour
- 1971: death of Father Damasus
- 1962-78: Father Burkhard: professor Pontifical Liturgical Institute, San Anselmo, Rome.⁵

Both of us had been together in the novitiate of Maria Laach. Gerd Winzen began in 1921; I came later, on September 30, 1922. However, our years before this novitiate, despite some great differences, were remarkably similar. Both of us came from universities, Winzen after many semesters in Gottingen and Munich, I after only one semester in Bonn. In addition, both of us were deeply influenced by the *Jugendbewegung*, the youth movement, and both of us had been in contact with Romano Guardini as first year students; Damasus in Munich, I in Bonn where Guardini was beginning his academic career as a professor. Guardini profoundly influenced both of us. Damasus was especially influenced by Gustav Mensching, a young Protestant philosopher, and a wonderful object of our fraternal conversations in the novitiate.⁶

But these elements disappeared, more or less, when we came as postulants, novices to the Abbey of Maria Laach. It was during these years that the monastery was actively working in the Liturgical Movement in Germany. The movement began during Easter 1918, the year in which the first volume of the anthology *Ecclesia Orans* appeared, including the article "The Spirit of the Liturgy," by Romano Guardini, with the famous introduction by Abbot Ildefons Herwegen. Under the leadership of this Abbot and the novice-master and Prior Albert Hammenstede, Father Odo Casel with all his liturgical studies, and many other monks, all worked together with the intention of actualizing the *Opus Dei*,

the Liturgy of the Church, so that the mind might be in harmony with the voice (*Rule of Saint Benedict*, ch. 79).⁷ Our desire was to obtain the wonderful actualization of the entire life of Maria Laach during the powerful beginning of the liturgical apostolate of the abbey, famous in Germany, Europe, and in the entire Roman Catholic Church, the work of which was finally confirmed by the Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.⁸

When we arrived at Maria Laach, Father Damasus was already a mature student, a student whom we, the younger brothers, admired. I arrived after my first semester of higher studies. Both of us, indeed all of us in the novitiate, were enthusiastically open to the splendid reality of monastic/liturgical life, a life of "*Mysteriengegenwart*," the mystery-presence of Christ, the presence of the salvation work of Jesus, the Christus, the Kyrios, present in the entire celebration of the Eucharist, of the sacraments, of the Divine Office. I will try to describe this atmosphere with scientific objectivity, citing myself and others who spoke after having lived in this atmosphere.

First, allow me to repeat here what I wrote in my essay on the occasion of the one hundred-year jubilee of Maria Laach in 1993, describing the situation as it was when we arrived:

The years 1918 to about 1926 were ones of peaceful celebration and intensive apostolic work, full of the enthusiasm of the new insight into old treasures. An expression of this mood and conviction, besides the imposing series of publications, *Ecclesia Orans*, *LQF* and *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft*, was a little volume of joint works, published in 1926 under the title *Mysterium Gesammelte Arbeiten Laacher Monche*. This work, small but typical in both its title and contents, can be viewed as the close of the period from 1918 to 1926, of the years of peaceful but dynamic groundwork of the Laach contribution to the liturgical movement on German soil. This work was also the beginning of the first criticism written in the essay of J.B. Umberg, the start of a scientific discussion, commonly referred to as the "controversy of

the mysteries," which was to continue for many years. It was a great time; discussion at a highly scientific level . . . conducted by significant scholars and above all by Odo Casel.⁹

In these years Father Albert Hammenstede started with the dialogue Mass, celebrated in the crypt of the Abbey Church, with the altar facing the people, famous then and famous still today.¹⁰ Father Odo Casel wrote his great studies;¹¹ the entire community celebrated the liturgy according to the theological interpretation of the presence of the salvation work in it; Father Casel defended it, publishing the first synthesis of this theology in his book, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*.¹²

