

## The Bavarian's Surprise: Ratzinger's Spirit of the Liturgy as the Spirit of the Council

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“I am convinced that the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is to a large extent due to the disintegration of the liturgy. . . . When the community of faith, the world-wide unity of the Church and her history, and the mystery of the living Christ are no longer visible in the liturgy, where else, then, is the Church to become visible in her spiritual essence? Then the community is celebrating only itself, an activity that is utterly fruitless. . . . This is why we need a new Liturgical Movement, which will call to life the real heritage of the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>1</sup>

—Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

NO ONE FAMILIAR with the history of liturgy after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and the raging debates about the implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (hereafter, *SC*),<sup>3</sup> will find this quote surprising. While it is

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs, 1927–1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 148–49.

<sup>2</sup> I will refer to him as Joseph Ratzinger throughout the essay when referring to his work before becoming Pope and will use the appropriate papal nomenclature when speaking of him as the Bishop of Rome.

<sup>3</sup> When the Latin text of a Vatican II document is quoted, the text will be taken from the Latin version available at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm). All Scripture quotations are taken from

largely assumed that the theological work of the Pope Emeritus will harmonize with Vatican II, his critique of SC and the implementation of its call for reforms in the liturgy is seen as the one glaring exception. Cardinal Ratzinger has long been a symbolic figure for those who seek a “reform of the reform,” a tension that is often caricatured with the battle line drawn between the council itself and the “spirit of the council.”<sup>4</sup> This “spirit” is pejoratively depicted as an attempt to jettison central aspects of the Church’s life but do so from underneath the invisibility cloak of the authority of an ecumenical council. Ratzinger is convinced of a danger for the Church in what Eamon Duffy characterizes as “a rootless *aggiornamento*, reform understood as the adoption merely of modern intellectual and cultural fads and fashions.”<sup>5</sup> When it comes to the liturgy (by which he means most centrally the Mass), Ratzinger’s principal concern is summed up well in John Baldovin’s striking metaphor: he “perceives the liberal or progressive attitude toward liturgy as an unwarranted accommodation to the spirit of the age—going in their door and failing to come out our own.”<sup>6</sup> In short, the story of Ratzinger and the liturgy is often portrayed as something of a tragedy: the young progressive betrays his original commitments; he then retrenches and slowly foments a growing distrust for the new liturgy because of his a-historical nostalgia for the piety of his German childhood.<sup>7</sup>

But does this tell us the actual story? I wish to suggest that a focus on the ecclesiological aspects of Ratzinger’s liturgical writing, particularly the presentation of “the people of God gathered as the liturgical assembly” in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, reveals a *ressourcement* that

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*The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: Revised Standard Version, Containing the Second Edition of the New Testament and an Expanded Edition of the Apocrypha*, ed. Bruce Manning Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> Since a great deal of what will be discussed centers on the differences between the liturgy and the liturgical spirit before and after Vatican II, all references to “the Council” refer to the Second Vatican Council unless otherwise noted.

<sup>5</sup> Eamon Duffy, “Pope Benedict XVI and the Liturgy,” *Inside the Vatican*, November 2006, 35.

<sup>6</sup> John F. Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 67.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre-Marie Gy makes this precise charge: “I am aware that I am a few years older than Doctor, now Cardinal, Ratzinger, that, in our twilight years, we are in danger of retracing the intellectual path we traveled at the outset of our maturity? Some great theologians of Vatican II have not escaped this danger”; see “Cardinal Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*: Is It Faithful to the Council or in Reaction to It?” *Antiphon* 11.1 (2007): 90–96, at 95–96.

is in deep accord with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.<sup>8</sup> In fact, despite the critiques of those like the eminent liturgical scholar Pierre-Marie Gy,<sup>9</sup> Ratzinger's liturgical theology in general and his discussion of the liturgical assembly in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* in particular exhibit a real and substantive coherence with SC. Further, I suggest that Ratzinger's concerns regarding the liturgy are best characterized as *ecclesiological*. As such, this essay will be structured so as to give particular attention to the place of the gathered Church as the assembly in the Eucharistic liturgy.

The argument will proceed by proposing a series of theses on controversial matters that move from macro concerns, such as liturgy's relationship to the human person, down to particulars, such as what constitutes active participation of the assembly. Each thesis begins with a quotation from Ratzinger and concludes with one from SC in order to disclose further the harmony between them. Yves Congar will be a critical conversation partner throughout by way of his influential essay "The *Ecclesia* or Christian Community as a Whole Celebrates the Liturgy," which he published in 1967 "to provide expert commentary on the text of *Sacrosanctum concilium*."<sup>10</sup> But in order to best set the stage for my theses, I will begin with a brief overview of some of Ratzinger's concerns regarding post-conciliar liturgy and a look at the substance of the critique by Pierre-Marie Gy. While the concerns with Ratzinger's work often critique his hesitancy about much of the implementation of SC, Gy's critiques are much more serious, for he charges that Ratzinger's liturgical theology actually conflicts with that of the council.

## **Ratzinger on the Liturgy and Pierre-Marie Gy's Critique**

### *Background*

Ratzinger is often portrayed as someone who betrayed the spirit of reform that once burned hot. Recall that, before and during the Council, Ratzinger was counted "on the side of the Council's progressive

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> See Gy, "Cardinal Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*."

<sup>10</sup> Yves Congar, O.P., *At the Heart of Christian Worship: Liturgical Essays of Yves Congar*, trans. and ed. Paul J. Philibert (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 15–67. The comment about the purpose of the essay comes from the translator's introduction; see *ibid.*, 15. The essay was first published in *Vatican II: La Liturgie après Vatican II-Unam Sanctum* 66 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1967), 241–82.

wing.”<sup>11</sup> In the insider’s view of the Council that he published in 1966, only a year after the its close, he writes glowingly of the its decision to begin with the liturgy, the place where he says that the Church “fulfills its innermost mission, the adoration of the Triune God . . . and the proper point of departure for all renewal.”<sup>12</sup> In fact, these memoirs anticipate the major theme of the Constitution: the “fully conscious and active participation” of the whole Church (SC, §14). He begins his 1966 council chronicle noting both the “exhilaration at the opening of the Council in Rome” and “an undeniable uneasiness, whose obvious symptom was annoyance with the endlessly long ceremonies.” He goes on: “The opening liturgy did not really involve all who were present, and it had little inner coherence. Did it make sense for 2,500 bishops, not to mention the other faithful there, to be relegated to the role of mere spectators at a ceremony in which only the celebrants and the Sistine Choir had a voice. Was not the fact that the active participation of those present was not required symptomatic of a wrong that needed remedied?”<sup>13</sup>

Immediately, two major themes of SC (see §14) come to the fore as Ratzinger continues: (1) “the dialogical nature of the whole liturgical celebration and its essence as the common service of the People of God had to be once more fully emphasized”;<sup>14</sup> and (2) “a special objective of liturgical reform . . . was a more active participation of the laity.”<sup>15</sup> But all this is said to have changed for Ratzinger just

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas P. Rausch, S.J., “Introduction,” in Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 31.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 20–21. Congar and Edward Schillebeeckx, S.J., among others, expressed similar critiques and in often blistering language. See Yves Congar, O.P., *My Journal of the Council*, trans. Sr. Mary John Ronayne, O.P., and Mary Cecily Boulding, O.P. (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2012), 85–89; 465–66. Here are a few trenchant excerpts from Congar’s journals on the opening liturgy: “The liturgical movement has not yet reached the Roman Curia. This immense assembly says nothing, sings nothing. It is said that the Jews are the people of hearing, the Greeks of sight. There is nothing here except for the eye and the musical ear: no liturgy of the Word. No spiritual word. . . . After the epistle, I left the tribune. In any case, I could not take it anymore. The whole Church was there, embodied in its pastors [the bishops]. But I regret that a style of celebration was employed that was so alien to the reality of things. What could it have been if those 2,500 voices had together sung at least the *Credo*, if not all the chants of the Mass, instead of that elegant crooning by paid professionals?” (*ibid.*, 87).

<sup>14</sup> Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 32–33.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 33–34.

two years after the publication of his conciliar memoir/commentary, when the student riots in the spring of 1968 shook him dramatically. From that point forward, there is little debate that there is a growing distance from theologians such as Karl Rahner. Ratzinger eventually joined Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar in supporting the journal *Communio*, in some contradistinction to its rival *Concilium*, on whose pages could be found the writings of luminaries such as Yves Congar, Hans Küng, John Baptist Metz, Karl Rahner, Edward Schillibeeckx, and others.<sup>16</sup>

There can be a strident tone to some of Ratzinger's writing on the liturgy, even at times in his only book-length treatment of the topic, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*.<sup>17</sup> This is because they were usually occasioned by his concerns over the implementation of SC, both in the composition of the new rites and in the latitude with which they are sometimes celebrated.<sup>18</sup> While this "theology of the liturgical assembly" is a liturgical theme, *Spirit of the Liturgy* is no less concerned with ecclesiology, which may be Ratzinger's most lasting theological contribution.<sup>19</sup> We should not forget that one of the achievements of

<sup>16</sup> Ratzinger, *Milestones*; Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy*; John L. Allen, *Cardinal Ratzinger: The Vatican's Enforcer of the Faith* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> In addition to this work, see his others writings on the liturgy: Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986); Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today* (New York: Crossroad Pub, 1996); Ratzinger, "Romano Guardini's Basic Theological Approach and Its Significance" in *Fundamental Speeches from Five Decades* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 231–58; Ratzinger, "The Theology of the Liturgy" and "Assessment and Future Prospects," in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger: Proceedings of the July 2001 Fontgombault Liturgical Conference*, ed. Fontgombault Liturgical Conference and Alcuin Reid (Farnborough, Hampshire, UK: St. Michael's Abbey Press, 2003), 18–31 and 145–58; Pope Benedict XVI, *The Sacrament of Charity [Sacramentum Caritatis]: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, Publication / USCCB Publishing, no. 7-002 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2007). These and others have recently been published in one volume: *Joseph Ratzinger-Collected Works: Theology of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Even his most recent public lecture directly addressed these themes within the context of music within the liturgy: "Pope Benedict's Words After Receiving Honorary Doctorate in Castel Gandolfo," 07-06-2015, Zenit.org, (available at [http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-benedict-s-words-after-receiving-honorary-doctorate-in-castel-gandolfo?utm\\_campaign=dailyhtml&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=dispatch](http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-benedict-s-words-after-receiving-honorary-doctorate-in-castel-gandolfo?utm_campaign=dailyhtml&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dispatch)).

