

The New Liturgical Movement

After the Pontificate of Benedict XVI

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Abstract:

The April 2005 election of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger to the Throne of Peter gave significant impetus to the "new liturgical movement" for which he had called some years earlier and which he had already done much personally to promote. His example, teaching and acts of governance as pope gave the movement further momentum.

The unexpected resignation of Benedict XVI in February 2013 and the election of a new pope with a seemingly different approach to the Sacred Liturgy raised questions, including whether the initiatives of Benedict XVI are now to be set aside and replaced with what are presumed to be the liturgical principles behind the style of the current pope. In some circles anxiety has arisen that genuine progress made in recent years will now be lost. In others these events are regarded as a welcome opportunity to relegate 'Benedict XVI-style liturgy' and return to liturgical practices widespread in the 1960's-1990's.

This paper recalls pertinent aspects of Catholic belief about the papal office, including its limitations, and reflects on its liturgical impact in the contemporary world, particularly in the light of the reality of instantaneous media.

The paper revisits the foundations of the new liturgical movement and reflects on the nature of the liturgical reform of Benedict XVI with reference to the principles of the 20th century liturgical movement and of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

In the light of these considerations, the paper seeks to articulate principles and future pathways for a new liturgical movement that will serve this movement now that its "father," Benedict XVI, is no longer the reigning pontiff.

Introduction

Early in the evening of April 19th 2005 the Cardinal Protodeacon announced the election of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger to the papacy. Shortly thereafter the new pope appeared on the central loggia of Saint Peter's Basilica wearing papal choir dress and imparted the blessing *Urbi et Orbi*.

On the evening of March 13th 2013 another Cardinal Protodeacon announced the election of Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio SJ as pope. Pope Francis appeared on the loggia in just a white cassock, in stark contrast to his predecessors. The Master of Apostolic Ceremonies at his side carried a stole which the pope wore only for the blessing.

Pope Benedict XVI's attire on the loggia went unnoticed (save, perhaps, the black cardigan poking out from under the white sleeves – apparently Cardinal Ratzinger didn't have a white one in his bag 'just in case!'): the world's media were busy filing stories about the new "Rottweiler Pope" and various Catholics were reaching for either champagne to celebrate, or for something far stronger in order to drown their sorrows.

Yet Pope Francis' attire was noticed. It was a statement. It was clearly a personal decision, a rejection by the new pope of how popes had traditionally vested for the blessing *Urbi et Orbi* – which is, after all, a part of a liturgical rite, the *Ordo Rituum Conclavis*.¹ The manner of his appearance was news. Whilst media filed facile reports about simplicity and humility, in some Catholic circles the champagne and stronger elixirs were sought once again, but this time who was drinking what was reversed.

Pope Benedict XVI was a pope of the Sacred Liturgy and his election and pontificate gave great impetus to the 'question of the liturgy.' Pope Francis is a different pope with his own style and priorities – and there is nothing at all wrong about that. Indeed, in the Providence of Almighty God we have been blessed with many Successors of St Peter throughout history with varying talents and insights who have served Christ and His Church according to the needs of the time.

At least there should be nothing abnormal about popes not being identical. But in a world of instantaneous media and a Church marked by decades of 'liturgy-wars' the liturgical choices of the Bishop of Rome have been waved around as triumphantly as any military standard – be they the choice to wear a cream mitre with a brown stripe, or a fanon,² or nothing liturgical at all.

Do these choices truly herald a victory? Does each pope's style and personal preference determine what is, or what should be, the liturgy of the Church? Are we, after this pontificate, to wait to see who emerges wearing what before we know what the Sacred Liturgy is and how we are to celebrate it? Where does this leave pastors, liturgical ministers and formators, indeed all of Christ's faithful? And where does it leave what has become known as the "new liturgical movement" for which Cardinal Ratzinger had called,³ and to which his example, teaching and acts of governance as pope gave such momentum? Should it pack up and go home, as it were, because its 'patron' is now retired and the Church is under new management?

¹ *Officium De Liturgicis Celebrationibus Summi Pontificis, Ordo Rituum Conclavis*, Vatican City 2000; cf. nn. 67, 75.

² A papal vestment set aside by the Venerable Paul VI, but worn occasionally by Blessed John Paul II and then returned to use for the most solemn Papal liturgies by Benedict XVI.

³ Cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ignatius, San Francisco 2000, pp. 8-9.

An examination of the nature of the papal office and of the Sacred Liturgy is necessary, I suggest, in order to glean some principles that will serve us in addressing these questions whatever present or future bishops of Rome may choose to wear, or not.

The Papal Office

What is the papal office? In the words of the Holy Father at the Mass for the Inauguration of his Petrine Ministry it is a “service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross.”⁴ It is the continuation of the specific ministry given by Christ to Peter involving both the power of the keys (cf. Mtt. 16:18-19) and the duty to tend and feed the Lord’s sheep (cf. Jn. 21:15-19).

