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**Public Lecture**

**BENEDICT XVI AND THE LITURGY:  
VISION, TEACHING, ACTION**

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In the dark years leading up to the Second World War, a German boy discovered the wondrous world of Catholic liturgy. Worshipping with his family in a Bavarian parish influenced by the Liturgical Movement, carefully following his people's missal,<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger is now Pope Benedict XVI.

In his autobiography, *Milestones, Memoirs 1927-1977*, he expressed his life-long love of the liturgy. "Naturally the child I then was did not grasp every aspect of this, but I started down the road of the liturgy, and this became a continuous process of growth into a grand reality transcending all particular individuals and generations, a reality that became an occasion for me of ever-new amazement and discovery. The incredible reality of the Catholic liturgy has accompanied me through all phases of life, and so I shall have to speak of it time and again."<sup>2</sup>

## **1. HIS VISION**

### **The Hermeneutic of Continuity**

His life story helps us see why, both as cardinal and Pope, his vision of worship has been guided by the same principle that informs his theology within the *ressourcement* school of thought - the *hermeneutic of continuity*. The word "hermeneutic" means a way of interpreting something. The hermeneutic of continuity means that we should interpret the Second Vatican Council as part of the continuous growth of the living tradition of the Church, that is, only in continuity with all other Councils, not as a sharp break with the past. He thus rejects the distinction between "pre-conciliar" and "post-conciliar" Catholicism.

Cardinal Ratzinger applied this principle to the Sacred Liturgy. The liturgical reform authorised by the Council is to be understood and implemented in continuity with the preceding and continuing liturgical tradition. By contrast, a *hermeneutic of discontinuity (or rupture)* interprets the Second Vatican Council as a radical break with the past - essential for a true renewal and modernisation of the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones, Memoirs 1927-1977*, Ignatius Press, 1999, pp. 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20,.

Theologians who accepted and promoted discontinuity and modernity were friends from whom he parted company not long after the Council.<sup>3</sup>

Applied to the liturgy, the hermeneutic of discontinuity means eliminating whatever might impede renewal, hence: the ruthless renovation of churches, removal of altars and images, banning Latin, perpetuating last century's modern art and architecture, paraphrased translations, popular or secular forms of music, experimentation. An ongoing revolution is implicit in this view, which is why some liturgists call for never ending changes and adaptations.

## Organic Development

Cardinal Ratzinger's critique of liturgical discontinuity rested on the conviction that ***authentic liturgical development is always organic***. This was favoured by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.<sup>4</sup> But changes that followed the Council were not always organic. As he bluntly put it, organic growth was replaced, "...as in a manufacturing process, with a fabrication, an on the spot banal product."<sup>5</sup> Change in liturgy should not be concocted by committees or individuals or produced by experiments. That would interfere in the foundation of liturgical continuity - that ***liturgy is given to us by God***, through the Church. Yet he is frank about past problems, comparing the liturgy to an endangered fresco preserved by whitewash, which was stripped away, only to be "endangered by climatic conditions as well as by various restorations and reconstructions".<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, while it develops, the liturgy is a treasure handed on to us, entrusted to us by the Church. By sharp contrast, the hermeneutic of discontinuity sees liturgy as *our* creation, what "we do", or as we hear today, what we do when "we gather". However, it is God who gathers us, just as He gathered the Hebrew people by calling them out of Egypt to worship Him in the wilderness as He prescribed and to receive the Law for life.<sup>7</sup> At the Last Supper Christ would prescribe what those assembled by God are to do when he gave his command: "do this in memory of me".

## God, Cosmos and Liturgy

Writing and speaking with a love of the liturgy, Cardinal Ratzinger expounded a **cosmological vision of worship**. The liturgy of the Church, is not just the product of human cultures. Rather, it intersects time and space, history and the cosmos, as

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<sup>3</sup> Explained lucidly in Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith, The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford University Press, 2008, Chapter 1, "Contemporary Theological Circles".

<sup>4</sup> See, Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 23.