<sup>19</sup> The fusion of these two themes is present from the beginning of his theological work, as his doctoral dissertation ("The People and House of God in Augustine's Doctrine of the Church") demonstrates; his dissertation was

Vatican II most regularly trumpeted is the emergence of Eucharistic and communion ecclesiologies as a balance to a more juridically conceived approach that was marked by “a rigid distinction between clergy and laity.”<sup>20</sup>

The theme of ecclesiology is reflected in SC through its significant attention to the *ecclesia*,<sup>21</sup> or “People of God” (to which I will refer throughout as the “assembly” for the sake of brevity) and their “active participation” in the liturgy.<sup>22</sup> The very basic acknowledgement

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published as Joseph Ratzinger, *Volk Und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von Der Kirche*, Münchener Theologische Studien 7 (München: K. Zink, 1954).

<sup>20</sup> So suggests Richard R. Gaillardetz in *Teaching with Authority: A Theology of the Magisterium in the Church*, Theology and Life Series 41 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 4. See 3–30 for Gaillardetz’s ecclesiological reading of Vatican II. For a different perspective, see Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, 161–91.

<sup>21</sup> Ratzinger introduces the term *ecclesia* (spelled *ekklesia* in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*) when he begins his discussion of church buildings (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 63). The general use of the Greek term was for “a regularly summoned legislative body,” though its secondary meaning is “people with shared belief, community, congregation”; see *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. and rev. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (BDAG) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 303. Ratzinger highlights Cyril of Jerusalem’s note that the *convocatio* (which he says corresponded to *synagoge-ekklesia* and defines as “the assembly of the people called together and made his own by God”) appears for the first time in the Pentateuch, where it is connected with Aaron and oriented toward worship (he seems to be referring to the end of Exod 4 and Num 20:6–10). The principle theological claims are: a) God convokes or gathers scattered people into a group; b) the assembly’s primary purpose is to worship; and c) the use of the term in the New Testament is meant to recall its archetype on Sinai, where they “come together to hear God’s Word and to seal everything with sacrifice” (Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 63).

<sup>22</sup> The watchword of the post-Conciliar liturgical movement—“active participation”—appears eleven times in SC—§§14 (twice), 19, 27, 30, 41, 50, 113, 114, 121, 124—and is certainly one of its sub-themes. This emphasis is not new to SC but is seen much earlier, for instance in Pope Pius X’s *motu proprio* titled *Tra le Sollecitudini* (Instruction on Sacred Music) (November 22, 1903): “We deem it necessary to provide before anything else for the sanctity and dignity of the temple, in which the faithful assemble for no other object than that of acquiring this spirit from its foremost and indispensable font, which is *the active participation in the most holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church*” (Introduction; emphasis added; available in Spanish at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_x/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_motu-proprio\\_19031122\\_sollecitudini\\_sp.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19031122_sollecitudini_sp.html); English translation available at <http://www.adoremus.org/MotuProprio.html>). Pius XI echoed these sentiments in his Papal Bull *Divini Cultus* (On Divine Worship) (December 20, 1928)

that the plural “you” to whom the texts of the New Testament are addressed is the “we” of the liturgical texts encapsulates the nature of this divinely created *ecclesia*.<sup>23</sup> The great liturgist Josef Jungman wrote that, in order to answer the question of what the liturgy is, one first needs to answer the question “What do you mean by *ecclesia*—church?” Jungman’s response to the latter question provides a helpful insight into Ratzinger’s approach: “The *ecclesia* is the spiritual assembly of brothers and sisters (gathered in faith), brought about by an act of the Lord and by his presence in their midst.”<sup>24</sup>

Ratzinger’s concern is with the practical ways in which the emphasis on the People of God<sup>25</sup> in the documents of Vatican II and

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(available in English at <http://www.adoremus.org/DiviniCultus.html>). This trajectory in papal teaching before the Council culminates in Pius XII’s encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947), especially §§78, 192, and 199. Massimo Faggiolo argues strongly for the centrality of ecclesiology to understanding SC and then, through this reading of it, to understand the ecclesiology of Vatican II; see Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012): 15: “*Sacrosanctum concilium* constitutes one of the pillars of the ecclesiology of Vatican II.” In particular he highlights the famous line in SC, §5: “For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the ‘the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church.’” This theme of the “church as sacrament,” he argues, is the basis for the opening of *Lumen Gentium*: “Since the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of a sacrament—a sign an instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men” (§1); see Faggioli, *True Reform*, esp. 65–71.

<sup>23</sup> Gordon Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 21. Lathrop makes it clear that he shares this approach with Ratzinger (cf. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 171–77). The first chapter of Ratzinger’s *Dogma and Preaching* (“Church as the Place of Preaching”) offers a helpful source for an even richer liturgical perspective on the *ecclesia*; see *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, unabridged ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 15–25.

<sup>24</sup> Josef Jungman, “Was ist Liturgie?” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 55 (1931): 83–102 (cited in Congar, *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 43).

<sup>25</sup> This phrase, *populus Dei* appears only once in SC, in §29: “Servers, lectors commentators, and members of the choir also exercise a genuine liturgical function. They ought, therefore, to discharge their office with the sincere piety and decorum demanded by so exalted a ministry and rightly expected of them by God’s people [Etiam ministrantes, lectores, commentatores et ii qui ad scholam cantorum pertinent, vero ministerio liturgico funguntur. Propterea munus suum tali sincera pietate et ordine exercent, quae tantum ministerium decent quaeque populus Dei ab eis iure exigit; the mention of piety is drawn from Pius XI’s *Divini cultus*].” Referring to the Church as *ecclesia* and People of God, Congar suggests that, had SC been composed after *Lumen Gentium*, “it might have accentuated even more the points on which we can observe an

the call for the “full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgical celebrations” (SC, §14) by all the faithful has found practical expression in much of the Church. §48 of the Constitution is often read as a summary of the program for the reform of the liturgy:

The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers, they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God’s Word and be nourished at the table of the Lord’s Body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him [“*immaculatam hostiam non tantum per sacerdotis manus, sed etiam una cum ipso offerentes*”], they should learn also to offer themselves.

One way to summarize the heart of Ratzinger’s critique of a great deal of Catholic liturgy after the Council is to say that the “essence of the liturgy” has been lost by a growing inattention to what is absolutely central to the liturgy—namely, that it is “God [who must remain] at the center of the liturgical celebration.”<sup>26</sup> For Ratzinger, all proper liturgical theology and practice must flow from a proper answer to the question “What is the central *actio* of the Mass?”<sup>27</sup> His answer is that God’s action is the “real action,” although the whole church both “part-icipate[s]” in it and has a real part.<sup>28</sup> And from this fundamental assumption flows all his theological considerations of the Eucharistic rite and the assembly’s active participation.

### *Gy’s Critiques*

The 2007 review essay by eminent liturgical scholar Pierre-Marie Gy, “Cardinal Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*: Is it Faithful to the Council or in Reaction to It?”<sup>29</sup> is representative of the deep concern

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advance over the encyclical *Mediator Dei*, from which it takes its fundamental teaching” (ibid., 49).

<sup>26</sup> Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy*, 67.

<sup>27</sup> See Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 171, and *Feast of Faith*, 33.

<sup>28</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 171–73.

<sup>29</sup> Gy, “Cardinal Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*,” originally appeared in French in *La Maison-Dieu* 230.2 (2002): 113–20. He lists more criticisms than I will address in the body of this essay. Here are two additional specific



elicited in some quarters by Ratzinger's book, and Gy offers a number of serious critiques. The heart of his concern—and this is a serious charge—is “whether the Cardinal is in harmony with the Council's Constitution on the Liturgy.”<sup>30</sup> He claims that, outside of “active participation,” Ratzinger fails to lift up other “important aspects” of SC (although Gy does not himself name these other themes). Strangely, in the same paragraph, Gy argues that Ratzinger “shows no concern for how active participation deepens the piety of the faithful, nor for spiritual values such as that of the role (expressly mentioned in the council documents) of the faithful in the eucharistic sacrifice, or of communion under both species.”<sup>31</sup> This odd contradiction in his critique is all the more perplexing in light of a large section near the end of *The Spirit of the Liturgy* entitled “Active Participation” (pp. 171–77), a fact that Ratzinger points out in his reply to Gy's critical essay.<sup>32</sup> Part of Ratzinger's concern about active participation can be found in his long engagement on the orientation of the priest at the altar vis-à-vis the assembly (a matter I will address in the final theses).

