

The Future of the Roman Rite: Reading Benedict in the Light of Ratzinger

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In the preface to the first published volume of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's "opera omnia," the Pope says that "the Church's liturgy has been the central activity of my life, and it also became... the center of my theological work."¹ In this work, "I was not interested in the specific problems of liturgical study, but in the anchoring of the liturgy in the fundamental act of our faith, and therefore also its place in our entire human existence."² His deep knowledge and love of the sacred liturgy is evident from a glancing survey of his liturgical writings, all of which are capped by his comprehensive "vision of the whole,"³ *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (Ignatius, 2000).

Nevertheless, Cardinal Ratzinger did discuss specific liturgical questions on many occasions. But with his election to the papacy in 2005, his opinions on the Church's liturgical life since the Second Vatican Council have acquired considerably more weight since as Supreme Pontiff he has authority to regulate the liturgy.⁴ So far Pope Benedict has exercised his supreme authority only twice with respect to the liturgy. With his *motu proprio Summorum pontificum* of 2007, he has placed the 1962 Missal in full parity with that of 1970, designating them as, respectively, the "extraordinary" and "ordinary" forms of the one Roman Rite.⁵ The other exercise of papal authority involves

1 BENEDICT XVI, Preface to *Theologie der Liturgie* [Theology of the Liturgy], ed. Gerhard L. Müller, *Gesammelte Schriften* [Collected Writings] 11 (Freiburg: Herder, 2008). English translation available at <<http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/208933?eng=y>> (posted 29 October 2008). Although the volume on the liturgy is the eleventh in the series, it was actually the first volume to be published.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium* (4 December 1963) 22.

5 BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Summorum pontificum* (7 July 2007), art. 1: "Missale Romanum a Paulo VI promulgatum ordinaria expressio 'Legis orandi' Ecclesiae catholicae ritus Latini est. Missale autem Roma-

an alteration to the *Ordo Missae* in the ordinary form: Benedict has approved three alternatives to the dismissal *Ite, missa est*.⁶

In his apostolic exhortation on the Eucharist, *Sacramentum caritatis* of 2007 (henceforth S.Car.), Benedict expresses his magisterial vision for a proper *ars celebrandi* of the reformed liturgical rites.⁷ In that same document he notes his willingness to consider moving the sign of peace to another place in the Mass.⁸

The writings of Joseph Ratzinger and the liturgical decisions of Pope Benedict leave no doubt about the Pope's commitment to the fundamental liturgical principles of Vatican II. What are the emerging directions of the ongoing renewal of the Roman liturgy? By reading Benedict in the light of the strong opinions of Ratzinger, it seems that a large-scale juridical "reform of the reform" is not likely to take place soon. For Benedict, the first priority is renewing the "spirit" rather than the structure of the liturgy. This requires a vigorous deepening of liturgical spirituality, of an ability to be drawn by the holy rites into spiritual conversion to Christ.

I. JOSEPH RATZINGER AND SACROSANCTUM CONCILIIUM

Joseph Ratzinger had a profound love for the twentieth-century liturgical movement and its culmination in the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium* of 1963. The influences of Josef Pascher⁹ and Romano Guardini¹⁰ led the young

num a S. Pio V promulgatum et a beato Ioanne XXIII denuo editum habeatur uti extraordinaria expressio eiusdem 'Legis orandi' Ecclesiae et ob venerabilem et antiquum eius usum debito gaudeat honore. Hae duae expressiones 'legis orandi' Ecclesiae, minime vero inducent in divisionem 'legis credendi' Ecclesiae; sunt enim duo usus unici ritus Romani." *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 99 (2007) 779.

6 CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, "Reimpressio Emendata *Missalis Romani*," *Notitiae* 503-504 (July-August 2008) 367-87, here 372. The new dismissal formulae appear in *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia emendata (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2008) §144, p. 605: "Ite, ad Evangelium Domini annuntiandum," "Ite in pace, glorificando vita vestra Dominum," and "Ite in pace."

7 BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (22 February 2007) 38-42. This theme has been treated in these pages; e.g., MALCOLM RANJITH, "Towards an *Ars Celebrandi* in the Liturgy," *Antiphon* 13.1 (2009) 7-17.

8 *Sacramentum caritatis* 49, n. 150.

9 JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1997) 56-57.

10 AIDAN NICHOLS, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 2nd ed. (London: Burns & Oates/Continuum, 2007) 153, and TRACEY ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) 123.

Ratzinger, as a seminarian, to embrace the liturgical movement, with its call “to rediscover the liturgy in all its beauty, hidden wealth, and time-transcending grandeur, to see it as the animating center of the Church, the very center of Christian life.”¹¹ The essential principles of that movement are enshrined in *Sacrosanctum concilium*. As a *peritus* at the Council, Father Ratzinger greeted the liturgy constitution “with enthusiasm,”¹² seeing it as “a marvelous point of departure for this assembly of the whole Church....”¹³ Now, as pope, he frankly acknowledges the “difficulties and even occasional abuses” in the liturgical renewal begun by Vatican II but holds that these “cannot overshadow the benefits and the validity of the liturgical renewal, whose riches are yet to be fully explored” (S.Car. 3).