<sup>5</sup> In a lecture in praise of Klaus Gamber; quotation translated by Tracey Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 142, and see p.195, note 83.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2000, Preface, pp. 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> See, *Ibid.*, Part 1. chapter 1, "Liturgy and Life", pp. 15-19.

creation is healed through the redeeming love of Christ.<sup>8</sup> His saving Paschal Mystery is celebrated by, but never separated from, his Body the Church, worshipping in time and in eternity.

However, for him, liturgy is not some “other worldly” activity. *Liturgy is always incarnational*, grounded in our concrete material world where the Logos became flesh.<sup>9</sup> He says: “The body has a place within the divine worship of the Word made flesh, and it is expressed liturgically in a certain discipline of the body, in gestures that have developed out of the liturgy’s inner demands and that make the essence of the liturgy, as it were bodily visible.”<sup>10</sup>

### **The Worshipping Community**

In the light of a hermeneutic of continuity, organic growth and his cosmological/incarnational vision, he scrutinized the way communities worship today. *When the liturgical community turns in on itself, then it ends up worships itself.* While self-centric worship is supposed to build up community, in practice it undermines community. “Only when the sacrament retains its unconditional character and its absolute priority over all communal purposes and all spiritually edifying intentions does it build community and edify humans.”<sup>11</sup>

In this context we also should interpret his critique of allowing communities and cultures to reshape liturgy, hence *his rejection of radical inculturation*. He discussed this problem in a perceptive study of the early history of liturgical music.<sup>12</sup> He rejected dancing during the liturgy especially in a Western context, when the people often applaud after the dancing, as I have observed.<sup>13</sup> He pointed out that, in the African context, dancing in Ethiopia and in the Zairean rites, is in fact a ritual procession.<sup>14</sup> His papal teaching would be more open on the question of inculturation, but still with certain wise cautions.

### **Beauty**

As cardinal and later as Pope, he insists that *the worship of God in all its dimensions should be beautiful*. Catholic worship should reflect the cosmic order and harmony of the divine Logos, the beauty of God. St Augustine’s understanding of God as beautiful is a major influence. But, as we can see, one marked feature of the hermeneutic of discontinuity or rupture is a tendency towards ugliness, or at least promoting a modernist aesthetic, that is often dull, cold or minimalist.

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<sup>8</sup> See, *Ibid.*, Part 1, chapter 2, “Liturgy – Cosmos – History”.

<sup>9</sup> See, *Ibid.*, Part. 4, chapter 2, “The Body and the Liturgy”.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 176, 177.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, Crossroad, New York, 1996, p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> See *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op , cit, pp. 143-148.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 199,

This emphasis on beauty applies especially to music. At home, music was part of his daily life. His brother Msgr. Georg Ratzinger became Director of the finest boys' choir in Germany at Regensburg cathedral, the "Ratisbon Sparrows". His emphasis on truly liturgical music and the place of fine art is best understood within this broader perspective of divine beauty. *Liturgical music should never be "utility music"*, that is, music used to sustain worship or to function as a teaching device. The music of the Church is the divine praise of the Logos in the cosmos, therefore never to be left to subjectivist fashions or whims.<sup>15</sup> Music helps us see that the strong theme of beauty in his writing on liturgy was not mere aestheticism, rather beauty understood as a revelation of the divine Logos. Singing, human word and voice, always should take priority over instrumental music.<sup>16</sup>

### **Continuity, Tradition and Modernity**

While criticising imprudent liturgical changes and bad taste, Cardinal Ratzinger made it clear that *he accepted the post-conciliar liturgical reforms*. At the same time, he never concealed *his abiding love for the venerable pre-conciliar liturgy*, the *Missale Romanum* of Blessed. John XXIII, 1962. This was not nostalgia for majestic celebrations of the pre-conciliar liturgy in Bavaria, rather a view informed by the hermeneutic of continuity. As cardinal he did not hesitate to associate himself with those who, often by making many sacrifices, worked hard to maintain and promote the pre-conciliar rite.<sup>17</sup>

In his writings we detect *an underlying critique of modernity*, understood as the driving force in the mythology of progress that emerged within the Enlightenment and triumphed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with all the dramatic ambiguities and tragedies of that ideological age.<sup>18</sup> This is not merely nostalgia for the past, nor is it reactionary, for he has no problem with *good* modern art and music.