Gy is also concerned that Ratzinger neglects the way the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, speaks of the Eucharist. In other words, he wonders whether Ratzinger's teaching on the liturgy has been placed in its proper ecclesiological context. This too is somewhat curious, since Ratzinger declares in the preface of *The Spirit of the Liturgy* that Vatican II “definitively” showed forth the true form of

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criticisms he names, listed in the order in which they appear in his essay and followed by Ratzinger's specific responses in “‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’ or Fidelity to the Council: Response to Father Gy,” trans. J. Stephen Maddux, *Antiphon* 11.1 (2007): 98–102: (a) the charge of an insufficient attention to precise contours of “papal authority in liturgical matters” (ibid., 92), to which charge Ratzinger made a specific response (Ratzinger, “Response,” 99); b) the charge of inattention to “the way Paul VI constantly followed the work of the *Consilium*” as witnessed in Msgr. A. Bugnini's history, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948–1975* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), in response to which charge Ratzinger highlights that “the pope withdrew his confidence in Bugnini in the end and remove[d] him from the work on the liturgy” and emphasizes Bugnini's own assessment that the Missal of Paul VI probably had a shelf life of only twenty or thirty years and thus the importance of the “need to reflect on the means for correcting the deficiencies in the reform, deficiencies that are more obvious today” (Ratzinger, “Response,” 99).

<sup>30</sup> Gy, “Cardinal Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*,” 94.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>32</sup> Ratzinger, “‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’ or Fidelity to the Council,” 98. In fact, as Ratzinger notes, “the entire second chapter of the fourth part of my book is dedicated to ‘active participation’ as an essential component of a proper celebration of the liturgy” (ibid.).

the liturgy. Instead of a foray into “scholarly discussion and research,” Ratzinger explains that his book is rather “an aid to the understanding of the faith and to the right way to give the faith its central form of expression in the liturgy.”<sup>33</sup> While it clearly presumes the teaching of Vatican II, Ratzinger is clear that he did not intend the book as a study of either SC or the Council’s other documents..

Since Ratzinger’s focus in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* is on neither the textual history of liturgy nor the particulars of its celebration, but rather the liturgy’s “spirit,” a subsequent charge by Gy must be considered quite carefully: “Does not an attempt [by Ratzinger] to separate anew spirituality and celebration amount to a reluctance to enter spiritually into the liturgy of Vatican II?”<sup>34</sup> This concern is prompted by Ratzinger’s claim in the book’s final chapter, on active participation, where he notes that the book “is not intended to give instructions for liturgical practice,” but rather to provide “insights into the spirit of the liturgy.”<sup>35</sup> The context of the quotation makes it quite clear that Ratzinger is simply noting that his book is not a priestly directive regarding ceremonial. Rather, it is a consideration of the spiritual nature of the liturgy and of how Christians might allow themselves most fruitfully to have a spiritual orientation that corresponds to and is shaped by a true participation in the liturgy.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Gy, “Cardinal Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*,” 94. In Ratzinger’s response to Gy, he acknowledges that “the question of orientation [of the priest in the liturgy] and that of active participation” have caused the most significant responses to his book (“‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’ or Fidelity to the Council,” 101).

<sup>35</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 207.

<sup>36</sup> In the English translation of Gy’s article in *Antiphon*, his quotation from the French edition of Ratzinger’s book (*L’Esprit de la liturgie*) is rendered somewhat differently: “the subject of this book is not the celebration of its liturgy but its spirit” (“Cardinal Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*,” 93), a sentence that is somewhat ambiguous. The English translation from which I quoted (from the Ignatius Press edition of *The Spirit of the Liturgy*) makes Ratzinger’s distinction much clearer: the distinction is not between the enacting of the liturgy and the spirit of the liturgy, but rather between liturgical instructions about precisely how to enact the liturgy (i.e., ceremonial details) and the spiritual posture necessary for the proper enactment of and participation in the liturgy. This is clear within the context of the quotation: the book subsection from which the quotation comes concerns the use of both the human voice and silence in the liturgy. The full quotation makes it clear that this part of the chapter is not about the various types of voice (i.e., full voice for certain parts of the liturgy, the low voice for the priest’s private prayers, and so forth). Rather, Ratzinger writes, “it is clear that in the liturgy of the Logos, of the

Gy, however, seems to interpret Ratzinger's claim quite differently. He suggests that Ratzinger is advocating for a sharp chasm between the spiritual life and the celebration of the liturgy. As Ratzinger himself explicitly argues, and as I will show later, his purpose is just the opposite. The task is to set out the nature or spirit of the liturgy *in order to* facilitate both greater active participation by the faithful (the subject of the book's lengthy final chapter) and a life that corresponds to this participation.

Ratzinger's book consciously recalls the work of a nearly identical title in 1918 by Romano Guardini,<sup>37</sup> but Fr. Gy strongly suggests that Ratzinger's approach may actually be in tension with both Guardini's and (rather ironically) that of St. Pius X.<sup>38</sup> Both advocated (in Gy's words) a "spirituality integrated with liturgical life."<sup>39</sup> He goes on to suggest that one of the differences between them and Ratzinger is that the latter's work demonstrates "an attempt to separate anew spirituality and celebration." Specifically, Gy argues that Ratzinger's approach to spirituality/piety is that "of his Christian childhood and of his priestly ordination," which includes "an attachment to the priestly prayers said in a low voice" and a mass with a silent canon. If this is so, it is in tension with that of both "the liturgical rules currently in place" and "the liturgical values affirmed by the Council."<sup>40</sup> By this, Gy means to remind his readers that Ratzinger's ideas

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Eternal Word, the word and thus the human voice have an essential role to play. In this little book, which is not intended to give liturgical instructions for liturgical practice but only insights into the spirit of the liturgy, we do not need to discuss the detailed forms in which the human voice is deployed in the liturgy" (ibid., 207). The way Gy uses the quotation in his argument indicates that he thinks Ratzinger is making a much bigger distinction than it is clear Ratzinger intends to make.

<sup>37</sup> Ratzinger notes this in the introduction of *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Presumably, Gy is thinking in particular of the 1903 *motu proprio* by St. Pope Pius titled *Tra le Sollecitudine* and his 1910 decree *Quam Singulari*.

<sup>39</sup> Gy, "Cardinal Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*," 94.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 94–95. Gy cites Ratzinger's memoirs as evidence of his attachment to a piety in tension with Vatican II; see Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 67. Gy also mentions Ratzinger's "attachment to the priestly prayers said in a low voice, that the faithful of his country began to follow in a missal around the beginning of the twentieth century," to which Gy adds somewhat sarcastically, "if they did not recite the rosary during the Mass" (Gy, "Cardinal Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*," 94); see Ratzinger's discussion in *Milestones*, 19–20, where he describes the use of a German people's missal that included all of the private priestly prayers and encouraged the faithful to pray those prayers silently along with the priest. The characterization by Gy that Ratzinger is "unaware of the distinction between the private prayers of the priest and the prayers said by

about a silent canon are in conflict with the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which is clear that the Eucharistic prayer is to be said in an audible voice.<sup>41</sup> Regarding the *sotto voce* canon, it seems that Gy has misunderstood the nature of Ratzinger's comments, which are not given as a *directive* to priests about how to say the canon when using the current missal. Rather, he is offering an argument that *in theory* a silent canon is not antithetical to the nature of the Eucharistic Prayer,<sup>42</sup> and this is the reason for his historical argument about how early this practice developed and his insistence, in his response to Gy, that he "hold[s] to it [the liturgical norms of the General Instruction] with an inner conviction."<sup>43</sup> Thus, in short, it is extremely unlikely that Ratzinger would publish a book while he was Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that publically encourages priests to contradict the stated norms of the Pauline missal.

### Conclusion

Together, these constitute the heart of Gy's critiques. For many of them, I have provided something of a response and/or rebuttal, using Ratzinger's own words as much as possible. Whether or not a partic-

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him as celebrant" seems strange indeed, as Ratzinger does not say this in either *Milestones* or *The Spirit of the Liturgy*.

<sup>41</sup> These two items are clear in both the 1970 and 2002 editions of the Instructions; and when they are considered together, they appear to preclude the possibility of both the canon said inaudibly and the playing of any music during the canon: a) "Among the parts assigned to the priest, the eucharistic prayer has precedence; it is the high point of the celebration" [Inter ea quae sacerdoti tribuuntur, primum locum obtinet prex eucharistica, quae culmen est totius celebrationis] (§10 in 1970; §30 in 2002); and b) "The presidential prayers should be spoken in a loud and clear voice so that everyone present can hear and pay attention. While the priest is speaking, there should be no other prayer or song, and the organ and other musical instruments should be silent [Nature partium "praesidentialium" exigit ut clara et elata voce proferantur et ab omnibus cum attentione auscultentur. Proinde dum sacerdos eas profert aliae orationes vel cantus non habeantur, atque organum vel alia instrumenta musica sileant]" (§12 in 1970; §32 in 2002). The English translation is from: *The General Instruction and the New Order of Mass*, ed. International Committee on English in the Liturgy (Hales Corners, WI: Priests of the Sacred Heart, 1969); *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, ed. International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Liturgy Documentary Series 2 (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003).

<sup>42</sup> See Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. My thanks to Fr. Andrew Menke and Dom Alcuin Reid for their insightful comments by way of private correspondence regarding Ratzinger's intention in this passage.

<sup>43</sup> Ratzinger, "The Spirit of the Liturgy' or Fidelity to the Council," 98, 99.

ular critique hits the mark, the whole thrust of Gy's charge against Ratzinger is substantial indeed. Does Ratzinger reject the substance of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy? I argue that Ratzinger's approach, while engendered by practical concerns that are reflected in language that is sometimes sharp, nevertheless reflects deeply both the spirituality, theology, and intention of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the approach of Congar: liturgical services are "not private functions" but, by their nature, celebrated by God's "holy people" (SC, §26).<sup>44</sup>

### **To Live Humanity's End**

*Thesis 1: The telos of the individuals who make up the assembly can be attained only as the assembly in the liturgy.*

"It is the very life of man, man himself as living righteously, that is the true worship of God; but life only becomes real life when it receives its form from looking towards God."

—Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 17.

Ratzinger begins his study of worship by looking at Israel's exodus, which he suggests had two discrete goals. The first and obvious one is the Promised Land. But the second is found in the request Moses makes of Pharaoh: "Let my people go, *that they may serve me in the wilderness*" (Exod 7:16), a request repeated four more times in the course of the plagues (Exod 8:1; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3). The exodus is not first about the acquisition of the land *qua* land. Rather, "the land is given to the people to be a place for the worship of the true God" and a restoration of their real identity. Congar describes God's activity in liturgical acts of the assembly "as an attempt to re-form within us our likeness to God . . . as reassembling man, and reuniting the scattered fragments of Adam."<sup>45</sup>

True freedom, the freedom to live a truly human life, is ultimately the freedom to worship. Worship is a necessary aspect of what it means to be fully human. First, there is its anticipatory and eschatological character, which seeks by means of this connection and conformity to God a more perfect form of existence and, "in so doing, gives our present life its proper measure."<sup>46</sup> Second, worship is constitutive of

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<sup>44</sup> For Congar, see *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 15–67.

<sup>45</sup> "The Council as an Assembly," in Yves Congar and Martin Redfern, *Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P., Theologians Today: A Series Selected and Edited by Martin Redfern* (London, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1972), 112.

<sup>46</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 18.

the full extent of human existence.<sup>47</sup> He cites Irenaeus in *Adversus haeresus* and then expands upon it: “The glory of God is the living man, but the life of man is the vision of God.”<sup>48</sup> He interprets this to mean that the *telos* for the human person is to become “glory for God,” which occurs when a person “puts God, so to speak into the light (and that is what worship is), when he lives by looking toward God.”<sup>49</sup> In short, liturgy and ethics bear a profound relationship to each other, each springing from and directed in a certain way toward the other. Worship—a completely God-ward life—is humanity’s *telos* and perfect freedom.

The liturgy is the mechanism through which the assembly, when actively participating, actually becomes the action of God (see SC, §7). This approach is critical to recognize in light of Gy’s charge that Ratzinger separates spirituality and the celebration of the liturgy. The theme of this thesis demonstrates precisely the opposite concern, that a proper engagement in the liturgy allows for the requisite spiritual orientation of the entire life of a Christian. Ratzinger presents this reality by way of the well-known Neoplatonic scheme of *exitus-reditus* that later was taken up and transformed by the Christian tradition.<sup>50</sup> The goal of worship—and, one could say, the *telos* of Scripture and ethics—is the very same goal as creation: “divinization.”<sup>51</sup> For Ratzinger, even the notion of sacrifice is understood in terms of the scheme of *exitus-reditus* movement. Viewed Eucharistically, humanity is unable to make a *reditus* even in response to the *kenotic exitus* of God the Son. Rather, only by following along in the path of the Son’s *reditus* is humanity able to make its *reditus*: complete surrender by means of love. The *exitus*, which Ratzinger identifies as “the Creator’s free act of creation,” is one of utter freedom and is ordered from the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>48</sup> *Adversus Haereses* 4.20.7, cited in Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 18.

<sup>49</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 20.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 29–32. He also refers to this in “The Theology of the Liturgy,” in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*, 26. Divinization (or, one might say, deification) is recognized as a major theme in Thomas Aquinas, despite the fact that this is often glibly considered a doctrine only in the East. For example, see A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God’s Grace: Deification According to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2015); Daniel A. Keating, “Justification, Sanctification, and Divinization in Thomas Aquinas,” in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction* (London / New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004), 139–58.

<sup>51</sup> See Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 28–33.

beginning to creation's *reditus*, the fullness of union with the Creator, which the Scriptures describe as the fullness when God is "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).<sup>52</sup> The assembly *as assembly* is given the means by which they are able to begin to realize the fullness of their humanity and final *telos* in the liturgy:

"In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims."

—SC, §8.

### A Living Sacrifice

It is precisely when we read the New Testament in terms of cultic theology that we see how much it is bound up, in its deepest implication, with the Old. The New Testament corresponds to the inner drama of the Old. It is the inner mediation of two elements that at first are in conflict with one another and find their unity in the form of Jesus Christ, in his Cross and Resurrection. What at first seems to be a break, turns out, on closer inspection, to be a real fulfillment, in which all the paths formerly followed converge.<sup>53</sup>

The fundamental truth about the nature of worship both for Israel and for the Christian assembly is this: "The only real gift man should give to God is himself."<sup>54</sup> The Church must understand how sacrifice actually functioned in Israel's worship precisely in order to see the underpinnings of the presentation of Jesus in the New Testament, for he is the "inner logic" of the Old Testament and, thus, affects a real unity within all of Scripture.

This notion of the self-offering of the assembly as a fundamental form of sacrifice is already present in Israel's temple worship, Ratzinger argues, a notion that slowly deepens after the exile. This approach is seen elsewhere, in sources as diverse as Augustine and in much of the significant scholarship regarding Christian sacrifice in light of Judaism.<sup>55</sup> Self-offering implies, as Congar explains, that

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<sup>52</sup> See Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy*, 68.

<sup>53</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>55</sup> See Augustine's remarkable insight in *City of God*: "If in times gone by our ancestors offered other sacrifices to God, in the shape of animal victims (sacrifices which the People of God now read about, but do not perform) we are to

“the offerings made in temple worship were not the action of a single individual but the action of a people considered in their totality.”<sup>56</sup> Congar clarifies what remains opaque in Ratzinger: the inner or spiritual sacrifice is essentially individual in nature and is a principle place where the individual exercises his or her priestly ministry. But it is in the communal celebration that this priesthood is exercised corporately and that its true corporeality is seen.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, the worship enjoined upon the assembly is spiritual worship, which is by nature and at the same time also bodily.<sup>58</sup> This worship

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understand that the significance of those was precisely the same as that of those now performed amongst us—the intention of which is that we may cleave to God and seek the good of our neighbor for the same end”; see *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, Penguin Classics (London / New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 377. For current discussions on the nature of sacrifice as it concerns Judaism, Christian worship, and the Eucharist, see: Robert J. Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (London / New York: T&T Clark, 2009); Andrew McGowan, “Eucharist and Sacrifice: Cultic Tradition and Transformation in Early Christian Ritual Meals,” in *Mahl Und Religiöse Identität Im Frühen Christentum [Meals and Religious Identity in Early Christianity]*, Texte Und Arbeiten Zum Neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 56, ed. Matthias Klinghardt and Hal Taussig (Tübingen: Francke, 2012), 191–206; Rowan Williams, *Eucharistic Sacrifice: The Roots of a Metaphor*, Grove Liturgical Study 31 (Bramcote, Notts, UK: Grove Books, 1982); Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 241–383; Matthew Levering, *Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist*, Illuminations, Theory and Religion (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 29–34; Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Some very creative insights can also be found in *Sacrifice and Modern Thought*, ed. Julia Meszaros and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), which explores sacrifice in art, film, and literature, in addition to theology.

<sup>56</sup> Congar, *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 17.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Congar, *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 18.

<sup>58</sup> The use of the term “spiritual” can be very misleading. The claims of Robert J. Daly and others about the “spiritualization of sacrifice” in Judaism and into Christianity have been widely accepted; see: Robert J. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background before Origen*, Studies in Christian Antiquity 18 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1978); Daly, *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled*; Frances M. Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom*, Patristic Monograph Series 5 (Cambridge/Winchendon, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979); Everett Ferguson, “Spiritual Sacrifice in Early Christianity and Its Environment,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, ed. Hildegard Temporini and



is described by Jesus as “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), and Romans describes it as the presentation of the assembly’s spiritual

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Wolfgang Haase, vol. II.20.i (Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 1972), 1151–89. This general argument plays a significant role in Louie-Marie Chauvet’s argument about the nature of sacrifice; see *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 228–319. For an example of an appreciate response, see John H. McKenna, “Eucharist and Sacrifice: An Overview,” *Worship* 76.5 (September 2002): 387. But rightly, it has not been uncontested; for example, see Harold W. Attridge, “Christian Sacrifice (Book review),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100.1 (March 1981): 145–47. The Jewish scholar Jonathan Klawans offers one such alternative argument: “When we look a little deeper into Paul’s description of sacrificial worship, we find that Paul affirms many of the fundamental theological tenants upon which ancient Jewish sacrificial worship is based. . . . All too often, Paul’s discussions of Jewish sacrificial worship are understood as examples of the so-called spiritualization of sacrifice. . . . As I have been arguing all along, it is high time to abandon the term ‘spiritual sacrifice’ altogether. . . [and instead] speak more neutrally of metaphorical uses of sacrifice language—a phenomena that we can see in Paul, Philo, the rabbis, and even the Last Supper traditions. . . . Sacrificial metaphors operate on the assumption of the efficacy and meaning of sacrificial rituals, and hope to appropriate some of that meaning and apply it to something else” (Klawans, *Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 220). Andrew McGowan provides a focused critique of the “spiritualization thesis” from both a classical and Christian perspective. He suggests that what is sometimes called “spiritualization” is better described as “the application of sacrificial understandings and interpretations to a wider range of practices than was previously seen as cultic,” which he argues differs from the tendency toward the interiorization of sacrifice that can be seen in someone like Philo: “Practices such as prayer and communal meals were already closely-related to sacrificial rituals, and in these cases to recast the relationships as organic rather than as merely adjacent is a subtle but important one”; see Andrew B. McGowan, “Eucharist and Sacrifice—Cultic Tradition and Transformation in Early Christian Ritual Meals,” in *Mahl und religiöse Identität im frühen Christentum [Meals and Religious Identity in Early Christianity]*, ed. Matthias Klinghardt and Hal Taussig, *Texte Und Arbeiten Zum Neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* 56 (Tübingen: Francke, 2012), 14–15. McGowan’s argument indicates that the debate about the use of “spiritualization” is not simply a semantic disagreement but is instead about the failure to understand how sacrifice was understood in the first few centuries in the ancient Near East. For more on how the relationship between food and sacrifice pervaded ancient near eastern culture, see G. Dorival, “L’originalité de la Bible grecque des Septante en matière de sacrifice,” in *La cuisine et l’autel : les sacrifices en questions dans les sociétés de la méditerranée ancienne*, ed. Stella Georgoudi, Renée Koch Piettre, and Francis Schmidt (Turnhout, BE: Brepols, 2005), 309–15. See also Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 4–6; Derek Collins, “Nature, Cause, and Agency in Greek Magic,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 133.1 (2003): 17–49.

