attics, storage buildings, even jails were used for their services. What is the explanation for this radical change from a knowing, active participation and involvement of the worshipers to the silent spectatorship you have here witnessed?

Arianism

If you suspected a deep-seated, historical, maybe even doctrinal explanation, you're right! The rise of the teaching of Arius, 256–336 A.D., provides just such an explanation. It was the conviction and teaching of Arius that Christ was a created being, subordinate to the Father. Although the Council of Nicaea, 325, condemned this teaching as heretical by declaring that Christ is “. . . begotten, not made, one in being with the Father,” that proclamation not only did not put an end to the controversy, it actually fanned its flames. By the time of the Synod of Toledo, 589, which effected a reconciliation between the “Arians” and the “Catholics,” more than half of Christendom had adopted Arian teachings.

This included Rome and the Italian Peninsula and also what is now Spain, France, and Great Britain, plus North Africa. Arianism was a vital element in Christian history and it remains so even today, at least through its influence on devotional and liturgical practice.

Yet, it was actually the reaction to Arianism that left its mark on the liturgy. Since Arianism denied the divinity of Christ, the church’s response was an emphasis, indeed, an over-emphasis, on this divinity. This involved a downgrading, if not an implicit denial, of his humanity. Things got out of focus. Regard Christ too one-sidedly as God, and the next step is to consider that he came on earth primarily to be worshiped, rather than to lead us as our brother in worship of the Father. Christ as God is indeed worshipable, adore-able, yet it is as Redeemer that he is most obviously with us: “I stand in the midst of you as one who serves.” (Luke 22:27) This had been his stance in the liturgy; Christians pray “through Christ our Lord.” The Father is worshiped “with, in, and through” Christ. Yet, Christ the Priest gave way to Christ the “Consecrator.”

Godfrey Dieckmann must be quoted in this context:

I believe that this word [Consecrator] is critical. Christ is viewed primarily as God, the divine Consecrator who effects the holy Sacrifice through His ministers, the priests. The faithful felt themselves faced by infinitely awful reality—the stupendous fact that God immolates Himself for man. In a word, holy Mass is no longer understood as a common action of the people of God, with and through their priests, with and through the Church, with and through their High Priest, the Man–God, Christ—but a service at which God becomes present in their midst, through the ministry of His priests. The Mass is the action of God. Christ is regarded not so much our High Priest as the divine consecrator.

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2 Ibid., p. 469.