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The Catholic University of America

"Few theologians writing today can match the rare combination of Bruce Morrill's encyclopedic understanding of contemporary biblical and theological currents and his graceful writing style. Morrill's new book offers a compelling case for the importance of Christian worship for the healing of broken persons, a wounded church, and a world wracked by violence and despair. To read and ponder this volume is to wonder how Christianity ever got to the bizarre situation, so evident today, in which the ministry of healing is seen as an occasional element of the church's mission rather than the very heart of the good news it preaches."

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Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies
University of Toledo

"With all the gifts of a well-trained theologian, the skills of an experienced liturgist, and the heart of a pastor, Bruce Morrill has crafted a unique and compelling resource for ministers, medical professionals, and all concerned with the pastoral and ritual care of the sick and dying. Eschewing mechanistic and biomedical approaches to sickness, Morrill offers a holistic vision of healing rooted in an evocative vision of Jesus the healer in dialogue with the fully contextualized faith community. . . . This mind-expanding work is a must read for all those committed to the care and nourishment of the sick and dying."

Edward Foley, Capuchin
Director, Ecumenical Doctor of Ministry Program
Professor of Liturgy and Music
Catholic Theological Union

“Bruce Morrill’s wide-ranging study . . . invites us to see healing as a helpful postmodern lens by which we can revisit liturgical renewal, eschatology, and, above all, salvation. The book is about the rites for the sick and the dying and the dead, but it is much more than that. In new and fresh ways, Morrill draws us into [realizing] that . . . the more the fullness of well-done symbolic ritual is experienced, the more people will be able to enter into and be transformed by their participation in the eucharist . . . and indeed, all the ecclesial actions which create and express our faith in the Triune God.”

Dr. Lizette Larson-Miller
Graduate Theological Union
Berkeley, California

Bruce T. Morrill

Divine Worship and Human Healing

*Liturgical Theology
at the Margins of Life and Death*

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Preface

In this book I have attempted a systematic (biblical, historical, philosophical, social-scientific) study of current Roman Catholic sacramental rites of healing, specifically those serving the seriously ill, aged, and dying, as found in the *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, and the dead and bereaved, in the *Order of Christian Funerals*. Investigation of those rites comprises the book's third part, building upon an opening pair of chapters proposing a theology of liturgy and definition of healing (part 1), followed by part 2's chapters treating Scripture and tradition as fundamental sources for theologizing about these rites. Originally I had also envisioned a chapter on the Rite of Penance, cognizant of its fascinating history and the current impasse in its pastoral-theological interpretation and practice in late-modern American Catholicism. The naiveté with which I conceived the scope of this project in the early 2000s, however, gradually gave way to the realization that in the complex endeavor of writing academic theology attentive to pastoral practice (just as in teaching such matter), less is more. Surely, an exhaustive treatment of the sacraments and healing, drawing on early and medieval Christian sources, would entail equally close attention to baptism and the Eucharist. One need only consider the stellar example of Aquinas, whose medicinal concept of Christian sacrament built upon Augustine and other patristic authorities.

The present era of post-Vatican II liturgical reform has brought predominant, if not in many places nearly exclusive, concentration on the celebration of the Mass, a pattern in theology and practice that may be buckling under its own weight. Meanwhile, as regular Sunday Mass attendance continues to slide, many of the faithful voice discontent over their inability to find a connection between liturgy and life. Reasons for this malaise are numerous and complex, encompassing the social conditions of late-modernity and problems in church order. In the course of these present chapters I shall touch on many of these challenges, but with a shift of focus to individual and corporate experiences at the margins of life, situations of human need so urgent and real as to render the "liturgy and life" question obvious.

Over many years of pastoral ministry I have seen for myself how beautifully the reformed rites for the sick, dying, and deceased can

serve the people of God in moments when life gets most real. I have, however, also experienced clerical and lay resistance—conscious and unconscious, informed and ignorant—to the symbolic and ritual dimensions of these sacraments, squandering the treasures of a tradition that discloses divine mystery as saving (healing) word written on human bodies of faith. My hope is that the following pages will serve as a scholarly ministry to word and sacrament through a greater pastoral proliferation of these rites and a more adequate academic theology of liturgy as the source and summit of the church's life.