We know from the Second Vatican Council that this service or ministry is a “source and foundation of unity of faith and communion” for the Church willed and established by Our Lord Himself (*Lumen Gentium* 18); and that the papacy involves a primacy in the Church which includes “full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church” (cf. *LG* 22). It is an office exercised collegially with all the bishops who, themselves must be in communion with the head of the college, the Pope, in order legitimately to exercise their own ministry (cf. *LG* 22). In clearly defined circumstances the papal magisterium enjoys the divine protection of infallibility, something which bishops teaching in communion with him can also share (cf. *LG* 25). The Second Vatican Council also states that:

Religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking (*LG* 25).⁵

There is no doubt that the papal office gives the Church a unique and powerful ministry, indeed one which provides the Church Christ founded with a secure foundation amidst the challenges and even attacks she encounters throughout the years and centuries. The papal office is both a consolation and assurance: if I am in communion with the Pope I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ and if I follow the Pope’s solemn teaching, and that of the bishops in communion with him, I cannot be led astray.

Yet we know that in history there have been good and bad holders of the papal office. In recent centuries we have enjoyed a succession of morally good popes who have served the Church to the very best of their ability. Their initiatives and policies shall continue to be evaluated by history, but the men themselves have given themselves completely, at times heroically, in the service of their unique vocation as the Successor of Peter.

There is a danger here. The nature of the papacy, and its juridical power, when combined with morally good incumbents risks creating an almost super-man. The temptation to forget that he is but the *vicar* of Christ and to idolize the individual pope is real. This can lead to the error ultramontanism: the belief that *any* opinion, act or judgement of the Pope is unable to be criticised, or indeed is infallible, and is to be followed as the teaching of Christ himself.

This is not to deny the pope’s authority. But it is possible for a pope to make an authoritative judgement not concerning a matter of faith or morals that is ill-considered,

⁴ Homily, Mass for the Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry, 19 March 2013.

⁵ See further: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 874-896

erroneous, wrong or bad. In such cases we would still owe him obedience—and the filial duty of submitting our reasons for believing him to be in error with respect and humility.

Thus, whilst thanking Almighty God for morally good popes, we are wise to recall that they, as men, and even the papal office itself, have limitations. Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the latter when he took possession of the *cathedra* at St John Lateran in 2005:

The power that Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors is, in an absolute sense, a mandate to serve. The power of teaching in the Church involves a commitment to the service of obedience to the faith. The Pope is not an absolute monarch whose thoughts and desires are law. On the contrary: the Pope's ministry is a guarantee of obedience to Christ and to his Word. He must not proclaim his own ideas, but rather constantly bind himself and the Church to obedience to God's Word, in the face of every attempt to adapt it or water it down, and every form of opportunism...⁶

This is a very sober reminder from the mouth of a reigning pope. His words echo those he wrote as Cardinal not a year earlier when speaking specifically about the limits of the papacy and liturgical reform. Taking as his point of departure article 1125 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* ("Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy"), Cardinal Ratzinger argued:

It seems to me most important that the Catechism, in mentioning the limitation of the powers of the supreme authority in the Church with regard to reform, recalls to mind what is the essence of the primacy as outlined by the First and Second Vatican Councils: The Pope is not an absolute monarch whose will is law, but is the guardian of the authentic Tradition, and thereby the premier guarantor of obedience. He cannot do as he likes, and is thereby able to oppose those people who for their part want to do what has come into their head. His rule is not that of arbitrary power, but that of obedience in faith. That is why, with respect to the Liturgy, he has the task of a gardener, not that of a technician who builds new machines and throws the old ones on the junk-pile. The "rite", that form of celebration and prayer which has ripened in the faith and the life of the Church, is a condensed form of living tradition in which the sphere which uses that rite expresses the whole of its faith and its prayer, and thus at the same time the fellowship of generations one with another becomes something we can experience, fellowship with the people who pray before us and after us. Thus the rite is something of benefit which is given to the Church, a living form of *paradosis* the handing-on of tradition.⁷

Cardinal Ratzinger's arguments assume Catholic liturgical theology: Catholic liturgy is nothing less than "a condensed form of living tradition in which the sphere which uses that rite expresses the whole of its faith and its prayer." The rites and their multivalent components are not mere tools employed or not on any given occasion and changed according to the preferences of the minister or community, but are privileged—indeed sacramental—means of our worship of Almighty God and of Christ acting in His Church in our day. These means develop, of course, but as the Catechism cautions, "not arbitrarily" but "only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy."

In respect of the papacy we may say, then, that the Sacred Liturgy enjoys a theological priority in relation to the personal preferences or wishes of individual popes.

Historically we have a grave problem here: for it is more than merely arguable that the Venerable Paul VI imposed his personal will on the Church's liturgical tradition when implementing the reform called for by the Second Vatican Council. The rites he promulgated are

⁶ Homily, Mass of Possession of the Chair of the Bishop of Rome, 7 May 2005.

⁷ Preface to: Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed. Ignatius, San Francisco 2005, pp. 10-11. Cardinal Ratzinger articulated similar arguments earlier, in chapter 1 of part IV of *The Spirit of the Liturgy*.

authoritative and valid, but their continuity with the received liturgical tradition is far from clear. Nor is it clear that they accord with the moderate reform for which the Second Vatican Council called. Yet these reforms were widely accepted, almost without question, principally because they came from the Pope. As John Cardinal Heenan wrote in March 1969: "If the Holy Father has decided to reform the Liturgy, we must accept."⁸

Of course Catholics wish to trust and obey the Pope: these are virtues, rightly cultivated. Yet, from them it is but a few steps from the filial respect and obedience we owe the Holy Father to the adoption of an uncritical ultramontanistism that is rightly ridiculed by protestants and which is foreign to the Office of Peter given by Christ to His Church. This danger is particularly acute in our world of an instantaneous media, of immediate image and textual transmission, when every utterance and appearance of the Pope is 'out there,' as it were, almost before the man himself has had time to consider the possible impact.