worship, their “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom 12:1). This discloses the true understanding of the Eucharist: it is not fundamentally a “liturgical phenomenon” or “an ‘assembly’, nor a recapitulation of Jesus’ act of institution at the Last Supper, as a ‘meal.’” Rather, the Eucharist speaks but one Paschal Word: “the universal form of worship that took place in the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection of Christ.”<sup>59</sup> The basis of Christian worship and sacrifice expressed in the Eucharist is not solely the Last Supper (and certainly not a reenactment of it), nor merely a “fraternal meal,” but worship of and in union with Jesus within the fullness of the Paschal Mystery.<sup>60</sup>

*Thesis 2: Because the complete self-offering of the Logos in the Paschal Mystery turns sacrifice inside out, Christian sacrifice consists in the self-offering of the assembly that is actively joined to the sacrifice of Christ.*

“This action of God, which takes place through human speech, is the real ‘action’ for which all of creation is in expectation. . . the real ‘action’ in the liturgy in which we are all supposed to participate in the action of God himself.”

—Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 172, 173.

The assembly has nothing to offer God. Thus, God must always initiate and provide what is necessary for the sacrifice.<sup>61</sup> The *Akedah* of Isaac (Gen 22:1–19; literally the “binding” in v. 19) is paradigmatic in Ratzinger’s view for all sacrifice, a perspective that is echoed by many scholars in their estimation of this event as “the great ‘founding’ sacrifice of the Old Testament.”<sup>62</sup> “God gives the lamb, which Abraham then

<sup>59</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 50.

<sup>60</sup> See “The Theology of the Liturgy,” in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*, 19–27. Here he also engages with some of the criticisms like those of the Society of St. Pius X, who claim that the focus on the Paschal Mystery “instead of the redeeming sacrifice of expiation of Christ” is precisely “the proof of the rupture with the classical doctrine of the Church” by Vatican II (ibid., 24). He responds that the Paschal Mystery sums up all of the realities from Holy Thursday through the Cross and into the Lord’s Resurrection and views them “synthetically as single, united even, as ‘the work of Christ’” (ibid.). It is the very same “mystery of Christ” that is at the heart of the Pauline gospel.

<sup>61</sup> See Chauvet’s description of what he calls “symbolic exchange,” which offers a fuller picture of this action (*Symbol*, 266–316).

<sup>62</sup> Daly, *The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice*, 47.

offers back to him,” which Ratzinger notes is recalled in the language of the Roman Canon in the *Unde et memores* (the anamnesis/oblation paragraph that follows the institution narrative): *offerimus praeclarae majestati tuae de tuis donis ac datis* [“we offer unto your glorious majesty from your own gifts given to us”].<sup>63</sup> The third petition for acceptance in the Roman Canon (the *Supra quae*) is based on God’s previous acceptance of, among other sacrifices, that of “our Patriarch Abraham,” which parallels the offering of the sacramental body and blood in the *Unde et memores* on the institution narrative that directly precedes it.<sup>64</sup> The inner logic of the Eucharistic sacrifice stands in the same trajectory of the sacrifices of old.

Everything the assembled Church offers—the bread, “fruit of the earth and work of human hands”; the sacramental body and blood of Christ; the assembly’s union with one another in the Spirit as the Body of Christ—is seen as an utterly gratuitous gift that is received only when it is re-gifted. This is no mechanistic view of sacrifice in which the creature performs a certain act in an attempt to obligate the deity. Rather, sacrificial worship “was always accompanied by a vivid sense of its insufficiency,” Ratzinger argues, something that becomes more and more clear in the Old Testament with its growing emphasis on the spiritual foundation of all sacrifice.<sup>65</sup> The sacrifice of the People of God always speaks of “a way of being.” This is precisely what Augustine means, Ratzinger says, when he speaks of the *civitas Dei*—by which he means “love-transformed mankind, the divinization of creation and the surrender of all things to God”—as the “true sacrifice.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 38.

<sup>64</sup> See Dominic E. Serra’s argument concerning the way the relative clauses of each paragraph of the canon appeal to what precedes it in the prayer in “The Roman Canon: The Theological Significance of Its Structure and Syntax,” *Ecclesia Orans* 20.1 (January 2003): 99–128. For his discussion of the *Unde et memores*, see *ibid.*, 117–19.

<sup>65</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 39. The insufficiency, one should be careful to note, is not with the Old Covenant, but with animal sacrifices.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 28. He does not cite Augustine directly, but it is clear that he is referring to the remarkable synthesis of Jewish sacrifice, the trajectory of Jewish sacrifice toward spiritual sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ as altar, priest, and victim, the sacrifice of Christians in their living, and the union of Christians with Christ’s sacrifice in the Eucharist in *De civitate Dei* 10.5–6 and 10.20. He engages this theme in Augustine in Ratzinger, “The Theology of the Liturgy,” in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*, 26–29.

“The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful ... should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration. They should be instructed by God’s word and be nourished at the table of the Lord’s body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all.”

—SC, §48.

*Thesis 3: The assembly is sacred because it is the Christus totus, the body of Christ at worship.*<sup>67</sup>

“To celebrate the Eucharist means to enter into the openness of a glorification of God that embraces heaven and earth, an openness effected by the Cross and Resurrection. Christian liturgy is never just an event organized by a particular group or a set of people or even by a particular local Church. Mankind’s movement toward Christ meets Christ’s movement toward men. He wants to unite mankind and bring about the one Church, the one divine assembly, of all men. Everything, then, comes together: the horizontal and the vertical, the uniqueness of God and the unity of mankind, the communion of all who worship in spirit and in truth.”

—Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 49.

The *Christus totus* is what the assembly as Church offers in its Eucharist: the complete union of the Church’s sacrifice of itself with that of the Son’s self-sacrifice, offered and received sacramentally in bread and wine. The concept of the *Christus totus* is given a marvelous definition when Congar describes it as “the profound unity between the physical body of the Lord, crucified and risen, his sacramental body offered in the Eucharist, and his ecclesial body which offers itself up.”<sup>68</sup> By defin-

<sup>67</sup> Congar’s historical survey of this is masterful: *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 15–30.

<sup>68</sup> *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 18. Henri de Lubac’s classic work provides a much richer picture of the *Christus totus* through his historical look at the three “bodies” of Christ (historical, ecclesial, and sacramental) and the way in which the language for them changed in significant ways; see Henri de Lubac,

ing the sacrifice in this way, he shows how it differs from the sacrifices of the first covenant. In Christian worship, the gift from God is not “this land, flowing with milk and honey” (Deut 2:9), but the gift of life in creation by which we experience the most gratuitous gift of all: God, the incarnate *Logos*. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross “has become [divine] gift, for the Body given in love and the Blood given in love have entered, through the Resurrection, into the eternity of love.”<sup>69</sup>

The return gift of the assembly is not simply “the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, O Lord, hast given me” (Deut 26:10). Rather, the return gift that is offered in a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the Father is twofold: both (a) the bread and wine (“fruit of the earth/vine and work of human hands”<sup>70</sup>) that the Spirit makes the Son’s sacramental body and blood and (b) the *ecclesia*, which by “water and the Spirit” (John 3:5) is made the ecclesial/mystical “Body of Christ” (1 Cor 10:16; 12:27). In Christian sacrifice, there is a divine-human cooperation of a completely unique order that is premised exclusively on the fact that “God himself has become man, become body, and here, again and again, he comes through his body to us who live in the body.”<sup>71</sup> The “once-for-all” divine-human act of Jesus makes possible innumerable and even simultaneous Masses precisely because the Source is inexhaustible.<sup>72</sup> As Congar explains

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*Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages: Historical Survey*, Faith in Reason (London: SCM, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 55.

<sup>70</sup> From the offertory prayer in the current Roman Missal; see *The Roman Missal: Chapel Edition* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 529.

<sup>71</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 173. He also writes “Sacrifice consists . . . in a process of transformation, in the conformity of man to God, in His theiosis [sic], as the Father would say. It consists, to express it in modern phraseology, in the abolition of difference—in the union between God and man, between God and creation: ‘God all in all’ (1 Cor 15:28)” (Ratzinger, “The Theology of the Liturgy,” in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*, 25).