Acknowledgments

Since beginning studies in college thirty years ago I have often read book prefaces in which the author admits (if not laments) how long it took to write a book and how supportive various persons were in the process. That certainly is the case here. On reflection I think the complexity of liturgy as a social, personal, and ecclesial reality requires time to organize and argue if the author wishes to avoid ending up an irrelevant textual positivist or the dreaded liturgical terrorist. I hope readers find the maturing of my thought over several years fruitful and the published result helpful. Encouragement that such might be the case has come from numerous opportunities afforded me to present and explore the topics comprising this book.

In my early years at Boston College the then-director of the Institute for Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry Claire Lowery and the Institute's associate director for academics Bud Horrel promoted my developing and teaching a new course I titled "Divine Worship and Human Healing." I learned so much in working on the history, theology, and practice of these rites with scores of committed, often insightful, students during the 1999, 2000, and 2003 offerings of the course. In 2002 I likewise enjoyed a year-long fellowship in the Center for Religion, Ethics, and Culture at the College of the Holy Cross, which included my teaching a course on suffering and healing. Boston College granted me a sabbatical in 2003–2004, during which I was able to make much headway on the research. In 2006 the university awarded an Undergraduate Research Fellowship for Mireille Azzi to compile and summarize helpful data on American perceptions of healing, health, and resurrection. My thanks to Mireille for doing a fine job. Seattle University's School of Ministry invited me to teach the course "Ritual and Healing" to an ecumenical student body in 2007.

I am grateful for having been afforded opportunities to present papers on this material at the annual meetings of the North American Academy of Liturgy, Catholic Theological Society of America, and *Societas Liturgica*, as well as plenary addresses at the 2007 conference of the Pappas Patristic Institute in Brookline, Massachusetts, and the 2008 congress of the *Societas Oecumenica* in Leuven, Belgium. I also benefited from sharing various aspects of my biblical, anthropological, and liturgical research on healing at faculty colloquia at the Milltown Institute of Philosophy and Theology (Dublin, Ireland, where I enjoyed a semester-long research fellowship in 2006) and Seattle University (where a visiting professorship afforded me ample time for writing in 2007), as well as in a public lecture at the Institut Catholique de Paris in 2006. In that same year I gave a day-long workshop on the entire scope of these rites under the sponsorship of Creighton University at the Saint Joseph Educational Center, Des Moines, Iowa. I am likewise thankful to the board of directors of Forum 104, who invited me to give a lecture on Christ as healer at that Marist-sponsored pastoral center in Paris, France, in 2004. Most recently I enjoyed the invitation to present an evening on the rites for the sick, dying, and deceased in the 200–2009 Liturgy Lectures series at St. Ignatius Church in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. And in July 2009, I offered a two-day colloquium on this material at Jesuit Theological College, Melbourne, Australia.

Along the way portions of my research and writing have appeared as articles in the journals *Worship*, *Transversalités*, *Liturgical Ministry*, *Studia Liturgica*, and *Liturgy* (for which the Liturgical Conference holds the rights). Small portions of this book's second and third chapters are taken from Bruce T. Morrill, "Challenges and Resources for a Liturgical Theology of Healing: Roman Catholic Practice and Postmodern Theory" (in *Liturgy* 22, no. 3 [July, 2007]): 13–20, © 2007). I wish to thank E. Byron (Ron) Anderson, president of the Liturgical Conference, for permission to reprint that material as well as for the opportunity to serve as guest editor for that thematic issue of *Liturgy*, titled "Healing and Anointing." I learned much from the several colleagues who contributed masterfully (and punctually) to an ecumenically broad treatment of the subject.

I extend thanks to colleagues, former students, and friends who read portions of this manuscript, providing helpful feedback and suggestions: Patricia Hayes; Denise Morency Gannon; Suzanne Dwinell; Vincent Miller; Lisa Cahill; Thomas Massaro, SJ; Mark Burke, SJ; William

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Part 1

Liturgy and Healing

Divine Worship: A Theology of the Liturgy

LITURGY AND HEALING?