As a son of the liturgical movement, Ratzinger saw reform as necessary for reawakening the faithful to the splendor of the liturgy. In his preface to *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, he compared the traditional liturgy to a fresco that “had been preserved from damage” but

had been almost completely overlaid with whitewash by later generations. In the Missal from which the priest celebrated, the form of the liturgy that had grown from its earliest beginnings was still present, but, as far as the faithful were concerned, it was largely concealed beneath instructions for and forms of private prayer.¹⁴

For this reason, Ratzinger embraced the reforms called for by *Sacrosanctum concilium* because they enabled “a return to the heart of Christian worship.”¹⁵ Writing after the Council’s first session, he expressed his approval of many proposed reforms: the primacy of Sundays over saints’ days, the simplification of forms to express more clearly the essence of the faith, the revised Lectionary and the greater emphasis on the proclamation of the Word, more active participation by the

11 JOSEPH RATZINGER, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000) 7.

12 NICHOLS, *Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 55.

13 RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 57.

14 RATZINGER, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 7-8. He reiterated this point at a liturgical conference held at Fontgombault Abbey in July 2001: “We can grasp the stature of the Liturgical Movement only in the historical context of an understanding of the Liturgy which was severely lacking.” JOSEPH RATZINGER, “Assessment and Future Prospects,” in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger* [henceforth: LAQL], ed. Alcuin Reid (Farnborough UK: St Michael’s Abbey, 2003) 146.

15 NICHOLS, *Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 55.

faithful and the use of the vernacular, to name only a few.¹⁶ He has not ceased to support these reforms.¹⁷

II. THE *NOVUS ORDO MISSAE*: PRAISES AND CRITICISMS

The Missal of Paul VI sought to put into practice the Council's recommendations, but in the years following its promulgation, Ratzinger repeatedly questioned the manner in which the new missal was composed and the liturgical practice that stemmed from it. It is to be noted that he has never questioned the validity or legitimacy of that missal, nor has he second-guessed the liturgical theology of the liturgical movement or *Sacrosanctum concilium*.¹⁸ In fact, as Aidan Nichols suggests, the criticisms that Ratzinger and others have raised concerning the new missal show their continued commitment to the spirit of the liturgy that brought about the Council and their desire, forty years later, to see these goals finally realized in liturgical worship.¹⁹ For this reason, Ratzinger hoped his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* would inspire a new liturgical movement.²⁰ Yet the question of how these goals might still be realized depends on an adequate understanding of the manner in which the changes in the liturgy were made and what they signify.

Thomas Woods outlines three main criticisms that Ratzinger had concerning the Missal of Paul VI. "First, he contended that the new missal gave rise to excessive creativity in liturgical celebration, which in turn undermined the very essence of liturgy and cut Catholics off not only from their past but even from the parish down the street, where Mass was celebrated differently."²¹ As an example, Woods cites the following observation from *The Feast of Faith*: "Today we might ask: Is there a Latin Rite at all anymore? Certainly there is no awareness of it. To most people the liturgy seems to be rather something

16 NICHOLS, *Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 55.

17 On the showcasing of the essence of the faith see JOSEPH RATZINGER, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986) 84. On the primacy of Sunday see idem, *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today*, trans. Martha M. Matesich (New York: Crossroad, 1996) 59-77. On the lectionary see idem, *Feast of Faith*, 87. On the vernacular see idem, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2002) 417-18. Ratzinger has written extensively on the theme of active participation, including *Sacramentum caritatis* 52-63.

18 THOMAS E. WOODS, JR., *Sacred Then and Sacred Now: The Return of the Old Latin Mass* (Fort Collins CO: Roman Catholic Books, 2008) 4-5.

19 NICHOLS, *Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 147.

20 RATZINGER, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 8-9.

21 WOODS, *Sacred Then and Sacred Now*, 7.

for the individual congregation to arrange.”²² In several places, Ratzinger criticized this creativity;²³ but he acknowledged that its specific catalyst lies in the new missal itself, for therein

we quite often find formulae such as: *sacerdos dicit sic vel simili modo... or, Hic sacerdos potest dicere...* These formulae of the Missal in fact give official sanction to creativity; the priest feels almost obliged to change the wording.²⁴

Significantly, as pope he raised this same concern in the letter that accompanied *Summorum pontificum*, noting that “in many places celebrations were not faithful to the prescriptions of the new missal, but the latter actually was understood as authorizing or even requiring creativity, which frequently led to deformations of the liturgy which were hard to bear.”²⁵

In Woods’ summary, “A second major theme in Ratzinger’s corpus of liturgical writing is what he called *desacralization*.”²⁶ Desacralization emerged from a disproportionate emphasis on the liturgy as “a simple, human, everyday meal.... In the same way the demand emerged to do away with liturgical forms and vestments and the call to get back to the way we look in ordinary daily life.”²⁷ Much of Ratzinger’s writing on sacred music, church architecture, liturgical posture, and even active participation sought to remedy this situation. In the same manner, as pope the first issue discussed in *Sacramentum caritatis* under the section “Ars Celebrandi” is beauty (S.Car. 35), a subject that will be examined later.

Finally, “Ratzinger’s third major criticism of the liturgical reform was that whatever its virtues, the new missal, both in particular sections and in its entirety, leaves the impression of a rupture with the past, and in some ways seems contrived.”²⁸ This question whether the *novus ordo* developed organically from the *usus antiquior* lies at the heart of the assessment of the reforms. Ratzinger raised this issue

22 WOODS, *Sacred Then and Sacred Now*, 7. Cf. RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 84.

23 See RATZINGER, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 163, 168; idem, “Ten Years of the Motu Proprio *Ecclesia Dei*” in *The Latin Mass* 8 (Spring 1999) 15-18. Woods cites the latter.