<sup>72</sup> Appealing to Maximus the Confessor, Ratzinger explains that “the obedience of Jesus’ human will is inserted into the everlasting Yes of the Son to the Father.” That obedience in a historical moment, explains St. Bernard of Clairvaux, “bears within itself the *semper* (‘always’) such that ‘today’ embraces the whole time of the Church,” and thus, “in the Eucharist we are caught up and made contemporary with the Paschal Mystery of Christ” (Ratzinger, *Spirit*, 56–57). See also John Chrysostom, *Homily on Hebrews* 17.3 (on Heb 9:24–26): “There is one sacrifice and one high priest who offered the sacrifice that cleanses us. Today we offer that which was once offered, a sacrifice

this mystery, “the church, which is his Body, is as such the very place where he continues his life and manifests it here below.”<sup>73</sup>

This vision of Christian worship is remarkable in its scope because it brings about a sacramental unity between the assembly and Jesus Christ in every aspect of his priestly offering. Augustine gathers these up in book 10 of *De civitate Dei*, something to which Ratzinger alludes and that Congar explicitly highlights:<sup>74</sup> as Jesus is the temple, “we are his temple, collectively and as individuals” (*De civitate Dei* 10.3); Jesus makes us his body, “condescends to dwell in the union of all and in each person” (*ibid.*); in offering ourselves with Christ’s offering, “our heart is his altar” (*ibid.*); the offering we make is the same as that of Jesus: “we vow to him and offer to him the gifts he has given us, the gift of ourselves,” which “are fulfilled [in] those two commands on which ‘all the Law and the prophets depend’ (*ibid.*) and expressed in “a heart that is broken and humbled” (*ibid.*, 10.5). All this is summed up at the conclusion of 10.6: “This is the sacrifice of Christians: *although many, one body in Christ*. And this is the sacrifice that the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar (which is well known to the faithful), where it is made plain to her that, in the offering she makes, she herself is offered.”<sup>75</sup> The unity between the assembly and Christ is so profound that we can go as far to say that the ecclesial Body of Christ, insofar as it is joined to its Head, is both priest and victim:<sup>76</sup>

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that is inexhaustible. This is done as a remembrance [*anamnesis*] of that which was done then, for he said, ‘Do this in remembrance of me.’ We do not offer another sacrifice as the priest offered of old, but we always offer the same sacrifice. Or rather we re-present the sacrifice”; English translation found in Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 35.

<sup>73</sup> Congar, *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 18.

<sup>74</sup> See Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 58–59, 86–88. See also *ibid.*, 21.

<sup>75</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 10.6.3, in *The City of God: Books 1–10*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. William Babcock (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), 310. Augustine continues this reading in 10.19–20. For a recent study of Augustine and sacrifice in book 10, see Uwe Michael Lang, “Augustine’s Conception of Sacrifice in City of God, Book X, and the Eucharistic Sacrifice,” *Antiphon* 19.1 (2015): 29–51.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Congar, *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 21. Later, Congar notes the way that, in Augustine, the images of the Church as Body of Christ and as Spouse of Christ “blend together,” such as when Augustine speaks of the “sponsus et sponsa, una caro,” the “husband and his spouse becoming one flesh” (*ibid.*, 32). The singularity of Christ’s Body and Spouse helpfully illustrates how any separation of priest from *ecclesia* introduces serious problems.

“Offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also together with him, they should learn also to offer themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other, so that finally God may be all in all.”

—SC, §48.

### Active Participation<sup>77</sup>

A vision of the liturgy that speaks of the union of the Church in the action of Christ, and specifically the union of a particular assembly at a definite point in history, leads to an obvious question: Precisely how do Christians enact this participation? *Participatio actuosa* (“active participation”) was, as already noted, the phrase used in SC to express how the assembly joins in the *opus Dei*.<sup>78</sup> Like *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is very clear that it is the members of the Church joined as one who are the ministers of the liturgy.<sup>79</sup> “But,” Ratzinger asks, “what does this active participation come down to?”<sup>80</sup>

Since liturgy is the action of the Church, “participation” speaks to the peculiar character of this particular act, “a principal action in which everyone has a ‘part.’” The central question, Ratzinger argues, is not about what constitutes participation, but rather a prior question, that of the central *actio* in which “all the members of the community are supposed to participate.”<sup>81</sup> The discussion thus far has provided a rich description of this *actio*, but he has a more technical

<sup>77</sup> For a much less nuanced reading of the history of the assembly’s participation, see Keith F. Pecklers, S.J., “The Liturgical Assembly at the Threshold of the Millennium: A North American Perspective,” in *Liturgy for the New Millennium: A Commentary on the Revised Sacramentary: Essays in Honor of Anscar J. Chupungco*, ed. Mark R. Francis and Keith F. Pecklers (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> See the list of references in SC found in note 22, above. See also Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 171. His discussion of the term “liturgy” also refers to *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereafter, CCC), §1069; see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000). CCC explains “a ‘public work’ or a ‘service in the name of/on behalf of the people’” in §1069. See also Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy*, 69.

<sup>79</sup> See CCC §§1069, 1071, 1136, 1140, 1141. This claim is premised in and grounded on a detailed discussion of how the liturgy is first the work of the Holy Trinity (“The Liturgy—Work of the Holy Trinity” is the title of article 1 in part II, section 1, ch. 1 of CCC [preceding §1077 and running from §1077 to §1109]).

<sup>80</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 171.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

answer in mind with regard to the structure of the Eucharistic liturgy itself. The central *actio* is the Eucharistic Prayer/Canon of the Mass, but this must be considered within the context of the term used by the Fathers to describe the entire Eucharistic celebration: *oratio*. The term does not mean simply prayer, but something broader: “solemn public speech.”<sup>82</sup> Thus, instead of the slaughter of animals, Christian worship consists in “the Word, summing up our existence . . . addressed to God and identified with *the* Word, the Word of God, who draws us into true worship.”<sup>83</sup> For the assembly’s *actio* to be truly authentic, it cannot originate with them. Thus the *Logos*, in all its rich Christian resonances, stands at the heart of the Canon and at the heart of the *oratio*, for, in the end, it is the Word who prays and the Word who is offered.

*Thesis 4: The sacred character of the assembly is most visible when its active participation is premised on the absolute priority of the divine actio.*

“But there is only *one* action, which is at the same time his and ours—ours because we have become “one body and one spirit” with him. The uniqueness of the Eucharistic liturgy lies precisely in the fact that God himself is acting and that we are drawn into that action of God. Everything else is, therefore, secondary.”

—Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 174.<sup>84</sup>

The fact that worship is a response to God’s initiating gift made possible through our cooperation with (i.e., acting “by” and “in”) God is expressed in the numerous petitions for acceptance in the Roman Canon (along with the other Eucharistic Prayers of the current missal

<sup>82</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 172. The first definition of *oratio* in Lewis and Short is “a speaking, speech, discourse, language,” and the second definition notes that this is in particular often “formal speech.” In the first definition, the following from Cicero is cited: “non est autem inverbo modus hic, sed in oration, id est, in continuatione verborum” (*Cic.* 3.42.167); in *A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews’ Edition of Freund’s Latin Dictionary: Revised, Enlarged and in Great Part Rewritten by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>84</sup> He writes elsewhere (*ibid.*, 88–89) that “there is a person-to-person exchange, a coming of the one into the other. The living Lord gives himself to me, enters into me, and invites me to surrender myself to him, so that the Apostle’s words come true: ‘It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me’ (Gal 2:20).”



and in almost all historic *anaphoras*).<sup>85</sup> Ratzinger's explanation of the petitions gets to the heart of this study. The request is not that the sacrifice of Jesus would be acceptable: "the Sacrifice of the Logos is accepted already and forever." Rather, our petition is that Christ's sacrifice might "become *our* sacrifice, that we ourselves, as we said, may be transformed into the Logos (*logisiert*), conformed to the Logos, and so be made the true Body of Christ. That is the issue, and that is what we have to pray for."<sup>86</sup> The only thing for which we can really petition is the *actio* of God.

This entire prayer for acceptance through the reception itself

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 172. There are three petitions for acceptance in the Roman Canon (Prayer I): in the *Tē igitur*, the *Hanc igitur*, and the *Supra quae* (*The Roman Missal: Chapel Edition*, 635, 638, 641); in Eucharistic Prayer II, it is somewhat muted ("humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the holy spirit"; *ibid.*, 648); the prayer for acceptance is much clearer in Eucharistic Prayers III and IV ("look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim by whose death you willed to reconcile us to yourself, grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your son and filled with his holy spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ. May he make of us an eternal offering to you"; in Eucharistic Prayer III in *ibid.*, 653; and "look, O Lord, upon the sacrifice which you yourself have provided for your Church, and grant in your loving kindness to all who partake of this one Bread and one Chalice that, gathered into one body by the holy spirit, they may truly be a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory"; in Eucharistic Prayer IV in *ibid.*, 660).