At the outset of this project, a few years ago, when describing to various folks its basic scope, namely, a theological book on worship (or liturgy) and healing, I repeatedly found that the very eliding of the two terms would strike fellow believers as intriguing, if not provocative. People seemed ready to sense something promising, perhaps life-giving, in the association of Christian liturgical worship with healing, even as many were likewise quick to say that they had never thought of putting the two concepts together. One friend, a seminarian in his early thirties, pondering the working title of my book, was able to articulate why he found the combination of liturgy and healing baffling. Everything about his formation as a Catholic, he explained, seemed to convey that liturgical worship is a matter of celebration, not of healing. His statement strikes me as carrying two significantly telling implications: first, that the church's worship is a unidirectional action, something an assembly of believers does *for* or offers *to* God; and, second, that the positive nature of such celebration, as an expression of praise and thanksgiving, runs counter to the negative or distressful nature of a situation in which healing is needed. Pressing his reflections even a bit further, I found that the words "worship" and "liturgy" bear for him the narrow connotation of Eucharist or the Mass.¹

The rites proposed here for theological inquiry—the Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum, and the Order of Christian Funerals—often do not come to fellow Catholics' minds in reference to the notion of liturgy. They tend, rather, to connote the ministration

¹ While my hope is that this book might be of service to Christians of all churches and communions, I write from my particular context of Roman Catholicism. I do this not for exclusivist, let alone triumphalistic, reasons; rather, the theory and practice of my theology, while ecumenically informed and committed, is situated in the Roman tradition.

of a certain sacrament *by* a priest *for* the benefit of an individual (and perhaps, in the case of the Order of Christian Funerals, not only for the deceased but also the loved ones). Would many Catholics think of “going to confession” as an act of worshiping God? Likewise, would they consider the “last rites” a celebration of liturgy? On the other hand, what does it mean for the church to say that healing occurs in anointing the sick or administering Viaticum to the dying? An elderly priest and veteran of decades of service in parishes, when occasionally inquiring about the progress of my project, has used these occasions to ascertain, “You are, of course, talking about *inner* healing, right?” This question-cum-statement points to what would generally be called the spiritual dimension of human existence. But it can also imply a problematic view of salvation (from the perspective of Christian anthropology), one in which the sacred element of human being is immaterial and set apart from the bodily. God is concerned about saving the soul. This tendency toward a rigid bifurcation of the “inner” and “outer” aspects of reality has riddled theological reflection on sacramental liturgy from early centuries onward. If the physical sign of a sacrament only functions to make believers think of a more real spiritual dimension, then why bother doing the sign at all, why not just *talk* about what is spiritually real? Such theory has also supported symbolically minimalist, clerically instrumentalist, and narrowly juridical practices of the sacraments—approaches to the rites that are utterly antithetical to their fundamentally liturgical (and thus, pastoral) nature.

My wager is that putting these two terms, “liturgy” and “healing,” together affords an opportunity to pose good questions and arrive at theological and pastoral insights into Christian worship as an ecclesial activity both human and divine. A sense of wholeness is intrinsic to both divine worship and human healing, as will hopefully become clear in this first part of the book. An authentic and fruitful celebration of Christian liturgy (no matter which sacramental rite) is an encounter with the divine origin and final end of all creation, a real and nourishing foretaste of the fullness of life in the divine presence. An adequate grasp of what human healing entails is likewise holistic, a matter of arriving at a much-desired comprehensive sense of meaning that transforms a disorienting, alienating, and often life-threatening situation. This is one of the reasons the notion of healing is so attractive in our contemporary social (including religious) context. It bears relief and deliverance, the promise that pain, fragmentation, and indeed,

judgment have passed. One of the primary Christian metaphors for what God has done for humanity in the person and mission of Jesus of Nazareth is salvation, a medicinal concept sharing the same Latin root, *salus* (health), with salve, a healing ointment.² This points to the profound conjunction of divine worship with human healing in the content and practice of Christian faith.³

These introductory remarks invite several questions about the nature of Christian liturgy, rite, and celebration, about the role of word and sacrament, about liturgy's symbolic and official dimensions in the context of the entire life of the church and its members. I will address such questions at different points, and in some cases repeatedly, over the course of the following chapters. Again, my hope is that attention to one thematic dimension of Christian faith and human experience, namely, healing, will prove an opportune angle for shedding light on the wider theology of the church's liturgy. Toward that end, an exposition of what is meant by Christian worship is necessary at the outset, one constructed already with a view toward the notion of healing (chapter 1). This will usher in a subsequent investigation into the connotations of healing in contemporary Catholic discourse (chapter 2).

THE NECESSITY OF LITURGY FOR CHRISTIAN FAITH

An adequate understanding of Christian liturgy, as part of the broader activity of divine worship, fundamentally depends on recognizing what God it entails. The content, shape, and scope of Christian worship is a function of the God who is both its subject and object, namely, the God of biblical revelation, the God of Jesus, the triune God revealed through his life, death, and resurrection.⁴ This apparently innocent, if not seemingly tautological, statement is a stick of theological

² See Susan K. Wood, "The Paschal Mystery: The Intersection of Ecclesiology and Sacramental Theology in the Care of the Sick," in *Recovering the Riches of Anointing: A Study of the Sacrament of the Sick*, ed. Genevieve Glen, 5–7 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002).