24 WOODS, *Sacred Then and Sacred Now*, 9. Cf. LAQL 151.

25 BENEDICT XVI, *Letter to the Bishops that accompanies the Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* (7 July 2007).

26 WOODS, *Sacred Then and Sacred Now*, 9; emphasis in original.

27 JOSEPH RATZINGER, *God Is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life*, eds Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2003) 57.

28 WOODS, *Sacred Then and Sacred Now*, 11.

whenever he discussed liturgical rites, and several of his comments are now well known. Nevertheless, it is important to look at the issue of organic development in more detail, for it will shed more light on Benedict's current and future liturgical vision.

Woods cites *The Feast of Faith* as illustrative: "Even the official new books, which are excellent in many ways, occasionally show far too many signs of being drawn up by academics and reinforce the notion that a liturgical book can be 'made' like any other book."²⁹ The new books produced by the *Consilium* charged with implementing *Sacrosanctum concilium* "happened far too quickly and abruptly, with the result that many of the faithful could not see the inner continuity with what had gone before."³⁰ Implicitly, Ratzinger here affirmed continuity between the two missals, despite their visual disparity owing to the hasty production of the new books and the de facto suppression of the old. Nevertheless, two statements in particular seriously question the legitimacy of the development of the new books. First, in his preface to the French edition of Msgr Klaus Gamber's *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*,³¹ Ratzinger wrote:

What happened after the Council was something else entirely: in the place of liturgy as the fruit of organic development came fabricated liturgy. We abandoned the organic, living process of growth and development over centuries, and replaced it – as in a manufactured process – with a fabrication, a banal on-the-spot product.³²

Second, in *The Feast of Faith*, he stated that

the way in which the renewed Missal was presented is open to much criticism.... Yet, with all its advantages, the new Missal was published as if it were a work put together by professors, not a phase in a continual growth process. Such a thing never happened before. It is absolutely contrary to the laws of liturgical growth, and it has resulted in the nonsensical notion that Trent and Pius V had "produced" a Missal four hundred years ago. The Catholic liturgy was thus reduced to the level of a mere product of modern times.... [L]iturgy cannot be the result of Church regulation, let

29 WOODS, *Sacred Then and Sacred Now*, 11. Cf. RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 85; idem, *Milestones*, 148.

30 RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 84.

31 KLAUS GAMBER, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background*, trans. Klaus D. Grimm (Fort Collins CO: Roman Catholic Books, 1993).

32 Ratzinger's preface is printed in English translation on the back cover of GAMBER, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy*.

alone professional erudition, but, to be true to itself, must be the fruit of the Church's life and vitality.³³

One might easily think Ratzinger had entirely rejected the new Mass but for this clarification:

Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me add that as far as its content is concerned (apart from a few criticisms), I am very grateful for the new Missal, for the way it has enriched the treasury of prayers and prefaces, for the new eucharistic prayers and the increased number of texts for use on weekdays, etc., quite apart from the availability of the vernacular. But I do regard it as unfortunate that we have been presented with the idea of a new book rather than with that of continuity within a single liturgical history.³⁴

Ratzinger's ultimate criticism, then, is not the *novus ordo* itself but the unprecedented manner and speed of its appearance. For him,

liturgy goes beyond the realm of what can be made and manipulated; it introduces us to the realm of given, living reality, which communicates itself to us. That is why, at all times and in all religions, the fundamental law of liturgy has been the law of organic growth within the universality of the common tradition.³⁵

Even with these reservations, in *Sacramentum caritatis* Benedict affirmed the legitimacy of the Missal of Paul VI and the innovations found therein, such as the allowance for introductory comments (45), the presentation of the gifts (47), the new eucharistic prayers (48), and the congregational sharing of the sign of peace (49). Moreover, he stated in his explanatory letter accompanying *Summorum pontificum* that he found "no contradiction between the two editions of the Roman Missal. In the history of the liturgy there is growth and progress but no rupture."³⁶

III. *SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM*: THE KEY TO CONTINUITY

The status of the 1962 Missal after the promulgation of the *novus ordo* was another facet of Ratzinger's criticisms of the liturgical reforms. He recalled in *Milestones*, "I was dismayed by the prohibition of the old missal, since nothing of the sort had ever happened in the entire

33 RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 86-87.

34 RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 87.

35 RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 66.

36 BENEDICT XVI, *Letter*.

history of the liturgy.”³⁷ This prohibition “introduced a breach into the history of the liturgy whose consequences could only be tragic.”³⁸ For this reason Ratzinger was a strong proponent of lifting the prohibition of the old Missal, for in this prohibition “we are despising and proscribing the Church’s whole past.”³⁹ He supported the 1962 Missal for the same reason he questioned the manufacturing process of the 1970 Missal: continuity with the “Christian identity”⁴⁰ expressed in the rites received from the Jews, from Jesus himself, from the Apostles and Church Fathers, from the Middle Ages to the present day must be maintained in liturgical worship.