It is perhaps not such a new problem. Almost a century ago the English priest and polyglot, Adrian Fortescue, explained to a friend his exasperation with the Holy See's position on biblical scholarship and with the stance of Pope Leo XIII:

Leo XIII commits himself to the historicity of every statement not obviously a quotation in the Old Testament. That is absolutely and finally hopeless....It is not that one wants to deny what the Pope has said. On the contrary one has the strongest reasons for wishing to justify them. But on such matters as this, one simply cannot refuse to be convinced by the evidence...I wish to goodness that the Pope would never speak at all except when he means to define *ex cathedra*. Then we should know where we are.⁹

Some of the policies of Pope Leo's successor also drove Fortescue to distraction. Writing to a brother priest he bemoaned:

We have stuck out for our position all our lives – unity, authority, St Peter the rock and so on. I have too, and believe it; I am always preaching that sort of thing, and yet is it not now getting to a *reductio ad absurdum*? Centralisation grows and goes madder every century. Even at Trent they hardly foresaw this kind of thing. Does it really mean that one cannot be a member of the Church of Christ without being, as we are, absolutely at the mercy of an Italian lunatic?

...Give us back the Xth century Johns and Stephens, or a Borgia! They were less disastrous than this deplorable person.¹⁰

Whilst some of Fortescue's language is strong, his instincts are sound. As he taught his parishioners, Catholics are "not bound to admire [popes'] characters or believe their opinions."¹¹ Ultramontanistism is not part of the Catholic faith. Being in communion with the Bishop of Rome does not mean I must think his every word, deed and choice are divinely inspired. Nor does it preclude respectful critical evaluation of his acts. Indeed, one might argue that the danger of ultramontanistism, and also those of possible distortion and misinterpretation, particularly in the light of modern media, suggest to the incumbents of the papal office, and to their aides, the adoption of a carefully considered modesty of words and images.

⁸ Cited in: Alcuin Reid, *A Bitter Trial: Evelyn Waugh and John Carmel Cardinal Heenan on the Liturgical Changes*, 3rd ed. Ignatius, San Francisco 2011, p. 23.

⁹ Cited in: Alcuin Reid ed., Adrian Fortescue, *The Early Papacy: to the Synod of Chalcedon in 451*, 4th ed. Ignatius, San Francisco 2008, p. 13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

I wish to return to the Holy Father's appearance on the balcony following his election in March. I confess that his lack of choir dress confused and disturbed me. "Why would he think it necessary to spurn liturgical attire?" I wondered. "What does this say about the new pope's understanding of and respect for the Church's liturgy?" I pondered. To this day these questions remain unanswered. We have all heard the jokes about Jesuits and the liturgy, and at times there may be a certain amount of truth in them: the somewhat a-liturgical aspects of their order and its origins in the period of the ascendancy of the *devotio moderna* may go some way in explaining this.¹² In respect of our Jesuit Pope, even George Cardinal Pell observed in an April 2013 interview that at the start of this pontificate "liturgically, perhaps, there has been a little ripple here and there."¹³

Yes, there clear liturgical differences between the current pope and his predecessor. Yet, from what we believe about the papal office, it can and needs to be said clearly that the liturgical style or preferences of a given pope are not law and that it is possible that a pope can make errors of judgement in this area,¹⁴ which errors, because of his position and the instantaneous dissemination of anything he does, can give confusing or even misleading messages to the Church and the wider world.

To put this question into sharp relief: the feet of whom should be washed in the Mass of Maundy Thursday? Those of men or of women? The feet of Christians or non-Christians? Why? With all due respect I submit that any answer based solely on "...because the Pope did it" is insufficient if not downright ultramontane.

Such reasoning will not do. Such positivism is simply foreign to the Catholic faith. Papal preference is not the arbiter of the Church's liturgy: sound liturgical and theological principles are. The Bishop of Rome exercises his authority rightly when, in liturgical matters, he bases his judgements on these principles. If he ignores them in his judgements or personal practice he risks causing confusion, scandal and disunity. The exercise of authority in respect of the Sacred Liturgy and the personal liturgical behaviour of all popes, prelates, other clergy and laity are rightly evaluated according to these criteria.

Some measure of confusion and perhaps even disheartenment has certainly occurred as an unintended but real consequence of the liturgical "ripples" occasioned by the Holy Father. He seems to be a particularly open and approachable man and it would be more than interesting to converse with him about these questions. But he is also a man who is very busy, and rightly, about many important matters.

The Holy Father's concentration on other aspects of the Church's life, and even any mistakes he may have made in his own liturgical practice, do not mean that the liturgical initiatives promoted by his predecessor are now somehow unimportant or are to be abandoned. Those initiatives retain their validity insofar as they are grounded in sound principles, and it is to a consideration of those to which we must now turn.

¹² For a classic example of Jesuit relegation of the Sacred Liturgy to the status of but one almost marginal devotion amongst others see: Jean-Joseph Navatel SJ, "L'Apostolat Liturgique et La Piété Personnelle" in: *Études*, 20 November 1913, pp. 449-476.

¹³ "Cardinal Pell: We've got a Pope who's got mud on his boots" - Interview with Vatican Insider (www.lastampa.it) published on 23rd April 2013.