In later years, Abbot Ildefons Herwegen instituted for all these theological interpretations his Academy for Liturgical and Monastic Studies. But we were all passionately involved, in the sense that we supported these learned works, eagerly studying the great reply essays of Casel in *Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft*, hoping gradually to reach an understanding and maturity of insight in the persistent effort to actualize the "presence" of the mystery of Christ in the celebration of the liturgy, in the everyday life of the monastery, and to bring this mystery to literary expression also in the works of the budding liturgical experts of the monastery."¹³

Father Damasus and I were strongly united from the very first, beginning with our theological studies in San Anselmo, Rome, and even more so through our ordination to the priesthood together on the same day, August 12, 1928, in Maria Laach. During our holidays from studies we traveled back to Laach, thus remaining in living contact with the abbot and our confreres. The abbot generously allowed us to use these travels from Rome to Maria Laach in order to visit many of the great realizations of Christian culture—Milan, Florence, Sienna, Venice, Ravenna, and even more, the great Benedictine monasteries in Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Bavaria—in order to obtain a real contact with the different forms of monastic culture during the Middle Ages and later times. Throughout these years we remained joined together, continued to grow slowly, and were in vital contact

with the liturgical and theological activities of our confreres in the abbey.

From 1930 to 1938, Father Damasus and I worked together. Father Damasus worked as quasi-rector, I as a young professor in the school of philosophy, where we taught scholastic philosophy to our young confreres of Maria Laach, together with students from other abbeys of the Beuron Congregation. Our philosophical work was necessary for the theological formation of our young confreres. I have given an account of this activity in the *Festschrift, Ecclesia Lacensis*.¹⁴ In addition, both of us were active in the theological work of the abbey: preaching retreats, speaking for different occasions, participating in the ecumenical movement of those years, and in theological publications.¹⁵

Our entire activity geared itself to contributing to the liturgical atmosphere of those years at Maria Laach. This activity is further described by many of the students and scholars of this period in memoirs that are still in the abbey. The most important witnesses are Salvatore Marsili, Godfrey Diekmann, Balthasar Fischer, and Johannes Pinsk.¹⁶

Marsili has given an excellent picture of the situation in which a young postulant was introduced in the years after 1922:

He found himself immersed in that atmosphere of strong, and at the same time serene spirituality . . . a truly vital contact with the liturgy that the abbot Ildefons Herwegen, a man of incisive personality, was creating in the monastery. At this time, the liturgy at Maria Laach still retained the magnificent ceremonial solemnity of the era preceding the synod, and always proceeded in dignified chorus. But above all, on Sundays, the attitude of a real mystical experience took place. In general, the liturgy increased the attention to study, was the reason for apostolic work outside the monastery, and continues to remain important in the organization of the abbey and its activities.¹⁷

After those words of praise I would like to add still more from Godfrey Diekmann, in his descriptions of the importance given to his stays in Europe, first in San Anselmo in Rome, with

professors such as Anselm Stolz, and most decisively in his encounter with Maria Laach and its world of "*Mysterien-gegenwart*," of Spirit, where everything is full of "the presence." As I noted in a review of *The Monk's Tale*, "What he realized at that time was for Diekmann a theological synthesis, the themes were of great importance for the liturgical movement in North America."¹⁸

Balthasar Fischer speaks only of later years, which nevertheless typifies the past, when he says: "The atmosphere was pleasantly familiar. . . . In the first hours we indeed felt that in this man [Abbot I. Herwegen] we would get a teacher of unusual quality. Although the importance of the Laacher Academy study was not explicitly stated, most likely the most important fact was that all communal study was infused into the communal celebrated liturgy of our lectors."¹⁹

Finally, after these short citations, I must give the title of the book that the professors and students of the Liturgical-Monastical Academy of Maria Laach presented to Abbot Herwegen on the occasion of the silver jubilee of his abbatial election in 1938, a special volume of the journal *Liturgisches Leben*: "An honoring gift, for the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dr. I. Herwegen, Abbot of Maria Laach, presented by teachers and students of the Monastic-Liturgical Academy of the Abbey of Maria Laach." The editor of this volume, Johannes Pinski, a famous liturgist of these years, writes in his introduction to the book: "Since the Academy has existed now for eight years, this book is a special celebration of its first step into the public eye. It seems to me that under the special guidance of Father Damasus, published articles give a good picture of the consistent idea of the *vielseitigkeit*, the many-sided characteristic, of the academic schooling of Laach."²⁰