As was noted, Ratzinger loved the liturgical movement and *Sacrosanctum concilium* because they exalted the liturgy as the heart and expression of genuine Christian life.⁴¹ As cardinal, he often spoke in defense of the traditional missal because its prohibition undermined the Church’s highest form of self-expression that had animated Christian life for centuries. Furthermore, he believed that prohibiting the old missal, ironically enough, undermined the new:

It seems to me essential, the basic step, to recognise that both Missals are Missals of the Church, and belong to the Church which remains the same as ever. The preface of Paul VI’s Missal says explicitly that it is a Missal of the same Church, and acknowledges its continuity. And in order to emphasise that there is no essential break, that there is continuity in the Church, which retains its identity, it seems to me indispensable to continue to offer the opportunity to celebrate according to the old Missal, as a sign of the enduring identity of the Church. This is for me the basic reason: what was up until 1969 *the* Liturgy of the Church, for all of us the most holy thing there was, can not become after 1969 – with incredibly positivistic decision – the most unacceptable thing. If we want to be credible, even with being modern as a slogan, we absolutely have to recognise that what was fundamental before 1969 remains fundamental afterwards: the realm of the sacral is the same, the Liturgy is the same.⁴²

Clearly Ratzinger’s esteem for the old missal is not simply a reaction against abuses in the celebration of the new, but rather springs

37 RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 146.

38 RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 148.

39 RATZINGER, *God and the World*, 416.

40 RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 81.

41 RATZINGER, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 7.

42 In LAQL 149. Woods cites a portion of this passage in *Sacred Then and Sacred Now*, 15.

from his fidelity to the Church and to the liturgical expression of her authentic Tradition.

Thus for the sake of continuity between past and present, a continuity that ensures the identity of the Church's essence, Benedict issued *Summorum pontificum*, his only juridical document on the liturgy to date. In this light, article 1 is critical because it juridically establishes the permissibility of celebrating Mass "following the typical edition of the Roman Missal promulgated by Blessed John XXIII and never abrogated [*et numquam abrogatam*], as an extraordinary form of the Liturgy of the Church" (emphasis added).⁴³

In his letter to the bishops accompanying the *motu proprio*, Benedict explains his reasons for unrestricting the 1962 Missal.⁴⁴ Among them he includes accommodating the spiritual needs of the faithful attached to the ancient liturgy, an attachment he admits stems in part from Masses that "were not faithful to the prescriptions of the new Missal"; reconciliation with the Society of St Pius X; the need for more precise norms to govern use of the old missal; and the potential of the two forms of the one Roman Rite to enrich each other. But after enumerating these he writes: "I now come to the positive reason which motivated my decision to issue this *motu proprio* updating that of 1988. It is a matter of coming to an *interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church*" (emphasis added). This reconciliation involves more than making peace with wayward groups attached to the "Tridentine" forms; it is the reconciliation of the Church with her own liturgical tradition. No longer can the old missal – and with it the identity of Church that was nourished by it – be considered "strictly forbidden," nor can the desire for this liturgy "seem downright indecent."⁴⁵ Reinstating the old missal shows "that there is continuity in the Church" because it is "a sign of the enduring identity of the Church."⁴⁶

IV. USING THE PAST TO GUIDE THE PRESENT

If the central theme of *Summorum pontificum* and its accompanying letter is reconciliation with the past, what can be said of the future of the Roman Rite? In 2001 Ratzinger proposed that "the old missal is a point of reference, a criterion" for the use of the new.⁴⁷ "The

43 Cf. RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 146.

44 He does not express a desire to return to the older missal *en masse*. In fact, he expressed reservations about doing so; for example, JOSEPH RATZINGER WITH PETER SEEWALD, *Salt of the Earth: Christianity and the Catholic Church at the End of the Millennium*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1997) 177 (here particularly because of the language issue).

45 RATZINGER, *Salt of the Earth*, 176.

46 LAQL 149.

47 LAQL 149. Significantly, he also said that the old missal "should

goal we are all aiming for in the end,” he went on to say, “is liturgical reconciliation.” Hence,

I am not in favor of *uniformity*; but we should of course be opposed to *chaos*, to the fragmentation of the Liturgy, and in that sense we should also be in favour of observing unity in the use of Paul VI’s Missal. That seems to me a problem to be faced as a priority: how can we return to a *common* rite, reformed (if you like) but not fragmented, nor left to the arbitrary devices of local congregations, nor that of a few commissions, or groups of experts? Thus, the “reform of the reform” is something which concerns the Missal of Paul VI, always with this aim of achieving reconciliation within the Church, since for the moment there exists rather a painful opposition, and we are still a long way from reconciliation....⁴⁸

If the Missal of Paul VI is to express the Church’s identity and continuity with the past, it must be faithfully celebrated in accordance with the liturgical norms. This will help overcome the “painful opposition” of which Ratzinger speaks.

Pope Benedict has expressed his hope that “the two forms of the usage of the Roman rite can be mutually enriching.”⁴⁹ After suggesting the insertion into the 1962 Missal of new prefaces and celebrations for some new saints, he goes on to say that through the coexistence of the two forms “the celebration of the Mass according to the Missal of Paul VI will be able to demonstrate, more powerfully than has been the case hitherto, the sacrality that attracts many people to the former usage.” The first step in reforming the reform, then, concerns the *spirit* in which the revised liturgical forms are celebrated, not the texts and rites which constitute them.

V. REFORMING THE SPIRIT

One can infer from Ratzinger’s repeated statements in favor of liturgical pluralism that the ordinary and extraordinary forms will continue to coexist. He has written approvingly of rites other than the Roman within the Latin Church⁵⁰ and elsewhere expressed his willingness to support “a return to the ancient situation, i.e., to a certain liturgical pluralism.”⁵¹ If there is to be a reform of the revised missal under

become a refuge for those faithful who, in their own parish, no longer find a Liturgy genuinely celebrated in accordance with the texts authorised by the Church” (ibid.).