¹⁴ Some may consider the 11 July 1992 decision of Blessed John Paul II to allow women to serve at the altar as an example of this.

Liturgical Principles

These principles were at the heart of the “classical” twentieth century liturgical movement the basis of which was articulated by St Pius X in his seminal *Motu Proprio* of November 22nd 1903, *Tra le sollecitudini*:

It being our ardent desire to see the true Christian spirit restored in every respect and preserved by all the faithful, we deem it necessary to provide before everything else for the sanctity and dignity of the temple, in which the faithful assemble for the object of acquiring this spirit from its indispensable fount, which is *the active participation in the holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church*.¹⁵

It is important to note St Pius X’s insistence on the Sacred Liturgy as the “indispensible fount” from which the faithful acquire the “true Christian spirit,” from which flows the necessity of attending to it “before everything else.” This is nothing other than a consequence of the theological and pastoral primacy of the Sacred Liturgy; something which was self-evident to Pius X and to the pioneers of the liturgical movement and which the Second Vatican Council would reiterate. The Sacred Liturgy is the *culmen et fons vitæ et missionis ecclesiæ* – the source and summit of the life and mission of the Church (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10).

Almost one hundred years ago one of those pioneers, Dom Lambert Beauduin, sought to articulate a programme of action which would apply this principle to the life of the whole Church in *La Piété de L’Église* (ET: *Liturgy: The Life of the Church*). This small book is in many ways the foundational charter of the liturgical movement. Dom Beauduin asserted:

It is impossible...to overemphasise the fact that souls seeking God must associate themselves as intimately and as frequently as possible with all the manifestations of ... [the Liturgy], and which places them directly under the influence of the priesthood of Jesus Christ Himself.

That is the primary law of the sanctity of souls. For all alike, wise and ignorant, infants and adults, lay and religious, Christians of the first and Christians of the twentieth century, leaders of an active or of a contemplative life, for *all the faithful of the Church without exception*, the greatest possible active and frequent participation in ... [the Liturgy], according to the manner prescribed in the liturgical canons, is the *normal and infallible path* to a solid piety that is sane, abundant, and truly Catholic, that makes them children of their holy mother the Church in the fullest sense of this ancient and Christian phrase.¹⁶

¹⁵ R. Kevin Seasoltz OSB, *The New Liturgy: A Documentation 1903-1965*, Herder, New York 1966, p. 4. Emphasis added. The original is Italian: “Essendo infatti Nostro vivissimo desiderio che il vero spirito cristiano rifiorisca per ogni modo e si mantegna nei fedeli tutti, è necessario provvedere prima di ogni altra cosa alla santità e dignità del tempio, dove appunto i fedeli si radunano per attingere tale spirito dalla sua prima ed indispensabile fonte, che è la partecipazione attiva ai sacrosanti misteri e alla preghiera pubblica e solenne della Chiesa;” *Acta Sanctæ Sedis*, vol. XXXVI p. 331. The official Latin: “Etenim cum nihil Nobis potius sit et vehementer optemus ut virtus christianæ religionis floreat et in omnibus Christifidelibus firmior sit, templi decori provideatur oportet, ubi Christicolæ congregantur ut hoc virtutis spiritu ex priore fonte fruantur, quæ est participatio divinatorum mysteriorum atque Ecclesiæ communium et solemnium precum;” *Acta Sanctæ Sedis*, vol. XXXVI p. 388.

¹⁶ Lambert Beauduin OSB, *Liturgy the Life of the Church*, St Michael’s Abbey Press, Farnborough 2002, pp. 15-16; “On ne saurait donc trop inculquer aux âmes qui cherchent Dieu de s’associer aussi intimement et aussi fréquemment que possible à toutes les manifestations de cette vie sacerdotale hiérarchique que nous venons décrire et qui nous met directement sous l’influence de sacerdoce de Jésus-Christ. Telle est la loi primordiale de la santeté des âmes. Pour tous, savants et ignorants, enfants et hommes faits, séculiers et religieux, chrétiens des premiers siècles et chrétiens de XX^e, actifs et contemplatifs, pour *tous les fidèles de l’Église catholique sans exception*, la participation la plus active et la plus fréquente possible à la vie sacerdotale de la hiérarchie visible, selon les modalités fixées par celle-ci dans son canon liturgique, constitue *le régime normal*

Here again we have a strong assertion of the primacy and objectivity of the Sacred Liturgy for the life of every Christian. Implicit in this, though very widely ignored at the time, is the theological objectivity of the Sacred Liturgy—that which we understand by the fifth century maxim of Prosper of Aquitaine *lex orandi, lex credendi*. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches accordingly that “the Church believes as she prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition” (n. 1124).

As we noted above the very elements of liturgical rites—the words, gestures, sounds, things, etc—employed in the celebration of this holy and living Tradition share something of this objectivity. They are privileged sacramentals which, whilst capable of development or even of falling into disuse, are not arbitrarily or disproportionately changed or discarded without risk of harm to the realities they comport, without risk of diminishing or impeding the connection with Him whose saving action in the world of today the Sacred Liturgy is. This is a clear difference between Catholic and Protestant liturgical and sacramental theology, and we need to bear this fundamental principle in mind.