The abundant riches of this "many-sided characteristic" is easily seen in the summary given in the preface of this volume (pp. 80-81). Father Damasus was conscious of these riches when he was sent to the United States in 1938, as one of our best men, with the intention of helping Father Albert Hammenstede search for a refuge for the Abbey in case of its suppression by Hitler.²¹

The difficulties, problems, and disappointments of these years do not belong to my essay here. What is important is that Father Damasus spoke to many excellent Catholics, both men and women, doing it with all the enthusiasm received in Maria Laach, about the “presence” of the salvation-work of Christ Jesus in the celebration of the liturgy, about the *Mysterium*. These faithful later became the oblates who convinced Father Damasus to make a foundation after the end of the war, and finally to establish the foundation of Mount Saviour.²²

Meanwhile the two of us had already been separated in 1937, when I was called to San Anselmo in Rome to teach theology. Although we were separated, we nevertheless remained united. Through correspondence, and then by our meeting again in Rome when he came to see Pope John XXIII and also Monsignor Montini, Father Damasus’s friend throughout his twenty years in Rome.

This spiritual union of ours was one of the reasons why I was invited to come to Mount Saviour after his death to put into order the correspondence of Father Damasus, especially the German letters. During the weeks of my first contact with Mount Saviour, I participated in a symposium of extraordinary quality, “Word of Silence! Spiritual Formation, East and West,” an “Inter-confessional Symposium” typical of Father Damasus and the work of Mount Saviour.²³ It is not an exaggeration for me to say that this symposium was the best presentation of the intentions of the founder and of his work as the monastery tries to continue in its vocation into the next fifty years. The meeting was described as

a symposium of five days, as a congregation of representatives of the great religions . . . in a rather strict, thoroughly contemplative directed monastery, collected in silence to speak and hear reflective words about spiritual formation, contemplative prayer, and even its formal method, trying to find the common foundation that can bridge all contrasts and oppositions.²⁴

This symposium was the beginning of my various travels through the United States in the following years. I tried to describe my impressions in different essays published in the

review, *Beuron*, in later years.²⁵ Through my travels I became aware of the difference between the great abbeys as we know them in the United States and our European Congregations, and the ideal of smaller monasteries such as Mount Saviour. To be candid, I was divided in my impressions and my judgments. The great abbeys, such as Beuron and Maria Laach, had been the ideal of my monastic youth; therefore I was admiring them when I could find the same reality in the great abbeys in the States in all my travels.

I received a similar impression as well, when I saw the benefits of a smaller congregation, with its limitations, its modest scope, but also its great openness to silence, to concentration on the Spirit, to be a "Word of Silence," as the program of the symposium at Mt. Saviour in 1972 stated. Father Damasus expressed this ideal explicitly in one of his last publications in our German review, *Liturgie und Monchtum*.²⁶ He describes marvelously his ideal of a monastic life in its ideal purity, a so-called "contemplative" monastic life, realized in the United States. The essential features of such a monastic life could be realized also in Maria Laach after the Second Vatican Council, of course with different forms possible and necessary in our old Europe. The ideal of a monastic life in its absolute purity, can be realized now in essentially the same way, in the different concrete forms suitable to Europe and to the United States—in simplicity, in sincerity, in liveliness, open to modern reality, and more open to the Spirit of Christ, faithful to the authority *ita ut mysterium paschale vivendo exprimat*, so that the Paschal Mystery may be expressed in life.

Notes

1. General works on Liturgical Movement include Olivier Rousseau, *Histoire du M. L.* (1959; Italian translation by Salvatore Marsili, 1961); Ferdinand Kolbe, *Die Lit. Bewegung* (1964); Bernard Botte, *Le mouvement liturgique* (Temoignage et souvenirs, 1973); Burkhard Neunheuser, *Il movimento liturgico; panorama storico e lineamenti teologici, Anamnesis 1* (1974): 11-30.