48 LAQL 150.

49 BENEDICT XVI, Letter.

50 For example, LAQL 148-49.

51 JOSEPH RATZINGER WITH VITTORIO MESSORI, *The Ratzinger Report: An*

Benedict's pontificate, it will surely be done with a view to "reconciling" the older and newer forms of the Mass. Ratzinger's most explicit statement in this regard is found in *The Feast of Faith*: "In my view, a new edition will need to make it quite clear that the so-called Missal of Paul VI is nothing other than a renewed form of the same Missal to which Pius X, Urban VIII, Pius V and their predecessors have contributed, right from the Church's earliest history."⁵²

Such an undertaking must proceed with caution, so as not to repeat past mistakes:

We do at least need a new liturgical consciousness, to be rid of this spirit of arbitrary fabrication....

The most important thing today is that we should regain respect for the liturgy and for the fact that it is not to be manipulated. That we learn to know it again as the living entity that has grown up and has been given us, in which we take part in the heavenly liturgy....

That, I believe is the first thing we need, so that this peculiar or unauthorized fabrication may vanish again, and the inner sense for holiness be reawakened. In the second stage we will be able to see in what area, so to speak, too much was pruned away, so that the connection with the whole of history may become clearer and more alive again. I myself have talked in this sense of a "reform of the reform." *But in my opinion this ought in the first place to be above all an educative process, which would put a stop to this trampling all over the liturgy with one's own inventions.*⁵³

A rubrical reform of the new missal must follow, not precede, the revitalization of a Catholic liturgical ethos, in which worshippers are joined to the fellowship of countless generations before them and (mysteriously) yet to come. Although *Summorum pontificum* is a legislative document, its application of the principle of the hermeneutic of continuity exemplifies Benedict's prioritization of the spirit of the liturgy. Two other examples include the apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* on the Eucharist⁵⁴ and the manner in which Benedict celebrates Mass.

Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church, trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985) 124.

52 RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 87.

53 RATZINGER, *God and the World*, 415-16; emphasis added.

54 Although written to summarize the proceedings of the synod and explain its propositions, *Sacramentum caritatis* is certainly the creation of Pope Benedict, as seen in the prominence of certain themes present in the

In the second part of *Sacramentum caritatis* (“The Eucharist, A Mystery to be Celebrated”), Benedict elaborates on the *ars celebrandi*, the proper manner of celebrating the liturgy, and clarifies some questioned liturgical practices. He does not legislate or command, however. Rather the document is an expression of papal wisdom encapsulating much of his previous work on the Mass. Like Ratzinger the theologian, Benedict the Pope articulates the proper spirit of the liturgy in the hope that this understanding will lead to more authentic liturgical celebration. He manifests this intention in the beginning of the “Ars Celebrandi” section by developing the connection between beauty and the liturgy, a connection that cannot be legislated into existence. Beauty, “an essential element of the liturgical action,” is “no mere aestheticism, but the concrete way in which the truth of God’s love in Christ encounters us, attracts us and delights us” (S.Car. 35). Beauty, however, depends on the proper *ars celebrandi*, which as “the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness” (S.Car. 38) expresses the liturgy’s proper spirit. Thus the proper *ars celebrandi* cultivates a sense of the sacred from which the beauty of the liturgy shines (see S.Car. 40).

Second, Benedict’s own liturgical preferences showcase a proper *ars celebrandi* and manifest continuity with tradition.⁵⁵ These liturgical celebrations embody a Catholic liturgical ethos that is anything but flat, banal, and weightless. Beautiful vestments embroidered in older styles, celebration *ad orientem*, prominent use of Latin, Gregorian chant given “pride of place,” the altar adorned with a crucifix and seventh pontifical candle, a repositioned papal throne in St Peter’s Basilica, communicants receiving the Host on the tongue while kneeling – all these have become staples of the Masses celebrated by Pope Benedict. Shawn Tribe has written that Benedict’s liturgical presidency provides a model for bishops and priests around the world to imitate;⁵⁶ the

work of Ratzinger, including the emphasis on the Logos/Son and the discussion of *logikē latreía* (nos. 70, 94). On these themes see ROBERT A. PESARCHICK, “Worship in accord with the Logos’ – Incarnation, Liturgy, and Inculturation,” *Antiphon* 13.1 (2009) 28-50 and RICHARD MALONE, “Eucharist: Sacrifice According to the Logos,” *Antiphon* 13.1 (2009) 65-83.

55 The Internet has exploded with commentary on papal liturgies and how they manifest Benedict’s vision of liturgical continuity with the past and the intimate bond between the *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*. See, for example, the websites <www.wdtpers.com> and <www.newliturgicalmovement.org>.

56 SHAWN TRIBE, “Benedict XVI: The Liturgical Pope?” posted 20 December 2007 on <www.newliturgicalmovement.org> (accessed 8 December 2008).

Pope's leadership by example is critical to a renewal of the spirit of the liturgy.