In the second chapter of *The Organic Development of the Liturgy* I have attempted to demonstrate that in its origins the twentieth century liturgical movement sought to reassert the primacy of the Sacred Liturgy in the spiritual life through pastoral reform, not of the liturgical rites themselves, but rather in respect of the quality of liturgical celebration and of peoples’ capacity to participate in the rites.¹⁷ For the pioneers of the liturgical movement knew only too well that the liturgy as developed in tradition was theologically and pastorally rich. Their desire was simply that all of Christ’s faithful, clergy, religious and laity, would fully connect with and daily draw from these riches. To that end the liturgical movement worked tirelessly at what we would call “liturgical formation.”

In this context proposals for ritual reform emerged in due course. They require careful examination. At times it is possible to identify proposals motivated by a pastoral expediency or antiquarianism that would have disproportionately subjected liturgical tradition to the apparent needs of the times, to passing scholarly fashions or to ideological desires. Pope Pius XII even found it necessary to address some of these concerns in his 1947 Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei* (cf. Part I, chapter V).

Whilst the liturgical movement continued its sound work and, indeed, whilst the Holy See enacted some helpful reforms (for example, the restoration of the authentic times of the celebration of the Holy Week Offices), it is also true that in its later phase the growing desire and agitation for ritual reform amongst some liturgical movement activists risked outrunning if not occluding the indispensable work of liturgical formation. Some thought it desirable to take the short-cut of conforming the Sacred Liturgy to the needs of modern man rather than carefully to lay the foundations for the long road of forming modern man so that he could connect with and draw from the riches of the developed liturgical tradition of the Church.¹⁸

It was against this mixed background that the draft Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was produced and debated at the Second Vatican Council. The fundamental principles of the Constitution promulgated by Paul VI in December 1963 are certainly those of the liturgical

et infallible qui assurera, dans l’Église du Christ, une piété solide, saine, abondante et vraiment catholique; qui fera de nous, dans toute la force de l’ancienne et si chrétienne expression, les enfants de notre Mère la sainte Église;” *La Piété de L’Église: Principes et Faits*, Abbaye du Mont-César & Abbaye de Maredsous, Louvain 1914, p. 8.

¹⁷ See in particular the citations of Dom Bernard Botte and Louis Bouyer on p. 81 (2nd. ed. 2005).

¹⁸ Cf. Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, chapter 3.

movement, as article 14 demonstrates. As we know, this article states plainly that actual participation in the Sacred Liturgy is desired for the whole Church. But it also insists on the requirement for extensive formation “in the spirit and power of the liturgy” as a *necessary precondition* for achieving such participation.

These nature and interdependence of these two fundamental principles in the Constitution has been largely ignored in the past five decades and, I submit, has resulted in erroneous interpretations of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Instead of beginning the work of formation in order to prepare the soil for a more fruitful participation in the liturgy moderately reformed in line with the subsidiary and dependent principles of the Constitution which follow, the haste to have people become liturgical participants led too often to an activist, rather than an actual, participation in Sacred Liturgy built on the quicksand of facile reforms rather than the solid foundation of careful liturgical formation. Indeed, to borrow the words of Father Aidan Nichols OP, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* “carried within it, encased in the innocuous language of pastoral welfare, some seeds of its own destruction.”¹⁹

That is to say that in the unholy and unruly rush to implement specific reforms, the moderate reform for which the Council Fathers called was left behind. Perhaps the clearest example comes from the pen of the principal partisan of postconciliar reform, Archbishop Bugnini himself, who wrote: “It cannot be denied that the principle, approved by the Council, of using the vernaculars was given a broad interpretation.”²⁰ A very broad interpretation indeed! There is no doubt that Sacred Liturgy, that “constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition,” was subjected to unofficial changes and official reforms that were at times highly questionable,²¹ and which caused confusion if not scandal in the lives of many faithful Catholics.²²

Let it be said plainly that after the Council much took place, with and without authorisation, that had little or no justification in the Council itself or indeed in the noble and sound aims of the liturgical movement which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* sought to endorse and promote. The *minutiae* of this historical reality and its implications are for consideration elsewhere, but it remains a fact that the organic development of the liturgy called for by the Council (cf. SC n. 23),²³ was not achieved. There are significant elements of ritual and theological rupture.²⁴ Archbishop Bugnini’s boast that, in respect of the reform, the saying “fortune favours the brave” came true, is itself evidence of the spirit with which the Constitution was officially implemented.²⁵ And the uncritical positivism of self-confessed ‘Vatican II loyalists’ such as Robert Taft SJ who asserts that “the mandate for liturgical reform was passed by the council with an overwhelming majority, so it is the tradition of the Catholic Church, like it or lump it,” simply rings hollow.²⁶

¹⁹ Aidan Nichols OP, “A Tale of Two Documents: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Mediator Dei*” in: Alcuin Reid, ed., *A Pope and A Council on the Sacred Liturgy*, St Michael’s Abbey Press, Farnborough 2002, p. 12.

²⁰ Annibale Bugnini CM, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville 1990, p. 110.

²¹ Perhaps the most telling is the debacle surrounding the 1969 promulgation of the new *Ordo Missæ*; cf. Anthony Cekada, *The Ottaviani Intervention: A Short Critical Study of the New Order of Mass*, Tan, Rockford, Illinois 1992.

²² See: Reid, *A Bitter Trial*.

²³ On article 23 cf. Alcuin Reid, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Organic Development of the Liturgy” in: Uwe Michael Lang, ed., *The Genius of the Roman Rite: Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives on Catholic Liturgy*, Hillenbrand Books, Chicago 2010, pp. 198-215.