As a theologian, he developed a rich theology of liturgy, drawn from the sources of Revelation: Scripture and Tradition. In particular, he brought forth a deeper understanding of the Eucharist as the Lord's Sacrifice, correcting an over-emphasis on the meal dimension of the Eucharist, one fruit of the Liturgical Movement that some have taken too far after Vatican II.<sup>19</sup> While he integrates the sacrificial dimension and the meal dimension of the Mass, *he rejects the meal as the paradigm for the Eucharistic liturgy*. The term "meal" in German and English cannot convey the depth of the liturgical action and its Passover roots.<sup>20</sup> Nor does he accept "sacrificial meal" – which still puts the meal first. He favours a deeper understanding of the priority of

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<sup>15</sup> See, *Ibid.*, Part 3, chapter 2, "Music and Liturgy".

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, cf. p. 149.

<sup>17</sup> Evident in his association with the Abbeys of Fongombault and Le Barroux, the Fraternity of St Peter and CIEL, Centre International d'Etudes Liturgiques.

<sup>18</sup> For a provocative interpretation of the Holy Father's vision of liturgy, see, Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith, The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, op. cit., Chapter 7, "Liturgy Since Vatican II".

<sup>19</sup> For the pre-conciliar roots of this exaggeration, see, for example, The Community of Saint-Severin, *The Mass, Christians Around the Altar*, Fides, Chicago, 1958, pp. 18-19. Even noting qualifications, here the meal is proposed as the paradigm for the Mass.

<sup>20</sup> Cf., Joseph Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1980. p. 51.

Sacrifice through a Hebrew concept of sacrifice, internalised in the self-immolation of Christ crucified and risen.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. HIS TEACHING

Benedict XVI has gradually and gently entered the field of liturgy, where he happens to be more highly skilled than any Pontiff in recent centuries. Therefore, when we come to his teachings as Pope, it is useful to read various books and addresses that marked his life as a cardinal.<sup>22</sup> Otherwise it is difficult to appreciate the “New Liturgical Movement” he has initiated. His previous writings do not allow us to forget that this wise liturgist begins with doctrine and theology, particularly Christology. Jesus Christ is inseparable from the Church, his worshipping Body, as the Council Fathers taught in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.<sup>23</sup>

### (a) *Encyclical Letter: Deus Caritas Est*

The Holy Father’s first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, on love, includes important, but indirect, allusions to liturgy by way of the Eucharist. “‘Worship’ itself, Eucharistic communion, includes a reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented”<sup>24</sup> This theme anticipates what he will later develop in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, that the Eucharist has absolute priority over liturgical actions and rites. In *Deus Caritas Est* he also affirms that we cannot separate the three great dimensions of the Church’s life and mission: “proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma*, *maryria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*) and exercising the ministry of the Church (*diakonia*)”.<sup>25</sup> These are inseparable, for Christian charity is not welfare.

### (b) *Apostolic Exhortation, Sacramentum Caritatis*

Although he did not live to see it, the Synod on the Eucharist of 2005 marked the culmination of the Eucharistic project of the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II. That project crowned the last years of his pontificate. The newly elected Pope Benedict saw the role of the Synod and his response to it as *a work in continuity with that of a beloved predecessor, with whom he had been closely associated*. The liturgical magisterium of the two Popes is *one project* in this Eucharistic perspective.

One overriding message of his response to the Synod, the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, is that ***the Eucharist as Sacrifice and Sacrament takes absolute priority over the liturgy***, at least as we understand “liturgy” in the West, that is, through a rather Cartesian distinction between the visible “externals” (rite, rituals, ceremonies, music, symbols, etc.) and the inner spirit of worship. Nevertheless, his only explicit reference to the hermeneutic of continuity is discretely included in a footnote to section 3 of the exhortation.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* pp. 51-60.