VI. REFORMING THE LETTER

While the spirit of the liturgy has been Benedict's priority thus far, his comments as cardinal still prompt speculation over whether he will make structural changes to the Missal of Paul VI. Critics of that missal have not been shy in voicing their desire for a "reform of the reform," though they do not all agree on how to go about this. Alcuin Reid summarizes the most common suggestions:

Proposals include the wide use of Latin, that the Roman Canon once again becomes the (sole) Canon of the Mass of the Roman rite, the replacement of the current offertory prayers with ones having a clear sacrificial theology, the restoration of the proper prayers of each Mass to their unedited form, the promotion of silence in the Liturgy, the return of many of the ritual gestures abolished in the Mass, and the return to the ancient Christian practice of priest and people facing east for what we now call the Liturgy of the Eucharist.⁵⁷

Ratzinger, as theologian, commented on a number of these suggestions but did not endorse all of them. He affirmed both the desirability of the vernacular (while favoring Latin for parts of the Ordinary) and the revised offertory prayers, now called the preparation of the gifts.⁵⁸ He likewise affirmed the eucharistic prayers introduced in 1968 (S.Car. 48). He has not specifically addressed the drastically altered texts of the Mass Propers.⁵⁹ In a number of places he has written in favor of silence in the liturgy⁶⁰ as well as celebrating the liturgy *ad orientem*, but the current missal permits both.

57 ALCUIN REID, "Looking Again at the Liturgical Reform: Some General and Monastic Considerations," *The Downside Review* 124.437 (2006) 251.

58 RATZINGER, *God Is Near Us*, 66-73.

59 On this, see LAUREN PRISTAS, "Missale Romanum 1962 and 1970: A Comparative Study of Two Collects," *Antiphon* 7.3 (2002) 29-33; idem, "Theological Principles that Guided the Redaction of the Roman Missal (1970)," *The Thomist* 67 (2003) 157-95; idem, "The Orations of the Vatican II Missal: Policies for Revision," *Communio* 30 (2003) 621-53; idem, "The Collects at Sunday Mass: An Examination of the Revisions of Vatican II," *Nova et Vetera* [English Edition] 3.1 (2005) 5-38. See also LÁSZLÓ DOBSZAY, "The *Proprium Missae* of the Roman Rite," in *The Genius of the Roman Rite: Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives on Catholic Liturgy*, ed. Uwe Michael Lang (Chicago: Hillenbrand, 2010) 83-118.

60 This would not rule out, at least occasionally, a silent canon. See RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 72-73, and idem, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 214-16.

These points aside, Ratzinger has still asserted that the new missal requires some changes, although generally he has avoided mentioning specifics. He has, however, suggested three steps toward reconciling the missals of 1962 and 1970: (1) freeing the new missal from its creative options such as “sacerdos dicit sic vel simili modo”; (2) using more precise translations, particularly in English; and (3) greater use of *ad orientem* worship.⁶¹ Curiously, he actually sanctions the first of these in *Sacramentum caritatis*, 45: “When circumstances so suggest, a few brief words of introduction could be offered in order to focus the attention of the faithful.” As to the second step, a revised English translation of the Roman Missal is on the horizon. The third step, *ad orientem* celebration (a major theme in Ratzinger’s liturgical cosmology), is allowable under the current rubrics and therefore requires no modification of the rubrics.⁶² Moreover, as a sort of compromise between the two orientations, Ratzinger suggested placing a cross on the altar to function as a point of reference where facing east is not possible or where a church has recently been renovated⁶³ – a practice he himself has carried out consistently in his papal liturgies in Rome and abroad. This gradual and sensitive approach to reintegrating *ad orientem* worship also seems to preclude a legal requirement of the practice in the coming years. Thus with the exception of suppressing the new missal’s creative options, Ratzinger’s stated ideas for reconciling the two missals do not require significant changes to the present-day books.

From this it seems that a rubrical “reform of the reform” will not happen in the foreseeable future, with perhaps one exception. Following the suggestion of the 2005 Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist,⁶⁴ Benedict has considered moving the sign of peace from its current position to before the Presentation of the Gifts.⁶⁵ In the earliest litur-

61 LAQL 150-52.

62 Ordo Missae, nos. 29, 127, 132-33, and 141, in *Missale Romanum*, editio typica tertia (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002), pp. 515, 600, 601, and 603.

63 See RATZINGER, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 74-84; BENEDICT XVI, Preface to *Theology of the Liturgy*.

64 “The greeting of peace in the Holy Mass is an expressive sign of great value and depth (cf. John 14:27). However, in certain cases, it assumes a dimension that could be problematic, when it is too prolonged or even when it causes confusion, just before receiving Communion. Perhaps it would be useful to assess if the sign of peace should take place at another moment of the celebration, taking into account ancient and venerable customs.” Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2-23 October 2005), Proposition 23; at <www.zenit.org/article-14410?l=english>.

65 CATHOLIC NEWS AGENCY, “Cardinal Arinze: Pope considering mov-

gies the kiss of peace occurred before the Mass of the Faithful, or what is now termed Liturgy of the Eucharist, after the catechumens were dismissed, “as the sign of mutual recognition between the faithful when they begin their part of the service;”⁶⁶ however, in the Roman Mass it was moved to where it now is, just before the Communion, probably in the fourth century.⁶⁷ Because of this centuries-old location, moving the sign of peace would be a matter of no small consequence, and the proposal to do so raises questions about the Pope’s authority to regulate liturgical practice. In *The Spirit of the Liturgy* Ratzinger argued that, contrary to popular opinion, papal authority was bound by the liturgy:

After the Second Vatican Council, the impression arose that the pope really could do anything in liturgical matters, especially if he were acting on the mandate of an ecumenical council. Eventually, the idea of the givenness of the liturgy, the fact that one cannot do with it what one will, faded from the public consciousness of the West.... The pope’s authority is bound to the Tradition of faith, and that also applies to the liturgy. It is not “manufactured” by the authorities. Even the pope can only be a humble servant of its lawful development and abiding integrity and identity.⁶⁸

Moreover, Thomas Woods believes Ratzinger’s preface to Gamber’s *Reform of the Roman Liturgy* is an endorsement of the latter’s conclusion that “the assertion that the Holy See has the authority to change the liturgical rite would appear to be debatable, to say the least.”⁶⁹

In addition to writing on the limits of papal authority vis-à-vis the liturgy, Ratzinger also expressed sensitivity to the fact that liturgical

ing sign of peace,” 24 November 2008; at <www.catholicnewsagency.com> (accessed 25 November 2008).