²⁴ For an incisive study of the question of theological rupture see: Lauren Pristas, *The Collects of the Roman Missals: A Comparative Study of the Sundays in the Proper Seasons before and after the Second Vatican Council*, T&T Clark, London 2013.

²⁵ Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, p. 11.

²⁶ “Mass instruction: Fr. Robert Taft on liturgical reform,” Interview conducted by Brian Cones, *U.S. Catholic* vol. 74, no. 12, December 2009, (pp. 26-30), p. 27. Taft continues with an account that is staggering in its historical revisionism: “Unfortunately...there has been an attempt on the part of a group of what I call “neo-

In the light of the postconciliar liturgical crisis which, given the nature of the Sacred Liturgy, was and is a crisis that touches the very foundations of the the spiritual, pastoral and theological life of the Church, voices were raised in support of a possible “reform of the reform,”²⁷ or indeed, as we have seen with Cardinal Ratzinger, calling for a possible new liturgical movement.

These calls were not for, and their supporters are not promoting, an “anti-Vatican II ‘new liturgical movement’” to use the phrase recently coined by Massimo Faggioli.²⁸ Rather they – perhaps I may dare to say “we” – seek to read the Council in a hermeneutic of continuity rather than of rupture in an attempt critically to evaluate its implementation so as more faithfully to achieve the true reform it desired. The making of ‘the Council as “event”’ into an idol is all too apparent in the writings of Faggioli and his mentors,²⁹ and leads to an atrophying of the critical faculty in respect of its implementation whereby policies and prudential decisions are elevated into irreformable dogma. This is wrong. The Council’s fundamental principles stand – on their merits – and we are free today to ask whether their implementation was faithful or is in need of correction. Indeed, we are free to ask whether other measures or policies might be necessary for our changed circumstances fifty years later, and whether some of the contingent policies of the Council might now have lost their relevance.

The Liturgical Reform of Benedict XVI

The election to the papacy of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger gave great impetus to these considerations. Pope Benedict XVI’s seminal discourse to the Roman Curia of 22 December 2005 gave the Church the vocabulary of “a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture” and of a “hermeneutic of reform,” of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us,” with which to approach the postconciliar crisis, liturgical and otherwise. This distinction is, of course, is that of the man himself and stands on its merits. That it is has been widely adopted – and hotly contested by some – suggests that it touches a central issue in the interpretation of the Council – wherever one stands.

This hermeneutic grounded what we may call the “liturgical reform of Benedict XVI.” His liturgical initiatives were multi-faceted. In the first place his personal liturgical example used the worldwide visibility that comes with the papal office to offer the Church a master class in how any liturgical minister should put Christ and His action in the Sacred Liturgy first and the person of the celebrant second. Then, in due course, he sought to establish a more tangible continuity in the manner of papal liturgical celebrations – perhaps most pre-eminently in what has become known as the “Benedictine arrangement” of the altar. His celebration of the modern rite *ad orientem* and

cons" to portray the reforms of Vatican II as something that was foisted upon the church by a small minority of professionals contrary to the will of many people in the church. This is what we know in the vernacular as slander. The reforms of the council were carried out under Pope Paul VI in a spirit of complete collegiality. Every suggested adaptation, change, or modification was sent out to every Catholic bishop in the world, and the responses that came in were treated with the utmost respect. When changes were severely questioned or opposed by a large number of bishops, they were revised according to the will of the bishops and then sent back again. So the notion that the liturgical reform was somehow forced on an unknowing church by some group of ‘liturgists,’ as if that were a dirty word, is a lie, and that needs to be said.”

²⁷ See: Thomas M. Kocik, *The Reform of the Reform? A Liturgical Debate: Reform or Return*, Ignatius, San Francisco 2003.

²⁸ Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville 2012, pp. 16-17.

²⁹ See: John W. O’Malley SJ, *What Happened at Vatican II*, Harvard, Cambridge Mass. 2008.

his reminder that Holy Communion is ordinarily received kneeling and on the tongue were significant beacons of continuity. He insisted on the correction of erroneous practices and on the observance of liturgical discipline, daring even to address the issue of the liturgical celebrations of the Neo-Catechumenal Way. So too he insisted on fidelity to received liturgical tradition in such matters as the translation of the words *pro multis* in the words of consecration.³⁰

Benedict XVI also taught about the Sacred Liturgy, pre-eminently in the 2007 Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, with its gentle but clear reassertion of the integral role of beauty in the liturgy (n. 35), his exposition of the *ars celebrandi* (nn. 38-42), including his frank assessment that “as far as the liturgy is concerned, we cannot say that one song is as good as another” and his reassertion of Gregorian chant as “the chant proper to the Roman liturgy” (n. 42), and his elucidation of authentic liturgical participation (nn. 52-63).

And he performed two significant acts of liturgical governance. The first, his 2007 Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* which established in law that the more ancient use of the Roman rite, the *usus antiquior*, “remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful.”³¹

We have recently heard Pope Francis speak of “the risk of the ideologization of the *Vetus Ordo*, its exploitation” as worrying.³² Whatever the Holy Father in fact meant by this, it is true to say that many reactions to *Summorum Pontificum* uncovered an ideologization of the *Novus Ordo* which is more than worrying in its narrow, if not closed, concept of liturgical tradition.

