

*To John, Bishop of Syracuse.*

Gregory to John, etc.

One coming from Sicily has told me that some friends of his, whether Greeks or Latins I know not, as though moved by zeal for the holy Roman Church, murmur about my arrangements [i.e. of divine service], saying, How can he be arranging so as to keep the Constantinopolitan Church in check, when in all respects he follows her usage? And, when I said to him, What usages of hers do we follow? He replied; you have caused Alleluia to be said at mass out of the season of Pentecost ; you have made appointment for the subdeacons to proceed disrobed , and for Kyrie Eleison to be said, and for the Lord's Prayer to be said immediately after the canon. To him I replied, that in none of these things have we followed another Church.

For, as to our custom here of saying the Alleluia, it is said to be derived from the Church of Jerusalem by the tradition of the blessed Jerome in the time of Pope Damasus of blessed memory; and accordingly in this matter we have rather curtailed the former usage which had been handed down to us here from the Greeks.

Further, as to my having caused the subdeacons to proceed disrobed, this was the ancient usage of the Church. But it pleased one of our pontiffs, I know not which, to order them to proceed in linen tunics. For have your Churches in any respect received their tradition from the Greeks? Whence, then, have they at the present day the custom of the subdeacons proceeding in linen tunics, except that they have received it from their mother, the Roman Church?

Further, we neither have said nor now say the Kyrie Eleison, as it is said by the Greeks: for among the Greeks all say it together; but with us it is said by the clerks, and responded to by the people; and as often as it is said, *Christe Eleison* is said also, which is not said at all among the Greeks. Further, in daily masses we suppress some things that are usually said, and say only *Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison*, so as to devote ourselves a little longer to these words of deprecation. But the Lord's prayer (*orationem Dominicam*) we say immediately after the prayer (*mox post preces*) for this reason, that it was the custom of the apostles to consecrate the host of oblation to (*ad*) that same prayer only. And it seemed to me very unsuitable that we should say over the oblation a prayer which a scholastic had composed, and should not say the very prayer which our Redeemer composed over His body and blood . But also the Lord's Prayer among the Greeks is said by all the people, but with us by the priest alone. Wherein, then, have we followed the usages of the Greeks, in that we have either amended our own old ones or appointed new and profitable ones, in which, however, we are not shown to be imitating others? Wherefore, let your Charity, when an occasion presents itself, proceed to the Church of Catania; or in the Church of Syracuse teach those

who you believe or understand may possibly be murmuring with respect to this matter, holding a conference there, as though for a different purpose, and so desist not from instructing them. For as to what they say about the Church of Constantinople, who can doubt that it is subject to the Apostolic See, as both the most pious lord the emperor and our brother the bishop of that city continually acknowledge? Yet, if this or any other Church has anything that is good, I am prepared in what is good to imitate even my inferiors, while prohibiting them from things unlawful. For he is foolish who thinks himself first in such a way as to scorn to learn whatever good things he may see.