66 ADRIAN FORTESCUE, *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy* (1912; reprint, Albany NY: Preserving Christian Publications, 1999) 370.

67 FORTESCUE, *The Mass*, 68-69, 370-72; also JOSEPH A. JUNGSMANN, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development* (Missarum Sollemnia) (revised and abridged edition in one volume), ed. Charles K. Riepe, trans. Francis A. Brunner (London: Burns & Oates, 1959) 480. [In the extraordinary form of the Mass, last codified in the 1962 Missal, the kiss of peace takes the form of a light embrace given within the ranks of the clergy at Solemn Mass only; it is *preceded* by the Agnus Dei and a special prayer for peace, *Domine Iesu Christe qui dixisti*, whereas in the ordinary form of the Mass the sign of peace comes after this prayer for peace and before the Agnus Dei; Ed.]

68 RATZINGER, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 165-66.

69 WOODS, *Sacred Then and Sacred Now*, 12-13, quoting Gamber, *Reform of the Roman Liturgy*, 39.

change can cause harm to the faithful. Regarding the reform of the liturgical calendar, for example, he chastised the reformers because they “simply did not realize how much the various annual feasts had influenced Christian people’s relation to time.”⁷⁰ Additionally, his advocacy of *ad orientem* worship was tempered by pastoral and architectural concerns, as mentioned above, for “Nothing is more harmful to the liturgy than a constant activism, even if it seems to be for the sake of genuine renewal.”⁷¹ In a similar manner, Pope Benedict wrote in his letter accompanying *Summorum pontificum*, “And I have seen how arbitrary deformations of the liturgy caused deep pain to individuals totally rooted in the faith of the church.”

How, then, does Benedict as Sovereign Pontiff understand his relationship to the liturgy? As Cardinal Ratzinger, he wrote often of the organic development of the liturgy and the importance of understanding liturgy historically, since, like the Church herself, liturgy grows with time, even though its essential elements remain unchanged.⁷² While liturgical growth over the centuries occurred in various places, “Rome kept watch on this and pruned back any overgrowth.”⁷³ Thus Ratzinger compared the role of the Holy See to that of a gardener: “Just as a gardener cares for a living plant as it develops, with due attention to the power of growth and life within the plant and the rules it obeys, so the Church ought to give reverent care to the Liturgy through the ages, distinguishing actions that are helpful and healing from those that are violent and destructive.”⁷⁴

One might infer that Benedict and the Synod Fathers deemed the current manner in which the faithful share the sign of peace as a threat – even “violent and destructive” – to the proper preparation for receiving holy Communion.⁷⁵ However, *Sacramentum Caritatis* mentions another holy reason for moving the sign of peace to before the offertory: “To do so would also serve as a significant reminder of the Lord’s insistence that we be reconciled with others before offering our gifts to God.”⁷⁶ Ratzinger strongly endorsed this practice when discussing variations within ritual families in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*: he praised Zairean use of the Roman liturgy for its incorporation of Congolese and Eastern elements: “For example, in line with what is

70 RATZINGER, *Feast of Faith*, 81.

71 RATZINGER, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 83.

72 See, for instance, RATZINGER, *God and the World*, 413-14.

73 RATZINGER, *God and the World*, 413.

74 RATZINGER, Preface to Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005) 9.

75 See *Sacramentum caritatis* 49.

76 *Sacramentum caritatis* 49, n. 150.

said in Matthew 5:23-25, the sign of peace is exchanged, not before Communion, but before the Presentation of the Gifts, which would be desirable for the whole of the Roman rite, insofar as the sign of peace is something we want to retain."⁷⁷

As pope, then, Benedict seems very interested in restoring the original meaning of the sign of peace by placing it before the offertory, despite a fifteen-centuries-long tradition of the peace occurring just before Communion. Significantly, Ratzinger expressed an analogous propensity for the original meaning of the offertory and its expression in the first millennium of worship. In *God Is Near Us* he recalled the original meaning of the word "offertory" as "preparation." What began as a silent and practical preparation for celebrating the Eucharist was changed in the tenth century with the incorporation of the offertory prayers of the traditional Missal that have a profound sacrificial dimension. While he acknowledged these prayers are "beautiful and profound," nevertheless

we have to admit that they carried within them the seeds of a certain misunderstanding. The way they were formulated always looked forward to the actual matter of the Canon. Both elements, the preparation and the actual sacrifice of Christ, were intertwined in these words.⁷⁸

Ratzinger's preference for the earlier practice and its original meaning independent of the forthcoming sacrifice coincides with his understanding of the restored sign of peace: with the faithful exchanging the peace in the new liturgy, Benedict prefers the original meaning of this ritual expression in its original location.⁷⁹

VII. ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT AND LITURGICAL REGULATION

The question can be raised in light of this issue whether there is a tension between Ratzinger's deference toward liturgical tradition and its relation to Petrine authority on the one hand, and his understanding of the Holy See as "gardener" of the liturgy on the other hand. What exactly constitutes the liturgical "Tradition of faith" within the liturgy for which "the pope can only be a humble servant of its lawful development and abiding integrity and identity"?⁸⁰ The present location of the peace predates the Gregorian reforms, and since

⁷⁷ RATZINGER, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 170.

