

CONSECRATION

(Paul Regan)

Antonín Brinda & Filip Gorazd Martinek

Consecration [part 1] - by Paul Regan

Notes for visit to church service at Kostel svatého Antonína Paduánského
Strossmayerovo náměstí 17000 Praha 7, Holešovice
1800-1840, Friday June 12 [day of the Eve of St. Anthony].

- Observe silence on the journey to and from the church.
- Consider [in the context of current pandemic] what is lost; what is gained.
 - Behold time in the realm of ritual space; in group and in oneself.
 - Perceive others, both present and absent.

The presentation of Paul Regan's art piece took place in two parts. First, following the instructions provided by the artist (above), the audience was invited to visit a Catholic mass in a church and witness the religious rite. The second part consisted of a video-performance created by Paul that was screened in one of Performance Crossings' venues. What concerns us here is the former, specifically the context it brings. The following text does not reflect on Paul's work as such, but speaks more generally about the relationship between Christianity and performance (art). The note was written by Filip Gorazd Martinek, a former performance artist-turned-c-lergyman, who performed at Performance Crossings 2016.

A Small Note on the Relationship Between Christianity and Performance (Art)

Filip Gorazd Martinek

In this note I aim to briefly address the relationship between Christianity and performance (art), which is also a key topic of my upcoming dissertation. To me, such a relationship seems to be characterised by differences; it is challenging and yet it occurs. My note's main points of reference are performer

and clergyman (e.g. priest), performative act, and Christian spirituality and service. The first difference we can present is that, in Christianity, each believer (a layman or a clergyman) is a Christian, based on acceptance of what makes Christianity Christianity. The Apostles' Creed (symbolum apostolicum), the original Nicene Creed, and other elements that we cannot examine here due to the length of the text could, in the scope of their ecumenical orthodoxy, be considered fundamental beliefs.

However, Christianity is not just some philosophical school of which one would become a part if one (only) professed its doctrine. A Christian becomes a Christian by participating in the sacramental life of the Church, participating in holy mysteries (tajiny), and being a part of the mystical Body of Christ, the holy Church. Being a Christian does not mean professing a particular theory or school of philosophy but living our life as a testimony for Christ and coming into communion with others who are grafted onto the mystical Body of Christ.

In contrast, not only is the performer not obliged to profess the apostolicum, but also the performer's theoretical foundation might be completely absent (often some performers don't even know about their performance and don't feel the need to reflect on it).

In general, a performer doesn't have to be a Christian. However, regarding the clergyman's performance, there is an assumption of subordination of performance under Christianity (a clergyman is firstly a Christian and then a performer). Some performances even show denotations of anti-Christian tendencies, such as a variety of cultic, magical (satanic) rituals. From the perspective of traditional theology, these spiritual practices could be potentially dangerous (!). Other performances might come close to performative prayer that is not harmful to anybody and even brings Good into the world. Each time I'm thinking about such things, some of the perfor-



Filip Gorazd Martinek, photo by Richard Ferčík

mances by prof. Tomáš Ruller come to mind, performances where the “content” of the performative act is spreading in the temporality of the flow, pointing to the implicit content of Christian spiritual experiences, such as devotion to God and trust in the actuality that is floating through the whole performative act, or more precisely, the performer himself is being carried by the actuality as he surrenders to its flow. However, I am afraid such occurrences are relatively rare in the Czech (or Czechoslovak) scene. In most cases, performance points us towards spectacular experiences, and Christian spirituality goes unnoticed.

In a sense, performance can also be perceived as a service, a Mass, Divine Liturgy, the service of God. The course of the service may be affected by the liturgical order, the gesticulation of the liturgist or clergyman, and the responsory character as a mirror of the gathered community. Aside from that, a spiritual performance is happening there, not only a materially visible one, often based on ordinances and ritual practices that can be impenetrable to contemporary humans (although it is a part of the tradition dating back to the Apostolic times).

During the service, the gathered community participates in the Eternal Heavenly Liturgy where all the angels, near and far from the Throne of God, celebrate the unflagging Eternal Liturgy, approaching non-temporarily. The gathered community participates in a timeless strain of beauty in eternity that is also personally eminent! It is not a matter of participating in something non-personal, as some non-personal energy. It is about participating in something that is purely Divine (and, thus, personal) – as well as for the community of angelic choirs that “come” towards us on earth – such that the liturgy performatively permeates and, like an icon, opens a way into the divine realm! For that, glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.