<sup>22</sup> See below, Appendix 1: *Cardinal Ratzinger’s Key Works on the Liturgy*.

<sup>23</sup> Cf., *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7 and 8.

<sup>24</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

Having first looked closely at the Eucharistic Mystery in the opening chapters of *Sacramentum Caritatis*, the Holy Father focuses the “liturgical” dimension less around theory and more around liturgical actions. He takes up the *ars celebrandi*, an expression favoured at the Synod, the “art of celebrating”.<sup>27</sup> This applies first and foremost to the celebrant of the Eucharist..

The Holy Father introduces the paragraphs on the *ars celebrandi* with an emphasis on ***the beauty of the liturgy***.<sup>28</sup> In divine worship we see the glory that the apostles beheld in Jesus Christ. “Beauty, then is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation.”<sup>29</sup>

He focuses on the role of the bishop as liturgist: “The bishop, celebrant *par excellence*”, the one whose example, particularly in his cathedral, sets the tone and standard for the liturgies of a particular Church.<sup>30</sup> He goes on to call for ***respect for the rites handed to us by the Church***. That theme was already evident in his writings as cardinal, liturgy as “given”, a gift of God, a gift of the Church. Art is meant to be at the service of worship, summed up in a nutshell sentence: “Everything related to the Eucharist should be marked by beauty.”<sup>31</sup> He also offers some guidance on that dimension dear to his heart, good sacred music, especially song.<sup>32</sup>

The question of the deeper meaning of “active participation” is also dealt with in *Sacramentum Caritatis*. In this context he introduced a positive but cautious paragraph on ***inculturation***, which always requires cooperation between Episcopal Conferences and the Holy See.<sup>33</sup> He goes on to point out that active participation goes beyond liturgical activities to participation in the life of the Church,<sup>34</sup> anticipating the latter part of the exhortation on the Eucharist which expounds the Church’s mission of justice and charity.

Eucharistic adoration was emphasised at the Synod, and the Holy Father’s response in *Sacramentum Caritatis* begins with a useful paragraph on ***the liturgical nature of adoration***, that is, adoration is inseparable from Eucharistic celebration.<sup>35</sup> Echoing an essay recalling his memories of Corpus Christi in Bavaria,<sup>36</sup> he praises the various forms of Eucharistic adoration,<sup>37</sup> then he emphasises the need for a prominent location for the tabernacle.<sup>38</sup> Such magisterial teachings in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, even when

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<sup>26</sup> See Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 3, note. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ibid., 38-42

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ibid., 35.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. loc. cit.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ibid., 39.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ibid., 42.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ibid., 54

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ibid., 66.

<sup>36</sup> See, *Feast of Faith*, op. cit., “What Corpus Christi Means to Me: Three Meditations”, pp.127-137.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ibid, 67-68.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ibid, 69.

they are couched in terms of exhortation and counsel, should challenge us in Australia today.

The papal exhortation implicitly raises a widespread problem. Once the Eucharist loses its absolute priority, the liturgy may be reduced to a method of teaching people. While there is a teaching dimension of worship, above all in the Liturgy of the Word, ***Catholic liturgy is not a prolonged sermon***. As cardinal, he criticised an emphasis on making worship “edifying”. As Pope, he teaches us that ***the Mass is primarily worship***, focused on the celebration of the Eucharist, both Sacrifice and Sacred Banquet. This is axiomatic in the process of maintaining or restoring continuity, for every liturgical abuse is a moment of rupture.

### ***(c) The Motu Proprio, Summorum Pontificum***

A Motu Proprio is a personal teaching of the Roman Pontiff, exercising his supreme, universal and immediate jurisdiction. This form of Petrine teaching is directed at a specific need perceived by the Supreme Pastor. The publication in July 2007 of the Apostolic Letter, *motu proprio data, Summorum Pontificum*, represents the Holy Father’s clearest affirmation of the hermeneutic of continuity as against a hermeneutic of discontinuity.