³ The tradition's roots lie in what Daniel Harrington describes as "the New Testament vocabulary of salvation," which includes words and phrases that translate into English as "get well" and "restored to health." *The Gospel According to Matthew*, New Testament, vol. 1, Collegeville Bible Commentary, ed. Robert Karris (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1983), 43.

⁴ See Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 155–61.

dynamite that, when ignited by the gift of faith in the Gospel, explodes conventional notions of divine worship, breaking down the barriers narrowly confining it to cultic activity, that is, to religious ritual. Put simply, worship of God is the entire Christian life, and thus the entire mission of the church in the world. Liturgy is the symbolic, ritual activity of the assembled church. It gives believers an explicit sense, a tangible presence, of the God hidden in their daily lives, as well as something of the specific content, through proclaiming and responding to Sacred Scripture, of what this ongoing human encounter with the divine is like. In the church's liturgy believers glorify God by participating more deeply in God's vision for the world and their place in it through word and sacrament.

Thus Christians have an irreducible need for the liturgy, the *ritual* worship they celebrate, even as those sacramental rites do not in themselves comprise the total practice of the faith, the single locus for knowing the one true God and his Son Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Liturgy articulates this dynamic of Christian ecclesial life by stating: "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows."⁵ To speak in terms of source and summit indicates that liturgy is not the sole work of the church and its members but, rather, what guides and nourishes all the activity of their lives, creating the possibility of encountering God therein. Christian faith is a praxis in the world. Guided by the ever-beckoning summit revealed in the church's sacramental worship, believers traverse a terrain experienced as the *creation* in which God delights in granting them active roles and, moreover, gives them the living water (John 4:14), the bread of life (John 6:35), to sustain them in this co-creative, salvific process. To join in Holy Wisdom's ongoing work in the history of suffering and the promise of ultimate triumph for all Her creatures is to worship God.⁶

⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), no. 10. *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, OP, rev. ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publications, 1996), 122.

⁶ See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); and Jill Y. Crainshaw, *Wise and Discerning Hearts: An Introduction to Wisdom Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001).

Over the past century and a half, theological scholarship and official church leadership have adopted the term “liturgy,” based on the ancient Greek concept *leitourgia*, meaning “work of the people,” to recover the proper, fundamental sense of worship found in Scripture and most ancient tradition.⁷ In contrast to such terminology as going to (or hearing) Mass or assisting at Divine Offices or receiving a sacrament, the rhetoric of liturgy revitalizes a sense of the church’s sacramental rites as the symbolic and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, very real participation of all the faithful in the divine-human *mystery* of creation and redemption.

THE MYSTERY OF FAITH:

GOD’S GLORY IN HUMANITY’S SALVATION

At the origins of Christianity, mystery was not about esoteric cults or secret rituals but rather the revelation that in the person and mission of the Jewish eschatological prophet Jesus of Nazareth, crucified by sin but raised to life by the Spirit, God’s purpose for creation has been fulfilled. In Jesus, whom faith acclaims the Christ, God’s boundless and merciful love for the suffering and the guilty *in the very context of human lives in history* has been definitively manifested. The mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection reveals that his words and actions, his total person and personal history, gave glory to God by saving and sanctifying people. In the Gospel of Luke, heavenly messengers proclaim at its outset the meaning of the entire life of Jesus that will follow:

“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to those on
whom his favor rests.” (2:14, NAB)⁸

As the Christian tradition developed over the next few centuries, this inseparable relationship of divine glorification and human salvation would pervade the sermons, catechetical instructions, and letters of the fathers of the church. By the close of the twentieth century, the

⁷ Irénée Henri Dalmais and others, *Principles of the Liturgy*, ed. Aimé Georges Martimort, trans. Matthew O’Connell, *The Church at Prayer*, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987), 7–9, 229–34.