<sup>86</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 173. Ratzinger is quite conscious in his use of the phrase "true Body of Christ" to refer to the Church. Earlier in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, he spends three pages discussing de Lubac's influential historical study *Corpus Mysticum*, whose important insights, Ratzinger claims, have "often been misunderstood" (*ibid.*, 86); see de Lubac's summary of his argument in *Corpus Mysticum*, 248–62. The relevant insight in this context is de Lubac's description of the process whereby the referents for *corpus mysticum* (the sacramental Body) and *corpus verum* (the ecclesial Body of Christ) were switched in order to emphasize that Christ's presence in the Sacrament is not in figure or only in memorial, but truly. Ratzinger acknowledges that, as a result of this shift, the central truth that "the goal of the Eucharist is our own transformation" (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 86) and "something of the eschatological dynamism and corporate character (the sense of the 'we') of Eucharistic faith was lost or diminished" and Christians "were not so clearly aware of it as before" (*ibid.*, 87). But he says that in spite of those losses, which "in our time we must try to make up for them," nonetheless, "*there were gains overall*" (*ibid.*, 88; emphasis added). Why? Because "the gift of the Eucharist" can "bring us together, so that we become his 'true Body'" only because of a more foundational truth: it is in the Eucharist that "the Lord gives us *his true Body*. Only the true Body in the Sacrament can build up the true Body of the new City of God."

constitutes the very heart of the *oratio* of Christian worship, in Ratzinger's estimation. And just as importantly, "in this prayerful approach to participation, there is no difference between priests and laity." This is not in conflict with differences that correspond to "the different functions proper to each," with bishop/priests, deacons, and the laity each having "distinct hierarchical roles."<sup>87</sup> The reason there is no conflict is that the real *actio* here is divine, something "which the Lord himself and only he can do. . . . In the words of St. Paul, it is a question of being 'united to the Lord' and thus becoming 'one spirit with him' (1 Cor 6:17)." The Eucharist is the same *oratio* of Jesus that he offered "in the days of his flesh . . . with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death" (Heb 5:7) and continues into the present, "since he always lives to make **intercession**" (Heb 7:25). The *oratio* of the assembly is the "sacrifice in the Word," the source and summit of which is the Eucharist.<sup>88</sup>

The identity of the priest as simultaneously *in persona Christi capitis ecclesiae* and *in persona corporis* in the Eucharistic offering is itself a symbol of an ecclesiology that sees the Church in liturgical assembly as "organic unity or priestly Body of Christ, our high priest, '*corpus Christi sacerdotis*.'"<sup>89</sup> In spite of Ratzinger's defense of some of what was gained in medieval Eucharistic theology, he never once speaks of the priest's power to consecrate (something Congar notes was a significant preoccupation of that period).<sup>90</sup> Instead, references to *potestas* in Ratzinger all concern the person of Christ. What the priest receives in the sacrament of orders is a gift whose *potestas* is never his own possession: "all he is ever able and allowed to be is a 'steward of the mysteries of God' (cf. 1 Cor 4:1)."<sup>91</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), §52. As Augustine explains with great precision in *De civitate Dei* 10, one must take great care so as to refuse "to isolate ministry [of the priest] from the community of believers"; cf. Congar, *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 20–21, which lists a whole series of citations from Augustine that speak to how the gift of the keys for the forgiveness of sins is given to the *ecclesia* (20n19) and how the *sacrificium christianorum*—the sacrifice of Christians—is what later theologians will call the *Christus totus* (21nn20–22). Congar also notes Bede's similar emphasis on the keys on page 24.

<sup>88</sup> See Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 46.

<sup>89</sup> This is Congar's summary of Isidore of Seville's ecclesiology in *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 23.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 31. He cites the discussions of power given to the priest in Albert the Great and Thomas as representative examples, and later details this history on pages 40–48.

<sup>91</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 204. Speaking of the power of Christ, he

“Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the mass not only in the person of his ministry, ‘the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross,’<sup>92</sup> but especially in the eucharistic species.”

—SC, §7.

*Thesis 5: The external actions of the assembly's participation are authentic when they express a union of the whole person.*

“To express one of its main ideas for shaping of the liturgy, the Second Vatican Council gave us the phrase *participatio actuosa*, the “active participation” of everyone in the *opus Dei*, in what happens in the worship of God. It was quite right to do so.”

—Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 171.

A priest must be trained in order to preside in such a way that fully expresses the divine *actio* of the Eucharist. The assembly must also be trained, and this is expressed not only through its internal disposition but also by “a close union of the whole being, of thought and action,” a reality that must be expressed corporately and corporally.<sup>93</sup> Different actions attend in greater and lesser ways to the *actio* of the mass. Therefore, emphasis must be placed on the outer actions in a proper relationship to the inner disposition of the person so that there is a real union between the two. Ratzinger's polemical tone returns when he discusses some of the external actions—reading, singing, the bringing up of the gifts—that he sees as subservient to actions more intrinsic to the Eucharistic *action* if they are considered to result necessarily in active participation.<sup>94</sup> His concern is about where active participation

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writes elsewhere: “We make the sign of the cross on ourselves and thus enter the power of the blessing of Jesus Christ” (ibid., 184).

<sup>92</sup> The quotation is from the Council of Trent, Session 22: Doctrine of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, ch. 2.

<sup>93</sup> Ratzinger, “‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’ or Fidelity to the Council,” 98. He responds elsewhere to the claim that the shift to Christian sacrifice was a move from the physical to the spiritual: “That charge might have applied to the pre-Christian idea of a *logos*-liturgy, but it cannot be true of the liturgy of the Word incarnate, who offers himself to us in his Body and Blood, and thus in a corporal way. It is, of course, the new corporeality of the risen Lord, but it remains true corporeality, and it is this that we are given in the material signs of bread and wine” (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 175).

<sup>94</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 174.

is properly located.<sup>95</sup> When any of these external actions begin to be viewed as an essential action in and of themselves, the “theo-drama” has been radically misunderstood, real symbol has been eviscerated, and the liturgy lapses into “parody.”<sup>96</sup>

One of the corporal actions that he thinks is critical is the visual enactment of the proper orientation of the Eucharistic *actio*: the priest and people “looking together toward the Lord and going out to meet him.”<sup>97</sup> This matter of the orientation of the priest at the altar during the Eucharistic prayer is one on which Gy spends some considerable time in his critique. Their disagreement is certainly in part about the interpretation of historical data and the scholarship surrounding it. Gy suggests that Ratzinger’s “chapter on celebration *ad orientum* [part II, chapter 3, “The Altar and the Direction of Liturgical Prayer;” 74–84] . . . is unsatisfactory both historically and with regard to the issue of active participation” and proceeds to present a summary of some of the important scholarship on the matter, particularly “the fundamental work of the Bonn liturgist Otto Nußbaum.”<sup>98</sup> Ratzinger responds rather tersely—“Of course I know of Nußbaum’s book”—and then points to the summary article by Albert Gerhards<sup>99</sup> that “presents all the material on both the historical question and the current debate.” In Ratzinger’s reading, Gerhards both “shows

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<sup>95</sup> As Ratzinger notes in his response to Father Gy’s criticisms, he dedicates the length final chapter (“The Body and the Liturgy”) of *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (171–224) to central issue of “active participation;” see Ratzinger, “‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’ or Fidelity to the Council,” 98.

<sup>96</sup> Ratzinger, “‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’ or Fidelity to the Council,” 175. Without mentioning him by name, Ratzinger is recalling Hans Urs von Balthasar’s significant five-volume work, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988). See Congar’s discussion of the Offertory in *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 22–23. He concurs with Ratzinger’s basic point but describes these actions when coming from a proper orientation: while the bringing forward of the gifts “was not sufficient to make the assembly of the faithful celebrants of the Mass . . . nonetheless the gesture of offering is true worship in the ritual context of the consecration and communion, and it has its place in the celebration and in the active role that the faithful take in it” (*ibid.*, 23).

<sup>97</sup> Ratzinger, “‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’ or Fidelity to the Council,” 174.

<sup>98</sup> Gy, “Cardinal Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*,” 92. The work he refers to is Otto Nußbaum, *Der Standort des Liturgen am christlichen Altar vor dem Jahre 1000: Eine archa ologische und liturgiegeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1965).

<sup>99</sup> “*Versus orientem—versus populum*: Zum gegenwärtigen Diskussionsstand einer alten Streitfrage,” *Theologische Revue* 98 (2002): 15–22.

clearly the universal value of prayer *versus orientum*” and highlights the corrections that Nußbaum himself offered later to his 1968 work.<sup>100</sup> Ratzinger appears most concerned that his view has been wrongly interpreted as a categorical rejection of *versus populum* celebrations or an insistence “that all altars must once again be reversed and that the priest’s place be changed as a consequence.”<sup>101</sup>

What is critical in Ratzinger’s view is that the priest and people are all directed towards the “liturgical east,” that is the direction of “the Christ who was crucified and who returns today,” regardless of the orientation of the priest and altar. In fact, he suggests that *versus populum* celebrations can (but need not) communicate that the action itself is a “closed circle, if there is only a dialogue between priest and people.” Such an approach, he writes, “constitutes a false clericalism” because the priest functions entirely *in persona Christi*, and not at all *in persona ecclesia*. Or even worse, the dialogue in such situations is only between members of the Body, such that the Head is excluded.<sup>102</sup> While he may overstate his case somewhat, it is not difficult for a confusion to be introduced when the priest faces the people at the moment when the most solemn petitions are being addressed to the Father in the Canon.

Another practice that introduces confusion about the nature of the central *actio* of the Mass is when the priest repeatedly looks up from the missal at the assembly throughout the Eucharistic Prayer, seemingly indicating that he is speaking to them. The physical orientation in the liturgy—priest and people facing one another when in dialogue, and alternatively facing the same direction when addressing God—contains a deep logic and should not be dismissed as mere infatuation with antiquarianism. But regardless of the placement of the altar, what Ratzinger considers essential is the corporal expression of the inner orientation that at the same time guards against the assembly “celebrating only itself.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ratzinger, “‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’ or Fidelity to the Council,” 100.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 100–01.

<sup>102</sup> Ratzinger, “The Theology of the Liturgy,” in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*, 152.