However, before you study the Motu Proprio, you should read the Holy Father’s accompanying Letter to Bishops.<sup>39</sup> Here he candidly spells out his intentions in a persuasive pastoral way. He makes it clear that he is working in continuity with the provisions made by Pope John Paul II in 1984<sup>40</sup> and 1988<sup>41</sup>. Again we have a common project of two Pontiffs, now taken to another stage by “clearer juridical regulations”.

An important canonical interpretation underlies the Motu Proprio. In his covering Letter, the Holy Father affirms that, contrary to widespread opinion, ***the usus antiquior was never formally abrogated***.<sup>42</sup> The debate on whether the old rite had been abrogated centred around Pope Paul’s mildly worded directive in the Latin text of the Apostolic Constitution promulgating the *Missale Romanum* of 1970.<sup>43</sup> Now that issue is settled. ***The traditional Mass was never abolished***. What then is its true status?

We find the answer in the Motu Proprio which established the pre-conciliar liturgy, the *Missale Romanum* of Blessed John XXIII, as the “extraordinary” form of the Roman Rite, parallel to the “ordinary” form, the *Missale Romanum* of Pope Paul VI.

<sup>39</sup> Letter of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Bishops on the Occasion of the Publication of the Apostolic letter “Motu Proprio Data” *Summorum Pontificum* on the Use of the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970.

<sup>40</sup> See, Congregation for Divine Worship, Letter to Bishops, *Quattuor Abhunc Annos*, October 3 1984, the indult allowing celebrations of the pre-conciliar rite under conditions.

<sup>41</sup> See, John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Motu Proprio data, Ecclesia Dei Afflicta*, July 2 1988 recognising the legitimate aspirations of those attached to the pre-conciliar liturgy and giving wider scope for its celebration.

<sup>42</sup> The noted Florentine Canonist, Count Neri Capponi, had stoutly maintained this position, together with many people attached to the pre-conciliar rite.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution, *Missale Romanum*, April 3, 1969.

These are “two expressions of the Church’s Lex orandi” and “two usages of the one Roman Rite”.<sup>44</sup> A distinction is made between the “ordinary” form, the Mass we use in the missal of 1970, and the “extraordinary” form, the pre-conciliar rite. This play on words, “ordinary” and “extraordinary” seems preferable to speaking of the “Novus Ordo” and the “usus antiquior”, because it presents two ways of celebrating the one Mass of the Roman Rite.

There follow the juridical Articles. Reading these, some bishops feel they have lost authority in this area, assurances of the Pope notwithstanding. But those bishops may presume they enjoy an authority over divine worship they never really had, particularly once we recognise that providentially the pre-conciliar rite was never formally abrogated. Moreover, in the regulation of the liturgy there is nothing novel here. We are all bound by the norms of the Rites, Western or Eastern, the Church entrusts to us. The Pope points out that bishops are “moderators” of the liturgy, hence not free to impede what some justly claim. If, within the parameters of the Articles of the Motu Proprio, groups of the lay faithful seek the extraordinary form, then bishops should not refuse or hinder them. The Holy Father appeals to bishops: “Let us generously open our hearts and make room for everything that the faith allows.”

In his Letter to Bishops, he also undercuts the claim that only an older generation seeks the extraordinary form. I celebrated Solemn Mass in this form for young pilgrims at World Youth Day, as did two other bishops on the three days set aside for catechesis. These young people came to Sydney as members of the international association “Iuventutem”. Moreover, in visiting the parish set aside for the extraordinary rite in Melbourne, in my Episcopal Region, I see young families, young servers and a youthful choir singing plainsong and polyphony. Indeed, in this area we need to read “the signs of the times”, even if that brings with it some surprises.

The covering Letter to Bishops also raise the question of how to implement the Motu Proprio. At this stage, some desired effects are emerging, but the import of *Summorum Pontificum* has not been assimilated or understood. Some want to limit the celebration of the extraordinary form or impede bishops who wish to establish personal parishes for the rite. Unfortunately, in some dioceses the lay faithful complain that requests to the Ordinary are rejected.