⁸ See Paul S. Minear, *To Heal and To Reveal* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 50.

theologically and pastorally revitalizing potential of this recovery of ancient tradition became evident in the widespread quoting and paraphrasing of the words of St. Irenaeus, a second-century bishop of Lyons: "'For the glory of God is a living man, and the life of man consists in beholding God,' in the Spirit and through the Son, who is 'the visible of the Father.'"⁹

It is in this broader soteriological perspective that the meaning and purpose of Christian worship resides. The significance of the church's liturgical form of worship does not lie in its cultic personages, objects, actions, and locations in themselves but rather in their symbolic function in relation to the biblical narratives that have revealed the entire cosmos and human history as the arena of God's creative and redemptive activity. What Christian liturgy is about is entirely a function of the specific God it worships—not the distant, mechanistic God of modern deism, nor the idealistic Transcendent in our personal experiences and feelings, nor the divine One "up there" who only appears in certain sacred places "down here"—but the God who covenants, that is, the God who has committed himself in love to the deliverance of humanity in history. This covenantal origin and basis of biblical faith is the reason worship is not a unidirectional ritual action done by believers for God but rather a full-life response to the gracious love (*hesed*) and trustworthy faithfulness (*emet*) God has shown the people,¹⁰ compelling them to behave in kind:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Deut 6:4-5; cf. Matt 22:37)

This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt 22:38-39; cf. Lev 19:18)

The Christian Church reads the Jewish biblical texts, the First (or Old) Testament, as a covenant history, focused on the climactic events of the Exodus and Mount Sinai but founded in the promises to Abraham

⁹ *Against Heresies* 4.20.7. Quoted in Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 66.

¹⁰ See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 93–100.

and the patriarchs and revitalized in the symbolic words and deeds of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets. God chose Israel to be the recipients of this covenantal heritage, receiving through it the mission to be light to the nations (Isa 42:6; 49:3, 6). The content of the covenant and the character of the God it reveals comprise the reason that sacred feasts and sacrifices are only pleasing if offered by a people actively striving for justice, mercy, and peace (Amos 5:21-24; Mic 6:6-8).¹¹ The need for such justice and peace, nonetheless, points to their absence and thus to the evil and suffering with which human history is riddled in the presence of the all-powerful and all-loving, but thereby totally Other, God.

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY PERSONIFIED: COVENANTAL LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS

The testament of the first believers in Jesus as the Christ is that God's covenantal promise of deliverance to Israel was taken up and transformed in the person, mission, and message of Jesus, with his death and resurrection constituting the climactic moment of covenant history. The gospels present Jesus as an eschatological prophet who claimed that Israel's longed-for, final deliverance from exile, the reign of God, was coming about through his words and actions.¹² The entire New Testament witnesses to the unexpected shape that God's faithfulness to Jesus took, raising him bodily from death into a new form of life, revealing his singular divine origin and end as the firstborn of a new creation that will one day be realized for all. This is the mystery revealed at the heart of Christian faith, the revelation that the strength of death is past and that the promised covenant of love written on human hearts is underway. Jesus enacted this greatest of his parabolic actions¹³ at the most important point in the Jewish cycle of sacrificial worship, the Passover, the memorial of deliverance from slavery and oppression that bore the promise that God would yet redeem his people definitively. In his mission and death Jesus took on both the

¹¹ See Frederick C. Holmgren, "Priests and Prophets: Spirituality and Social Conscience," *Worship* 79, no. 4 (July 2005): 304-16.

¹² My thought here has been greatly shaped by N. T. Wright's series, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vols. 2 and 3: *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), and *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), respectively.

¹³ See Minear, *To Heal and To Reveal*, 24.

nation's plight and the form their obedience to the covenant needed to take. In raising Jesus to life after he lay dead, God revealed a new, unexpected outcome for his Passover, the first installment of the resurrection for all humanity.

The mystery of Christian faith, then, is paschal (that is, pertaining to Passover and more specifically to Jesus himself as the definitive sacrifice¹⁴). The specific content of this paschal mystery needs to be repeatedly expounded through word and sacrament lest we lose sight of what God we are worshipping: the God who is for humanity, for the happiness and peace of all people; the God who is known in those who join in that activity; the God whose images are not sought in static objects but in actions. Liturgical theology, then, seeks to comprehend the vision and practice of Christian faith not in religious terms of sacred versus profane but rather of mystery disclosed in history: "In doing [the liturgy], the Church pursues its most essential purpose, which is to ensure the active presence of divine realities under the conditions of our present life—and that is what 'mystery' means."¹⁵ The paschal mystery likewise bears the pain of that which it does not disclose, the inexplicable wisdom in God's still waiting to deliver all the suffering into "a new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1).¹⁶

In Jesus the categories of sacred and profane break down. Christian liturgy is not a matter of taking believers out of the world for a moment but rather of immersing them more deeply in the mystery of God's paradoxical purpose for it over time.¹⁷ Sin is not what happens in the profane world, while perfection can be found in some sacred, separate precinct. Rather than the religious division of sacred and profane, the categories shaping Christianity are past, present,

¹⁴ See Robert J. Daly, "Sacrifice Unveiled and Sacrifice Revisited: Trinitarian and Liturgical Perspectives," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 24–42.