<sup>103</sup> Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 149. See also Ratzinger, “‘The Spirit of the Liturgy’ or Fidelity to the Council,” 98. Gy expresses his disagreement with Ratzinger’s historical judgment about the orientation of liturgical celebrations but never engages with Ratzinger’s claim about the necessity of an “inner orientation” and his proposal of using a cross on the altar at *versus populum* liturgies (see Gy, “Cardinal Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*,” 92–94). Jean-Jacques von

There are external actions that attend in a unique way to the heart of the *actio* itself whereby the body is trained “for the resurrection.”<sup>104</sup> Broadly speaking, a conscious, firm, and prayerful adherence to the twofold love of God and neighbor is the “demand made on the body in all its involvement in the circumstances of everyday life,” for “what begins in the liturgy is meant to unfold beyond it.”<sup>105</sup> But in the liturgy specifically, primary among the external actions that corresponds to the heart of Christian sacrifice is the sign of the cross, for “it is a way of confessing Christ crucified with one’s very body.”<sup>106</sup>

The act of kneeling, he argues, is not first something adopted from a particular pagan culture, but is truly “an expression of Christian culture,” received in the Scriptures.<sup>107</sup> The most important scriptural-theological basis for this basic posture is the Christ hymn in Philipians 2:6–11 (“that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow”), for in this act, the Church joins in the cosmic liturgy by which the *reditus* is possible.<sup>108</sup> This is not to exclude the other basic postures of worship, such as standing, which is an expression of victory, of prayer, of readiness, and of reverence (i.e., for the proclamation of the Gospel).<sup>109</sup> Sitting is meant to facilitate recollection: “our bodies should be relaxed, so that our hearing and understanding are unimpeded.”<sup>110</sup>

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Allmen quite helpfully clarifies the tension of this dilemma when he writes that it is never by looking at itself in worship, even “in the sense that it might be the time and place at which the Church might discover as in a purifying mirror its own image cleansed of every spot and wrinkle”; rather, “what makes the Church first glimpse, and then see clearly, its true face is meeting with Christ. . . . It is on Christ’s face that the Church learns who it is”; see Jean-Jacques von Allmen, “Theological Frame of a Liturgical Renewal,” *Church Quarterly* 2.1 (July 1, 1969): 8–23, quoted in Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 122.

<sup>104</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 176. This reflects the summary of participation given in *SC*, §30. His discussion (*ibid.*, 177–224) is much more detailed than this brief summary can express.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 174. Recall the earlier comment about the interrelationship between liturgy and ethics.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 192–93.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 194–95.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 196. He comments here that the introduction of dancing into the liturgy is quite out of bounds, at least any form of dancing that leads to applause: “Wherever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achieve-

The verbal response of the people is also essential, for “the responsive acclamation confirms the arrival of the Word and makes the process of revelation, of God’s giving of himself in the Word, at last complete.”<sup>111</sup> The restoration of the responses being said by the congregation, no longer leaving it to a representative altar server, corresponds, he writes, “to the true structure of the liturgy.” For, in these responses, the purpose of God “to create a Body for himself, to find a Bride” is freely accepted by the members of the assembly who are made into this Body and Bride.<sup>112</sup>

Finally, silence is also proper to Christian liturgy, for this too is an appropriate response to the Mystery of God.<sup>113</sup> Silence and speech do stand in tension with one another, but in a harmonious and essential unity. Silence is not “a pause in the action of the liturgy,” but “an integral part of the liturgical event.” Congar cites Florus of Lyons, who speaks of the fittingness of the silence that follows the Preface and *Sanctus*, for there, “the church with the priest and the priest with the church, filled with spiritual yearning . . . enter the heavenly, eternal sanctuary of God.”<sup>114</sup> Most particularly, Ratzinger encourages this silence both during the Preparation of the Gifts (if we view the Preparation “as an essentially interview process” whereby the priestly assembly is preparing to offer themselves as a sacrifice in union with Christ) and after the reception of Communion.<sup>115</sup>

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ment, it is a sure sign that the essence of the liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment” (ibid., 198). This should be distinguished from the kind of rhythmical movement in ordered processions that he notes is found in places like Ethiopia and Zaire. These movements are of a different sort altogether, for not only are they “in keeping with the dignity of the occasion,” but they provide “an inner discipline and order for the various stages of the liturgy, bestowing on them beauty and, above all, making them worthy of God” (ibid., 199).

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> See SC, §30.

<sup>114</sup> Cited in Congar, *At the Heart of Christian Worship*, 25.

<sup>115</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 208–10. He discourages the pause after the homily, both because it often is experienced as rather contrived and because “the homily often leaves questions and contradictions in people’s minds rather than an invitation to meet the Lord” (ibid., 210). He also encourages silence at the elevation, emphasizing the institution narrative as consecratory, as do the rubrics of older missals’ Roman Canon, which speak of the “words of consecration.” The rubrics in the current missal are a bit less specific, but they do say, after the dominical words over the bread, “he shows the consecrated host to the people, places it again on the paten, and genuflects in adoration” (*The*

Ratzinger's discussion of "active participation" confounds Gy's claim that the former shows no concern for the role of the faithful in the Eucharistic sacrifice or for the kind of participation described by SC, §48.<sup>116</sup> The central act of the whole people, Ratzinger explains, is the Eucharistic prayer by which the Church participates in "the real 'action' of the liturgy," which is "the action of God's himself. This is what is new and distinctive about the Christian liturgy: God himself acts and does what is essential." In a move that is meant to correct a lopsided emphasis on Eucharistic sacrifice in certain Catholic theologians, he explains that the one sacrifice of Christ "is accepted already and forever." But "we"—the whole church, priest and congregation—"must still pray for it to become *our* sacrifice, that we ourselves, as we said, may be transformed into the Logos (*logisiert*), conformed to the Logos, and so be made the true Body of Christ."<sup>117</sup> Not only is the content of SC, §48, expressed here with great fervor; Ratzinger also shows here how the union of the action of the assembly, priest, and the Lord is given a unique expression when there is a common ritual orientation in the union of the physicality and interiority. "Self-celebration" is not a possibility for Ratzinger because (as Gy reads him<sup>118</sup>) the people join the priest in offering the sacrifice. Rather, this possibility remains because certain enactments of the liturgy obscure the fact that it is both God who is the primary actor and God to whom the sacrifice is offered.<sup>119</sup>

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*Roman Missal: Chapel Edition*, 639). Ratzinger acknowledges the argument that the entire prayer is consecratory, and not just the dominical words (or, even, the canon up to that point), but he argues that this point in the canon is the pinnacle of "the moment of God's great *actio* in the world for us. . . . For a moment the world is silent, everything is silent, and in that silence we touch the eternal—for one beat of the heart we step out of time into God's being-with-us" (ibid., 212). He also notes that the manner in which the priest prays his silent prayers is very critical; for if they are said with "real recollection and devotion," the rest of the faithful are drawn to the Lord (ibid., 213–14).

<sup>116</sup> Gy, "Cardinal Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*," 90.

<sup>117</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 172–73.

<sup>118</sup> Gy, "Cardinal Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*," 91.

<sup>119</sup> Without giving any footnotes, Gy's claim that, "as a rule, [Ratzinger] pleads in favor of private Mass" is very difficult to understand and even more difficult to square with what was outlined from Ratzinger's discussion of active participation. In fact, in the introduction to the book, Ratzinger likens the liturgy to a fresco that, until Vatican II, had been "largely concealed beneath instructions for and forms of private prayer"—i.e., the private prayers of the priest (Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 8). Such a statement as this clearly assumes that the normative expression of the Eucharistic liturgy is a public,



“The aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord’s supper.”

—SC, §10.

“In liturgical celebrations each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy.”

—SC, §28.

“To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence.”

—SC, §30.

### Conclusion

The theological character of the assembly in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* is remarkably rich. In fact, Ratzinger’s presentation of the theological character of the assembly builds upon and deepens the vision sketched out in SC and is in deep harmony with the presentation of the intentions and theological underpinnings of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy given by Congar. More specifically, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* presents a theological foundation through which the external actions of the assembly can be properly understood and integrated with a corresponding interior disposition. It is quite difficult, in fact, to see where Ratzinger is “a little frightened” of either the *lex orandi* or the Tradition, as Gy charges in his review.<sup>120</sup>

Ratzinger’s book is one example of what the Constitution called essential,<sup>121</sup> the kind of catechesis necessary for the “full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgical celebrations” (SC, §14). The

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not a private, celebration.

<sup>120</sup> Gy, “Cardinal Ratzinger’s *The Spirit of the Liturgy*,” 95.

<sup>121</sup> SC, §11, states that it is the duty of the pastors to make sure the faithful are “fully aware of what they are doing.” More specifically, §48 says that such is through a “good understanding of the rites and prayers” and the assembly is able to “take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration.”

majority of this work's weight rests on the shoulders of pastors and catechists. One thing that remains unspoken in Ratzinger's work is a belief that the degree of energy that went into the actual reform of the liturgy should have been equally directed toward the kind of catechetical formation that would present the basics of the Church's Eucharistic theology as it relates to the liturgy, and specifically the assembly's role as a priestly people who, joined with the ordained ministers, together offer the *Christus totus* in the Eucharistic liturgy.

While Congar's presentation is more historically focused and full (though often too technical for the average congregation), Ratzinger's presentation is genuinely pastoral in its presentation of a nuanced picture of what full, conscious, and active participation entails. A primary concern for Ratzinger is that the external actions of the assembly never be separated from that spirit of conversion and love that unites the assembly's life in the liturgy to its life in the world. True "reception" of the Eucharistic gift sees no such distinction. Ratzinger's work may best be characterized as an attempt to restore the kind of "dynamism and corporate character (the sense of the 'we') of eucharistic faith" that he acknowledges "was lost or diminished" in the Middle Ages.<sup>122</sup> And as in much of his work, the call is to begin that restoration in contemplation of the face of Jesus, "an encounter in faith with the new reality of the risen Christ."<sup>123</sup> N-V

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<sup>122</sup> Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 87.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.