To make the Motu Proprio work, I would suggest that all senior seminarians should be taught how to celebrate both forms of the Mass. That would presuppose teaching Latin in our seminaries. I would hope that priests of the future might be able to celebrate both forms of our Rite with the ease with which we change the gears in a car.

In his Letter to Bishops the Holy Father signals that a new edition of the 1962 Missal of Blessed John XXIII may appear, incorporating not only new saints days but also new prefaces from the Missal of Pope Paul VI.<sup>45</sup> Resolving details, as well as issues, has been left primarily to the Ecclesia Dei Commission which issued a useful instruction *Universae Ecclesiae* on April 30, 2011. But, as this project developes, we

<sup>44</sup> Apostolic Letter, *Summorum Pontificum*, of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, given *motu proprio*, July 7 2007, Article 1.

<sup>45</sup> Some new prefaces were already included the 1962 edition of the *Missale Romanum*, thus correcting one of the weaker dimensions of the “Tridentine” rite.

may hope that a kind of interaction between the two forms of our rite may enrich both of them.

**(d) Encyclical Letter: *Spe Salvi***

In the Holy Father's magnificent second Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi* there is one reference to liturgy.<sup>46</sup> This demonstrates how spirituality animates his liturgical teaching. He writes of prayer in the context of hope, citing the heroic example of Cardinal Tuan, imprisoned for years in Vietnam. Yet personal prayer needs the great Prayer of the liturgy.

**(e) Allocution**

While I have covered the main sources, there are other references to the Sacred Liturgy in various papal allocutions across the first three years of the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI. For example, concluding his homily at the Mass of the conferring the Pallium on June 29 2008, the Pope reminded bishops that they are liturgists.<sup>47</sup> Another level of his teaching on liturgy emerges when the Pope speaks in a less formal way, for example during dialogues with priests. As an Auditor at the 2005 Synod on the Eucharist, I also recall his brilliant intervention on the vexed question of "meal or sacrifice."

**(f) Legislative Acts Authorised by Pope Benedict XVI**

To the Holy Father's teachings, we may add four legislative acts of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments that directly implement his policies. He corrects specific mistakes and errors, while at the same time opening the way for some organic developments.

- In 2006, the Congregation conveyed the Pope's wish to the American Bishops that, observing Article 279 of the revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, only a priest, deacon or instituted acolyte may purify sacred vessels after Communion.
- In that same year the Congregation decreed that "Pro multis" in the words of consecration of the wine is to be translated literally "for many", and not "for all", no matter what biblical experts may suggest. This settles a painful and unnecessary dispute and is embodied in the 2010 ICEL English translation of the *Roman Missal*.
- In the distinctive liturgies celebrated by the Neo-Catechumenal Way, a few variations such as the sign of peace before the offertory may be permitted, but more radical practices such as receiving Communion seated are forbidden.
- In a directive of June 29 2008, the Hebrew Sacred Name of God (Tetragrammaton, YHWH) is no longer to appear in any hymns, songs or prayers. This Name is never spoken or written in full by Jews, but the reason given in the document is that using this word has never been part of Catholic

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Spe Salvi*, 34.

<sup>47</sup> See below, note. 60.

tradition. Nevertheless it is also an excellent step in the area of inter-Faith relations.

- In the Apostolic Constitution, *Anglicanorum Coetibus* III, November 4, 2009, establishing Personal Ordinariates for former Anglicans, he authorized a variation of the Roman Rite, “liturgical books proper to the Anglican tradition”. A Vatican Commission, *Anglicanae Traditiones*, of which I am a member, is currently preparing these rites for the Ordinariates.
- He has opened a discussion on the appropriate location for the Sign of Peace during Mass, that is, whether it should be moved from the classical Roman position, before Communion, to a moment before the Offertory when the gifts are brought to the altar, as in the Ambrosian Rite of Milan.
- After widespread consultation he has authorised three new Latin forms of the Dismissal at the end of Mass, which appear in the new ICEL English translation, 2010.
- The Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei* issued an instruction *Universae Ecclesiae* on April 30, 2011, providing precisions for the application of *Summorum Pontificum* to promote and regulate the wider celebration of the extraordinary form of the Mass.