¹⁵ Dalmis, *Principles of the Liturgy*, 266.

¹⁶ In contrast to what he describes as Christian theology's long trivialization of suffering as an eschatological question, along with its pursuit of "too many clever answers to such questions as Who is God? And Where is God?" Johann Baptist Metz argues compellingly for a turn "to the primordial biblical question, What is God waiting for?" *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, ed. and trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 58; see also 84.

¹⁷ See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1983), 31–33.

and future.¹⁸ The key to Christian faith, and thus the meaning and purpose of its liturgy, is time. The mutually informing ritual activity of word and sacrament draws those present in the church's liturgical assembly into the memory of God's actions and promises of human redemption, transforming them, through the power of the Holy Spirit, into a foretaste of their promised fulfillment, when God will be all in all (see 1 Cor 15:28). We live in an utterly paradoxical time between the definitive inauguration of God's reign in the person of Jesus and the final realization of the whole creation's peaceful, just, and loving existence in God's presence. The two primary sacramental rites of the church, baptism and Eucharist, reveal this paradoxical divine worldview, initiating and sustaining believers' participation or communion (*koinonia*) therein. The church celebrates the paschal mystery of Christ liturgically so that this mystery might be writ large across our lives, embracing the "joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted."¹⁹

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM: ENTRY INTO THE PRACTICAL LOVE OF GOD

Perhaps the most prominent metaphor for our entrance into the life of faith is St. Paul's description of baptism as our being buried with Christ in death, "so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4, NRSV). Having no sooner made this indicative proclamation of our death to sin in Christ, Paul immediately goes on to exhort believers

¹⁸ See Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, trans. Asheleigh Moorhouse (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1966, 1986), 70–81, 183–84; and Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 87–115.

¹⁹ *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), no. 1. Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 163. Building on Paul's proclamation of a new social order in Galatians 3:28 and the Gospel's eschatological vision of the reign of God, Bernard Cooke argues: "Such a global sharing of the Spirit of God will not be a specifically religious phenomenon but something as broad as human life worldwide. If and when it occurs, it will make clear that Christianity was not meant to be a religion in any narrow sense of the word but rather the catalyst for a whole new way of being human." *Power and the Spirit of God: Toward an Experience-Based Pneumatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 27.

not to allow sin to have any power over us (6:14). This is but one way of describing the mystery that *is* the Christian life of faith, a life patterned on Christ's God-given mission of redemptive solidarity with a suffering world. Paul's reference to baptism is part of the larger argument he mounts in the first eight chapters of Romans, his effort to explain Christian life as a passing over from law to freedom, sin to Spirit, Adam to Christ—all of this so that humanity might walk (a biblical metaphor for ethical action) in a new way, a way through this world toward what awaits all in the final resurrection.

Likewise, although written in an obviously different mystical vein, the Johannine discourse on being born from above, or born again (John 3:3), is nonetheless about giving glory to God in the medium of human history. To look upon the one who was "lifted up" (on the cross) and to see in him the Son of Man (3:14) is to recognize in the torture, trial, and execution of Jesus the ultimate revelation of who God is, namely, the Creator so in love with the world that he gives his only son so that all might live (3:16). The First Letter of John teaches that living out such love now in community is the medium for glorifying God, a matter of "walk[ing] in the light as he himself is in the light" (1 John 1:7), that is, a matter of mutual service and charity. Through such ecclesial fellowship (*koinonia*), believers share in the very fellowship of the Father and his Son (1:3). Such is the life of those born of water and Spirit (John 3:5).

Jean-Marie-Roger Tillard finds in the First Letter of Peter one of the most important New Testament expositions of daily life in the Christian community as the practical form of communion that renders praise to God. Crucial for Tillard is this letter's rhetoric of God's people as the "priestly community of the king," "living stones . . . built into a spiritual house," a "holy priestly community worthy of offering through Jesus Christ spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God," who "proclaim the mighty acts of the one who called [them] out of darkness into God's marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9-10²⁰). Given the letter's teaching that mutual love and service are the fruits of the baptismal seed (1:23), glorifying God through Christ Jesus (4:10-11), Tillard explains the sense in which spiritual sacrifices (*pneumatikai thusiai*) worship God:

²⁰ The translation of 1 Peter 2 is Tillard's own. See Jean-Marie-Roger Tillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ: At the Source of the Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 22n25.