⁷⁸ RATZINGER, *God Is Near Us*, 68.

⁷⁹ Of course the exchange of peace in the new liturgy could also be suppressed; however, the Pope in *Sacramentum caritatis*, 49, strongly endorses the current form of the sign of peace as a gesture of "great value." Such approbation makes a future suppression of the practice unlikely.

⁸⁰ RATZINGER, *Spirit of the Liturgy* 166.

then a distinctive theology has arisen from it.⁸¹ But Ratzinger's comments on the offertory prayers and the sign of peace convey a strong preference for the earliest meaning of these rituals. How, then, does he understand "lawful development" and organic growth in light of two millennia of Christian worship?

In the first place, Ratzinger was very critical of "archaeological enthusiasm" that sought the oldest known form of the liturgy, deeming this the "pure" form of the rite and all subsequent growths "the product of misunderstandings and ignorance of the past."⁸² While he acknowledged that "[a] great deal of this was right," he cautioned that "liturgical reform is something different from archaeological excavation, and not all the developments of a living thing have to be logical in accordance with a rationalistic or historical standard."⁸³ This thinking harmonizes with what has been examined thus far: Ratzinger clearly was attracted to the original meanings of specific liturgical rituals, but he desired them within the context of careful, organic growth in light of a genuine understanding of the liturgy as the Church's self-expression, and not as the forced product of a historicism and liturgical rigorism that seeks the ancient for its own sake.

Ratzinger acknowledged this contemporary archaizing trend and its consequent dismissal of the liturgical inheritance of the Middle Ages as a danger latent within the liturgical movement before the Council.⁸⁴ At Fontgombault he rejected this approach in defense of "genuinely legitimate developments" of the medieval period, and proposed a "return to an exegesis rooted in the living reality of the Church, of the Church of all ages" so that "within the limitations which are certainly to be found in the texts of Trent, Trent remains the norm, as re-read with our greater knowledge and deeper understanding of the Fathers and of the New Testament, as read with the Fathers and with the Church of all ages."⁸⁵ This return is to be done, he asserted, in harmony with the Church and her pastors and not led by specialists, as was the case with the reforms following the Council.⁸⁶

There seems to exist a tension, then, between Ratzinger's preference – and now Benedict's preference concerning the sign of peace – for original liturgical rituals and organic development in relation to Petrine authority. Even if a potential change in liturgical rite or

81 See MICHAEL P. FOLEY, "A Crisis of Meaning in the Sign of Peace," *The Latin Mass* (Advent/Christmas 2007) 36-39.

82 RATZINGER, Preface to Reid, *Organic Development*, 12.

83 Ibid.

84 LAQL 146. Cf. RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 57.

85 LAQL 147-48.

86 LAQL 148.

potential growth harmonizes with the Church and her pastors, such as in Benedict's collegial consultation with the bishops on moving the sign of peace, does the Pope have the authority to change a part of the liturgy that existed legitimately and grew in its own right over the course of fifteen hundred years? If so, then it seems the liturgical norm is not Trent, or even the reform of St Gregory the Great, but rather the first few centuries of liturgical worship; yet Ratzinger cautioned against establishing such a rational and historical standard. On the other hand, it is noted that Ratzinger did not advocate reintroducing further ancient practices into the reformed liturgy; his comments on the offertory and the peace follow from initiations made by others. But within these two specific rituals, the question remains as to what should be the standard for proper organic growth following their initiations, even when they stand to benefit the whole Church.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, despite this difficulty, there is no tension between liturgical epochs for the theologian Joseph Ratzinger, and now Pope Benedict XVI, because his standard is the genuine spirit of the liturgy that has permeated the Church for two millennia and found its most recent expression in the liturgical movement and *Sacrosanctum concilium*. As a theologian, Ratzinger reminded his readers that "the Liturgy is not about us, but about God."⁸⁸ Now as Roman Pontiff, Benedict has already implemented his reform of the spirit of the liturgy through *Sacramentum caritatis*, *Summorum pontificum*, and his own manner of celebrating the liturgy. Even moving the sign of peace is aimed primarily at fostering this same spirit. Thus a large-scale rubrical reform of the reform does not seem to be in the works; any such initiative must wait until the "new liturgical movement" desired by Ratzinger in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* and put in motion since Benedict's election takes hold. As he told Peter Seewald, only then can a proper assessment of rubrics occur, an assessment that may still be decades away. For the interim, Benedict's concluding comment in his preface to his "opera omnia" succinctly captures his early achievements and future vision for liturgical reform as pope: "I would be happy if this new edition of my liturgical writings could contribute to displaying the great perspectives of our liturgy, and putting certain frivolous controversies about external forms in the right place."⁸⁹

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87 See *Sacrosanctum concilium* 23.

88 RATZINGER, Preface to Reid, *Organic Development*, 13.

89 BENEDICT XVI, Preface to *Theology of the Liturgy*.