### 3. HIS ACTION

Our Holy Father practises what he preaches. He is a reverent and prayerful celebrant. When he dedicated the new altar in St Mary’s Cathedral, Sydney, at World Youth Day, we saw a man engrossed in the Mystery of Faith, looking loving towards the Lord with the wonder of a boy who worshipped long ago in Bavaria.

#### “Turning Towards the Lord”

However, the hermeneutic of continuity is proclaimed by the actions of Pope Benedict XVI. On the Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord, 2008,<sup>48</sup> he celebrated Solemn Mass in the Sistine Chapel “facing the altar”. In some circles there were cries of surprise. People had forgotten that the first Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II at the time of his election in 1978 was celebrated facing that same altar! But, as Benedict XVI would remind those with ears to hear, this is not simply a matter of where one faces, rather of “turning towards the Lord”, a spiritual insight we might all ponder when we complain about the “loss of mystery” in the Mass.

His cosmological vision of the Eucharist explains the Pope’s appreciation for celebrating the Eucharist *ad orientem*, that is, towards the East. Led by the priest, we all turn towards the Light of the risen Lord, reigning in his cosmos and coming again in his *parousia*. As cardinal he was well aware of the cultural difficulty of appreciating this symbolism today in the secularised Western World.<sup>49</sup> But he did not even consider that ignorant expression we often hear, the priest celebrating Mass

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<sup>48</sup> Also on the Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord, 2009.

“back to the people”. As a cardinal he was not popular for putting that view. He partly challenged the most obvious and prevalent post-conciliar change, one that was also very costly, the almost universal practice of moving altars and celebrating Mass facing the people.<sup>50</sup>

However, he indicates a way to help us “turn to the Lord” whenever Mass is celebrated facing the people. This involves a simple rearrangement of the altar, what some call “Benedictine Altar”. At all papal Masses, the crucifix now stands at the centre, no longer to one side.<sup>51</sup> It is flanked by candles, of a significant size. In *Feast of Faith*<sup>52</sup> and *The Spirit of the Liturgy*<sup>53</sup> he argued that the altar is not a setting to display a man (Pope, bishop or priest). Rather, during the action of the liturgy, the altar itself should draw us around Jesus Christ crucified and risen. This also breaks down that self-centric community trend.

Having made this change in the parish where I live, I discovered that once you place the crucifix at the centre of the altar, it becomes visually “an altar”, not just a fine table adorned with some candles and flowers. His advocacy of placing the crucifix at the centre of the altar is also linked to the recovery of the pontifical altar at his Masses in St Peter’s Basilica and elsewhere, that is, using the seven candles of Roman tradition whenever the Diocesan Bishop solemnly celebrates the Eucharist

### **Kneeling to Receive the Lord**

At Corpus Christi in 2008, at the Papal Mass celebrated before the façade of St John Lateran, the communicants came to the Pope and received the Eucharist kneeling and on the tongue. That is now standard practice at papal Masses. This is the Holy Father’s concrete response, not only to a campaign by some liturgists to eliminate kneeling altogether,<sup>54</sup> but also to correct an abuse of power on the part of some priests. Lay faithful have been rebuked, even refused Communion, for presuming to kneel or not receive in the hand. By affirming the first option, the Pontiff gently corrects those who misuse their authority by taking from people the options the Church allows them.

### **“Things Old and New”**

<sup>49</sup> But in a significant section of *Feast of Faith*, pp. 139-145, he challenged even the expression celebrating Mass “facing the altar” or the claim that this was Mass “facing the tabernacle” or Holy of Holies

<sup>50</sup> But nothing can be found in the Documents of the Council concerning this change. Surprisingly this practice has been adopted illicitly by certain Eastern Rites. A corrective, by way of a beautiful and accurate explanation from the Congregation for Oriental Churches, seems to have been ignored in some quarters; see *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 1996, no 107.