The context indicates that these sacrifices are not primarily liturgical cultic actions but the existential acts of the holy life of this community. Its communion comes fundamentally from the Spirit, and it serves God in the daily actions of its members. . . . To become holy 'in all [one's] conduct' (1:15) means to place oneself, with faith and courage, within the network of relationships based on baptism which together make of the community, not a collection of persons seeking their own sanctification, but the unique and indivisible 'royal priesthood,' the 'priestly community of the king,' the 'spiritual house' of God. In the holiness of all those whom the gospel has engendered 'anew' (1:23; see 2:2), individual and community cannot be separated . . . the individual is a living stone of the 'spiritual house' (2:5) only by remaining bonded to others and acting with the awareness of this bond.²¹

In an inversion of the sacred-profane dichotomy, spiritual sacrifice is primarily about ethical, existential living.²² Spiritual sacrifice is a practical love shared not only among believers but also extended to non-Christians, giving them a sense of God's love and even assuring them that, in the end, they too will "glorify God when he comes to judge" (1 Pet 2:12).

THE EUCHARIST: SUSTAINING COMMUNION IN THE SELF-GIVING LIFE OF GOD

The Eucharist is what both reveals and sustains such interpersonal and social love as a communion in the very life of God. The eucharistic assembly's celebration of word and sacrament reveals the nature of these actions and the human bonds they form as coming from God through the Spirit of Jesus while also gathering them up in a (ritual) sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God. In the liturgical sacrifice believers enjoy a multifold presence of Christ,²³ symbolically made real

²¹ Ibid., 22–23.

²² Louis-Marie Chauvet has captured the upshot of this sacramental worldview: "Faithful to its biblical roots, ecclesial tradition has attempted to discern what is most 'spiritual' in God on the basis of what is most 'corporeal' in us. This is especially the case in the liturgy. But it is more widely the case in the whole of *Church Life*." *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 523.

²³ See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7; Peter Fink, *Worship: Praying the Sacraments* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1991), 81–93; and Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, rev. ed. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), 94–107.

through the power of the Holy Spirit, that nourishes their spirits and bodies. Gathering to remember with wonder the depth of God's love for all creation revealed in the life mission, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the assembly's doxological response of thanksgiving constitutes "a distinctive element of Christian identity."²⁴ As remembrance (*anamnesis*) of the executed and risen Jesus, the Eucharist is not only a ritual but also a prophetic action, for the event it commemorates, Jesus' supper on the eve of his death, was forward-looking. What Jesus did with the bread and cup found its meaning proleptically in the total gift of himself he would offer the next day but also in the sacramental (real symbolic) presence of himself it would give to his followers thereafter. This sustains them as they carry on his mission and ensures their future sharing in the ultimate banquet of the kingdom.

Xavier Léon-Dufour perceives the intermediate time between the "night when he was betrayed" (1 Cor 11:23) and the promised day of the kingdom's fulfillment (see Luke 22:14) as the period of the church's sacramental meal:

What Jesus does [at the Last Supper], then, he does in anticipation: not only his 'dying' (which he anticipates in order to bring out its meaning and to express his free consent to it), but also the giving of his presence in symbols. Through the commemoration which the disciples will make of him, this 'real' presence of Jesus will light up, from within, the night of the passion that lasts through the centuries in countless sufferings of human beings and their real 'dying.' The liturgical action will enable believers to express ever anew their confidence that love has conquered death.²⁵

The mystical activity of the Eucharist is essential to the life of the church, for it reveals over and again the presence of God, seen in the light of Christ, in the situations of life that would seem to be the most godless, the places where God is experienced as absent, the darkness of suffering and death. The Eucharist not only consoles believers with the promise of Christ's presence but also compels them to discover him in the practical, ethical activity of their lives, wherein they embrace his mission and know something of the paschal mystery that

²⁴ Tillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, 117.