2. See Piero Marini, *La nascita del "Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia"* (Gennaio-Marzo, 1964, in *Ephemerides*

Liturgicae 106 (1992): 289-318; and Marini, "Consilium, in Piena Attivita in un Clima Favorevole," (Ottobre 1964-Marzo 1965), in *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 109 (1995): 97-158; see my review in *Archiv fur Liturgiewissenschaft* 35/36 (1993-94), 229, and 40 (1998), 166.

3. *Inter Oecumenici* was published in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 56 (1964): 877-900; also in Reiner Kaczynshi, ed., *Enchiridion Documentorum Instaurationis Liturgicae* (1976), 52, nr. 203.

4. *Inter Oecumenici*, 52.

5. The information here is derived from J. Madeleva Roarke, *Father Damasus and the Founding of Mount Saviour* (Pine City, NY: Madroar Press, 1998). See also my review of this book in *Archiv fur Liturgiewissenschaft* 41 (1999).

6. See Odo Casel, "Katholische Kultprobleme," in *Jahrbuch fur Liturgiewissenschaft* 7 (1927): 105-24, critique of the booklet of G. Mensching, *Katholische Kultproble, dargestellt in ihrem Verhaltnis zur evangelischen Kultauffassung* (Gotha, 1927).

7. On Abbot Herwegen, see *Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche*, 3, Auflage 5 (1996), 48, with his bibliography. On Prior Hammenstede, see his *Erinnerungen eines Laacher Monches. Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen*, Laacher Hefte, 2 (1996). On Father Casell and his liturgical studies, see B. Neunheuser and Odo Casel, in *Theologische Realenzyklopedie* 7 (1981): 643-48; and A. Haussling and Casel, *Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche*, 3. Auflage 2 (1994): 966s; also 48; About the so-called controversy on the doctrine of Mystery, see Th. Filthaut, *Die Kontroverse uber die Mysterienlehre* (1947).

8. See *Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche*, 3. Auflage 6 (1997): 992-94; my article "Maria Laach Abbey: A Double Jubilee: 1093-1993; 1892-1992," in *Ecclesia Orans* 10 (1993): 163-78, especially 166-71; and the descriptions in all the publications cited above in note 1.

9. Neunheuser, "Maria Laach Abbey: A Double Jubilee," 168f.

10. See my essay: "Die 'Kryptamesse' in Maria Laach, Ein Beitrag zur Fruhgeschichte der Gemeinschaftsmesse," in *Liturgie und Monchtum* 28 (1961): 70-82; and the scientific dissertation about the same event, Martin Conrad, *Neuansatze in der Eucharistiefier in der Abtei Maria Laach unter Abt I. Herwegen (1913-1946)* (essentially published in *Archiv fur Liturgiewissenschaft* 41 (1999)).

11. Amply presented in the dissertation of Osvaldo Santagada, *Dom Odo Casel: Contributo monografico per una Bibliografia generale delle sue opere*, in *Archiv fur Liturgiewissenschaft* 10 (1967): 7-77, with the continuation given by A. Haussling, in *Archiv fur Liturgiewissenschaft* 28 (1986): 26-42.

12. *Das Christliche Kultmysterium* (1932). The last English edition was *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, with an introduction by Aidan Kavanagh (New York: Herder and Herder, 1999).

13. Neunheuser, "Maria Laach Abbey: A Double Jubilee," 169.

14. See my essay "Die Philosophische Hochschule der Abtei Maria Laach," with special notes on the activity of Father Damasus.