<sup>51</sup> Those who imagine that the cross obscures the celebrant should go and sit where the people worship, noting that, in most churches, they look at the altar at an angle.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Feast of Faith*, op.cit., p. 145.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, pp. 83-84

<sup>54</sup> For his incisive study of the *Christian* practice of kneeling, see *The Spirit of the Liturgy* op. cit. pp. 184-194

The quality of vessels, ornaments and vestments has been a concern since the post-conciliar reforms took shape. No matter what is envisaged in official documents such as the revised *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, and the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, many vessels and vestments do not come up to standards envisaged by the Church.

In this regard, the Holy Father insists on using the best for God. But he has been criticised for bringing various vestments and vessels “out of the museum”, for example fine mitres and a noble ferula or papal crozier of Bl. Pius IX.<sup>55</sup> For those with trained eyes, is not only the old, but the best of the new that the Pope uses for worship. Again by example he teaches us. The parable of Our Lord comes to mind about the wise scholar, who like a householder, brings forth “things both old and new” from his treasury.<sup>56</sup>

### **A New Liturgical Movement**

The critics of the Holy Father’s liturgical teaching and example seem to be locked in a dated understanding of divine worship, influenced by that hermeneutic of rupture. They accuse him of “restorationism”. That kind of ideological language implies that there is something wrong with restoring good features of the liturgy that have been obscured or even lost. Moreover, their uncritical acceptance of “modernity” is scarcely consonant with social and cultural issues raised in a new Millennium or the attitudes of a new generation of fervent Catholic youth who are not captivated by the latter decades of the past century.

By teaching and example, Pope Benedict is assuring us that what some call the “reform of the reform”, even a “New Liturgical Movement”, has already begun. We await other developments, perhaps correctives to the state of music in the liturgy. But the vision, teaching and action of Pope Benedict XVI show us that, based on the Eucharistic teaching of Pope John Paul II, his great project is not only restoring order, reverence, beauty, quality and good taste, but an invitation for us all to go forward and enter more deeply into “the spirit”, hence the spirituality, of the divine gift of the liturgy of Jesus Christ in His Church.

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<sup>55</sup> Now replaced by a similar, but more convenient, ferula. Since Christmas and Epiphany liturgies 2008-2009, the beautifully restored papal throne has been in use.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Matthew 13:52.

## APPENDIX

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Key Works on the Liturgy by Benedict XVI (as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger)</i></b></p>
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Two accessible books written by the Holy Father when he was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger have been translated into English: his *Feast of Faith, Approaches to a Theology of Liturgy*<sup>57</sup> and *The Spirit of the Liturgy*.<sup>58</sup> The title of this second work was that of a book by Romano Guardini, an act of homage to this renowned pioneer and popularizer of the Liturgical Movement in Germany and beyond.<sup>59</sup>

To these I would add *A New Song for the Lord*,<sup>60</sup> together with a book on the spirituality of liturgy, specifically the rites of Lent and Easter, *Journey Towards Easter*.<sup>61</sup> This work was the retreat he gave to the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II, and the Roman Curia, in 1983. It leads us into the rich spirituality that permeates his God-centred theology of liturgy.

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<sup>57</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith, Approaches to a Theology of Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1980, translation of Josef Ratzinger, *Das Fest des Glaubens* Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln, Switzerland, 1981.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Ratzinger *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2000, translation of Josef Ratzinger, *Einführung in den Geist der Liturgie*.

<sup>59</sup> Yet he was not uncritical of Guardini, for example for regarding the meal as the paradigm of liturgy, see, *Feast of Faith*, op cit. p. 35.

<sup>60</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, Crossroad, New York, 1996.

<sup>61</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Journey Towards Easter*, St Paul Publications, 1986, translation of Josef Ratzinger, *Il Cammino Pasquale*, Editrice Ancora, Milano, 1985.