

this religious setting of reciprocal salutation, the feeling of God's nearness is intensified.

Both the greeting and the reply are ancient, their origins hid in pre-Christian times. In the Book of Ruth (2:4) Booz greets his reapers with *Dominus vobiscum*. The salutation was thus a part of everyday life. It is met with several times in Holy Scripture.<sup>24</sup> The reply of the reapers to Booz's greeting was: *Benedicat tibi Dominus*. We employ in its place a phrase which means almost the same thing: *Et cum spiritu tuo*, a formula which betrays its Hebrew origin and has many parallels in St. Paul.<sup>25</sup> We render its full meaning by saying simply, "And with you too."<sup>26</sup>

Since the greeting is Old Testament, the *Dominus* originally meant merely God: God be with you. But there is no difficulty about referring the indeterminate *Dominus* to Christ, and this is more consonant with Christian worship. Take it in the sense of Christ's own promise (the wording is reminiscent anyway): "*Ecce ego vobiscum sum*" (Matt. 28:20), or that other assurance whose conditions are certainly fulfilled in the liturgical gathering: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Actually this is the sense in which the *Dominus vobiscum* is usually interpreted in modern times.<sup>27</sup> But it

<sup>24</sup> Luke 1: 28; cf. Judg. 6: 12; 2 Chron. 15: 2; 2 Thess. 3: 16.

<sup>25</sup> 2 Tim. 4: 22 (Vulg.): *Dominus (J. Chr.) cum spiritu tuo*; cf. Philem. 25; Gal. 6: 18; also Phil. 4:23.

<sup>26</sup> This is a Semitism: *Spiritus tuus = your person = you*.

Still it is to be remarked that even Chrysostom, *In II. Tim. hom.*, 10, 3 (PG, LXII, 659 f.) had already referred "thy spirit" to the indwelling Holy Spirit. In fact, in his first Whitsun sermon, n. 4 (PG, L, 458 f.) he sees in the word "spirit" in this counter-greeting an allusion to the fact that the bishop performs the sacrifice in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the reason the *Dominus vobiscum* was even at an early age restricted to those endowed with major orders, bishops, priests and deacons, and not given to subdeacons who were numbered among the higher orders only since the 13th century; cf. Eisenhofer, I, 188 f.

<sup>27</sup> Gavanti explains the altar-kiss that precedes in this sense: *osculatur altare sacerdos salutaturus populum quasi qui accipiat pacem a Christo per altare ut supra significato, ut eandem det populo*. Gavanti-Merati, *Thesaurus*, II, 5, 1 (I,

226). He is followed by many later commentators; see, e.g., Gühr, 456, note 14.

It is quite probable that this was the very reason for the introduction, as early as the 13th century, of the custom of kissing the altar each time the people were greeted. At any rate it was about this time that the analagous kiss of the altar, the one preceding the kiss of peace, was taken in this sense, so much, in fact, that often it was not the altar but the sacred Host that received the kiss, so that the peace was drawn from Christ in all reality.

The reference to Christ is employed in a different way in the recent edition of the *Rituale Rom.* (IX, 5, 5) where the *Dominus vobiscum* is omitted between the *Panem de coelo* and the oration that precede the eucharistic benediction. (This had already been ordered by a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, June 16, 1663; Gardellini, *Decreta*, n. 2223, 7); the reason that seems to have prevailed was this, that the desire that God might be with his people finds its expression in the eucharistic blessing itself; so Gatterer, *Praxis celebrandi*, 164. However, this principle was not carried through in all instances; cf. *Rituale Rom.* IV, 4, 24-26.