If *Summorum Pontificum* served only to shatter the widespread illusion of recent decades that true liturgy is only found in the early Church and after the Second Vatican Council, it served the Church well. But as we already know, it has done much more, particularly in respect of the “interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church” and by way of an unofficial (if predominantly one-way) ‘mutual’ enrichment between the older and newer rites.³³

The second significant act of governance with substantial liturgical import was the 2009 Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Cœtibus* which provided for Personal Ordinariates for Anglicans entering into full communion with the Catholic Church. Benedict XVI enabled them “to maintain the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church, as a precious gift nourishing the faith of the members of the Ordinarate and as a treasure to be shared.”³⁴ He thereby underlined the legitimate diversity possible of Western Catholic liturgy, preserving its substantial unity and, in this instance welcoming treasures developed outside of (although deriving from) the broader Western liturgical tradition. The introduction of the *Ordo Missæ* developed for the Ordinariates in the past week is perhaps the clearest example of this to date.

For a relatively brief pontificate there was indeed significant liturgical reform. However, as much as we are in debt to him as the Father of the new liturgical movement for his leadership, example and governance, it must be said the movement is not and must not become a Benedict XVI personality cult. His importance lies in his use of his office to articulate sound principles for the liturgical life of the Church, principles consonant with the liturgical tradition of the Church, which the Second Vatican Council recognised in its turn, yet principles which also draw upon the

³⁰ See further: Alcuin Reid, “The Liturgical Reform of Benedict XVI” in: Neil J. Roy & Janet E. Rutherford, eds., *Benedict XVI and the Sacred Liturgy*, Four Courts, Dublin 2010, pp. 156-180.

³¹ Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops on the Occasion of the Publication of *Summorum Pontificum*, 7 July 2007.

³² Antonio Spadaro SJ, Interview “A Big Heart Open to God,” *America*, 30 September 2013.

³³ Cf. Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops on the Occasion of the Publication of *Summorum Pontificum*.

³⁴ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Cœtibus*, 4 November 2009, III.

experience of the postconciliar decades and the changed circumstances of the Church and the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Principles and Pathways for the New Liturgical Movement

It is to an examination of these principles and of some pathways for the new liturgical movement today that we must now turn.

In the first place we must be utterly clear what the Sacred Liturgy is. We must have a truly Catholic liturgical theology that avoids the horizontalist if not protestant errors that infected too many liturgical reforms and choices in recent decades. For the Sacred Liturgy is Christ's work, not ours. In and through it we are immersed into the utter triumph of the resurrected Christ over death, which is daily renewed on our altars at Mass and is celebrated in the other liturgical rites. We do not construct this—we celebrate it as worthily as we can with respect and humility for its content and its forms, even its little rules, which we receive.

Catholic liturgy is a Christian triumphalism that is truly evangelical: it is nothing other than the celebration of the truth of the Gospel that the darkest shadows of the cross are cast by the light of the resurrection, in which light the baptised walk in hope and from which we are sent charged with the solemn duty of bringing others to share in its saving power.

In celebrating this reality ritually liturgically, in daring to do as much as we can as St Thomas Aquinas urges,³⁵ we are not engaging in any pelagian or semi-pelagian activity that seeks to earn God's grace. No, we are cooperating with and giving witness to the grace established within us at Holy Baptism which, for creatures of flesh and blood, and of human psyches, rightly employs multivalent points of connectivity with the action of He who Himself became flesh for our salvation. These points of connectivity—our rites and prayers developed in tradition—are sacred because of their sacramental facilitation of this saving encounter.

Secondly, we must reassert the truly pastoral nature of authentic liturgy. As a friend likes to ask: "Would someone please tell me precisely what liturgy is *not* pastoral?" For too long we have used the adjective "pastoral" to mean "dumbed-down." And that is simply not acceptable.

"To pastor" in the Christian sense means to shepherd one's flock towards the unending joys of heaven. How the dumbing-down of the liturgy, of church music, art, architecture, etc. serves this end I do not know. True liturgy, the Church's liturgy, celebrated fully and as well as we are able, as the Church intends it to be celebrated, is truly pastoral liturgy because it alone optimally nourishes, heals and sustains the life of Christ within us.

Indeed, we must assert the pastoral importance of the *ars celebrandi*—of fidelity to the liturgical norms, of a commitment to beauty in the liturgy, of moving beyond the minimalism of simply doing what is required by the rubrics, in a spirit of celebrating the riches of our liturgical tradition.

³⁵ Cf. Sequence for the Feast of Corpus Christi, *Lauda Sion Salvatorem*.

When we are clear about the true theological and pastoral nature of Catholic liturgy we can then promote that *participatio actuosa* for which the Second Vatican Council called. But, as I have said above and tried to argue in my paper at *Sacra Liturgia 2013* last June, widespread formation in the spirit and power of the Sacred Liturgy is the necessary precondition for such participation,³⁶ and we ignore this to our peril.

The work of liturgical formation must, then, be another hallmark of the new liturgical movement. This is not primarily an academic or technical endeavour. Rather it involves facilitating in hearts and minds the discovery of the ways of the liturgy – it is formation first and foremost by living the liturgy, by immersion into it, by recognising, coming to know and entering into a deeper relationship with the beautiful face of Christ at work there, in His Church gathered in worship. As a priest friend wrote to me recently: “We’ve changed minds, but we need to change hearts, and find a way to make the people *love* the liturgy as much as we desire to them to appreciate it intellectually and aesthetically.”