15. Some examples of these activities are as follows: for Father Damasus, *Deutsche Thomas Ausgabe*, vol. 29: *Die Sakramente. Taufe und Firmung* (1935); vol. 30: *Das Geheimnis der Eucharistie* (1938); *Theology of the Kingdom of Christ*. For me, helping in the translation of the Latin texts in the *Deutsche Thomassausgabe*, vol. 29 and 30; later, *Deutsche Thomassausgabe*, vol. 31; *Sakrament der Busse* (1962); vol. 32: *Schlusselgewalt; Krankensalbung. Sakrament der Weihe* (1985). See also my bibliography in *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 15 (1973): 123-64.

16. Salvatore Marsili, OSB, monk of the Abbey of Finalpia (Italy), abbot (1972-79), professor and 1. praeses of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute of San Anselmo/Rome. The best information on him may be found in Giustino Farnedi, *Paschale Mysterium. Studi in memoria dell' abate Prof. S.M.* (Studia Anselmiana 91, 1986). As young monk and also later as abbot he had a great friendship with Maria Laach.

Godfrey Diekmann, OSB, monk of St. John's Abbey, also visited several times during holidays and studied at the Monastic-Liturgical Academy at Maria Laach. The citations given here are taken from his biography by Kathleen Hughes, *The Monk's Tale* (Germany: Maria Laach, 1991). A short summary of this book is given in *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 34 (1992): 223-25.

Balthasar Fischer is a priest of the diocese of Trier; he frequented the Academy in Maria Laach. He wrote an excellent description of his study on the Academy in the "Festschrift" for the jubilee of Maria Laach, edited by Emmanuel V. Severus, *Ecclesia Lacensis* (1993; cited above in note 5): 305-15. Prof. Fischer is one of the most prominent professors in the Theology Faculty of Treves (Trier).

Johannes Pinsk was a pastor in the diocese of Berlin, and also "Studenten-seeslorger" at the University of Berlin; but in both these places also an eminent liturgist. Jerzy Stefanski has written a dissertation on his liturgical work, "Il concetto di Liturgia nelle opere di Johannes Pinsk" (1972/1973). An extract with the same title was published in Rome (*Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 38, 1974); also in *Eph. Lit.* 88 (1974): 81-116, and finally in a German edition "Consecratio mundi: Theologie der Liturgie bei Johannes Pinsk," *Pietas Liturgica*, Studia 7 (Pezabtei St. Ottilien: Eos-Verlag, 1990).

17. Marsili, "Eulogia," *Studia Anselmiana* 68 (1979): 5.

18. in *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 34 (1992): 223.

19. Fischer, in *Ecclesia Lacensis*, 305, 306, 314.

20. *Liturgisches Leben* 5 (1938): 81-272; cited at 82.

21. All the details of this very complicated situation are very well described in J. Madeleva Roarke, *Father Damasus and the Founding of Mt. Saviour*, especially chapter five.

22. See Roarke, *Father Damasus and the Founding of Mt. Saviour*, 141-163 and the next chapter.

23. I have given an explicit account of this symposium in *Erbe und Auftrag* 49 (1973): 60-63. I was invited to come to arrange the German correspondence of Father Damasus, who died on 26 June 1971 in Mount Saviour.

24. In the essay cited in note 22, p. 60, I translate: "a Symposium of 5 days . . . in the house of a monastery of a rather severe, downright contemplative living formation, ready to speak a reflective work, expressed in silent concentration, but a word which is received with the intention of being foundational for spiritual formation, for contemplative prayer, trying to find the common foundation, capable to overcome all the contrary oppositions, at least a little bit."

25. "Erbe und Auftrag," *Beuron* 49 (1973): 60-63; "Ein Sommer in USA," 51 (1975): 35-42; 55 (1979): 67-70. The last visit, a longer one, from September 26-October 29, 1989, is described only in my diary.

26. In *Liturgie und Monchtum* (Laacher Hefte 43), 31-37: "Leben aus dem Geist. Gedanken bei der Erinnerung an P. Theodor Bogler." See also the excellent exposition of Father Prior Martin Boler, *The Influence of Maria Laach on Mount Saviour Monastery*, in *Ecclesia Lacensis*, 436-48, especially 436-37.