To this end I would argue that we urgently need a *ressourcement*, a revisiting of the best of the origins of the twentieth century liturgical movement – the writings and practices, the efforts and pastoral vision of its pioneers and Fathers, particularly Dom Beauduin,³⁷ Dom Maurice Festugière,³⁸ Dom Idelfons Herwegen,³⁹ Romano Guardini,⁴⁰ Dom Virgil Michel,⁴¹ and others.⁴² They have much to teach us today.

When we have done this, and only then, we will have facilitated *participatio actuosa*, which is necessarily consequent to sound liturgical theology and to a good *ars celebrandi*. The liturgical celebrations in which we participate must be consonant with and grounded in sound liturgical and theological principles, not rites evacuated of their content so as to render participation facile, as too often has been the case.

The fourth area of activity for the new liturgical movement I would propose is its promotion of the riches and breadth of Western liturgical tradition. *Summorum Pontificum* and *Anglicanorum Cœtibus* have equipped us well for this task, which task includes revisiting the treasures of the liturgies of the religious orders and the primatial sees which were so clinically discarded following the Council: “What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too.”⁴³

Fifthly, we must insist that reform in continuity, and not rupture, is the *sine qua non* of Catholic liturgical development. This necessarily involves rereading *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and its

³⁶ “‘Spiritu et virtutæ Liturgiæ penitus imbuantur’- *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and Liturgical Formation,” Paper delivered to *Sacra Liturgia 2013*, Pontifical University of Santa Croce, Rome, 27th June 2013. The proceedings of *Sacra Liturgia 2013* are to be published by Ignatius Press.

³⁷ Lambert Beauduin OSB, *La Piété de L’Église: Principes et Faits*, Abbaye du Mont-César & Abbaye de Maredsous, Louvain 1914. It was published in English translation in 1926 by the Liturgical Press as *Liturgy the Life of the Church*. The most recent edition, edited by the present author, was published in 2002 by St Michael’s Abbey Press, Farnborough.

³⁸ Maurice Festugière OSB, *La Liturgie Catholique: Essai de Synthèse*, Abbaye de Maredsous 1913.

³⁹ Idelfons Herwegen, *Das Kunstprinzip in der Liturgie*, [Publisher?], Paderborn 1912; *Liturgy’s Inner Beauty*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville 1955, published as *The Art-Principle of the Liturgy* by the same publisher in 1931.

⁴⁰ Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Sheed & Ward, London 1930; *Sacred Signs*, Sheed & Ward, London 1937; *Liturgische Bildung*, Deutsches Quickbornhaus, Burg Rothenfels am Main, 1923; *Formazione liturgica*, 1988; “A Letter from Romano Guardini” in: *Herder Correspondence*, Special Issue, 1964, pp. 24-26.

⁴¹ Virgil Michel OSB, *The Liturgy of the Church: According to the Roman Rite*, Macmillan, New York 1938.

⁴² For example: Emmanuele Caronti OSB, *La pietà liturgica*, Libreria del Sacro Cuore, Torino 1920; *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville 1926.

⁴³ Benedict XVI, Letter to the Bishops on the Occasion of the Publication of *Summorum Pontificum*, 7 July 2007.

mutant progeny in the light of this hermeneutic. Such a reading will show us more clearly the paths necessary for any future reform of the reform, the need for which is not dead because some liturgists think that the current Pope may not wish to pursue it, but which is in fact ever more pressing out of fidelity to liturgical tradition, out of fidelity to the Council and also in the light of the urgent pastoral needs of today.

Finally, the new liturgical movement must reject the positivism and ultramontanistism spoken of earlier. “What Would You Want the ‘Council of Cardinals’ To Do with Liturgy?” we read in a post on the *Pray Tell* blog on 30th September 2013. But it is not for cardinals, popes, bishops, or any of us, *to do things with the liturgy*. Rather, it is our privilege and duty *to do the liturgy* as it has been handed on to us and to allow it, indeed to allow Christ working in and through it, to do things with us!

For when I say “I am going to change the liturgy,” I have long since lost that “religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy” of which the *Catechism* speaks. No. I must celebrate the liturgy faithfully, and as fully as I am able. If I am in a position of authority my responsibility is not to shape the liturgy according to prevailing preferences or ideologies—my own or those of others—but to care for it as a custodian, to see that it is faithfully celebrated and handed on, and yes, perhaps also carefully to supervise its legitimate development or even to correct erroneous practices.

Conclusion

The validity of these principles does not rely on any one personality or pope. Yes, we were providentially blessed in the person, teaching, governance and example of Benedict XVI. May he be rewarded for all that he has done.

But his is retired now. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, to whom, as Catholics, we owe due loyalty and obedience, is a different man with different priorities, and I am sure that we are as one in praying that Almighty God shall give him all the strength and wisdom necessary to govern the Church wisely in our time.

In the meantime the work of the new liturgical movement continues because it is founded on sound principles that are of perduring value for the Church.

We may mourn the loss of Pope Benedict’s leadership. We certainly—as children do—fondly recall all that he gave us. But as children eventually have to do, we—the next generation of the new liturgical movement—must now ourselves carry the burden of the day. According to the differing vocations and gifts Almighty God has given each one of us, we have this responsibility. In our efforts faithfully to fulfil this duty in the years to come let us make the beloved father of the new liturgical movement, Benedict XVI, very proud indeed!