²⁵ Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 72. See also Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 180–86.

is still painfully yet positively passing through time. By proclaiming and responding to the merciful loving presence and trustworthy faithfulness of God, members of the church abide in a joy founded in their participation in the kenotic (self-emptying) life of God. As Léon-Dufour intimates, moreover, the company of those participating in this great divine-human mystery is not confined to the sum total of those who liturgically celebrate the Eucharist nor, as Tillard demonstrates through Scripture and tradition, is the body of the church merely the sum total of its members.²⁶ The reality of the church in the larger paschal mystery of the world's suffering and salvation is itself a mystical communion with the God whose cause is the ultimate happiness and peace (wholeness) of all humanity. Christians know something of that salvation, that healing and wholeness, as they help one another to shape their lives by this mystery.²⁷

SACRAMENTAL LITURGY: MAKING KNOWN THE CHRIST HIDDEN YET PRESENT IN OUR LIVES

To use the now classic language made famous by the early work of Edward Schillebeeckx, we can say that Christ, church, and sacramental liturgy constitute encounters with God in the bodily, historical medium of human lives.²⁸ The Jesus who revealed through his entire mission of teaching and healing unto death the very presence of God in his person-body has ascended to God's right hand and thus we can see him no longer. To say that the church, through the mission of the Holy Spirit, is now the sacrament of Jesus—the bodily presence of this divine-human person in history—is really an affirmation that every member of that body, every living stone bonded into that temple, is also a sacrament of Christ.

Is it too bold to assert that, in the end, it is the people who are the sacraments? Given the paradoxical, in-between state of believers' existence—having been freed from death (and its instrument, sin) in baptism yet needing still to struggle, despite repeated failure, against sin's influence—this may well seem an overstatement. If we focus on any given individual and the story of his or her life, the history of his or her decisions and actions, an unqualified manifestation of divinity

²⁶ See Tillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, 50–51, 58–61.

²⁷ See Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, 631–44.

²⁸ See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963).

is certainly doubtful. At precisely this point the importance, indeed the necessity, of the third element in Schillebeeckx's formula, namely, the church's liturgical sacraments, becomes evident.²⁹ For when the church assembles under the leadership of an ordained minister in celebration of word and sacrament, that assembly becomes something far greater than the sum of the individuals; but also in their sacramental participation in the paschal mystery, each member comes to know something of his or her own self as the bodily locus, the living parable, of God's love for the world. The ritual action of believers together in liturgy, that is, their engagement of powerful symbols of evangelical faith, makes possible an experiential knowledge of themselves and our world as God sees us.

While baptism initiates people into life in the Spirit of Christ and then the Eucharist nourishes them throughout that journey of life toward the fullness of the kingdom,³⁰ a complement of other official sacramental rites reveal the presence and action of the Spirit of Christ in particular believers at specific moments in the story of their faith lives. It is not overstating the case to say that, for example, *in the celebration* of the sacrament of anointing, the sick person himself or herself

²⁹ Bernard Cooke has made a singular American appropriation of and contribution to this crucial trajectory in theology: "[A] fundamental principle of sacramental liturgy, particularly eucharistic liturgies [is this]: The most important sacramental symbol, the most significant reality, in any liturgy is the people who perform the action." *Sacraments and Sacramentality*, 102. Elsewhere, Cooke elaborates on the significance of this tenet for liturgical worship: "Apart from bodiliness we could not communicate with one another and so form community, either as humans or as Christians. Rituals capable of expressing and shaping our faith identity as body of Christ would be impossible, for the fundamental sacramental symbol in all Christian rituals is the observable assembly." In *Bodies of Worship: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, ed. Bruce T. Morrill, 48 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999).

³⁰ My own position on the theologically and pastorally troubled sacrament of confirmation is that it functions as the sacramental-liturgical bridge leading the fledgling Christian from the font of baptism to the table of the Eucharist. The explicit, symbolically real invocation of the Spirit of Christ upon the baptized person is an act of epiclesis that initiates him or her for participation in the eucharistic prayer, making him or her an eligible recipient of the Spirit each time it is invoked upon *the assembled members of the church*, along with the bread and wine they will share as Christ's Body and Blood. See Bruce T. Morrill, "The Meaning of Confirmation: Searching with the Bishop, the Liturgy and the Holy Spirit," *Liturgical Ministry* 9 (2000): 49–62.

becomes a special sacramental presence to that community of faith. Raised up amidst the assembly in the context of proclaiming and responding to the word of God, the person who is the subject of the sacramental anointing becomes in that event the tangible, bodily-human manifestation of God's merciful love and steadfast faithfulness. For this to happen, however, the rite must be approached not as an instrumental ministration of some quantifiable thing (the unfortunate, long-regnant view of sacramental grace), as if Christ through his vicars were dispensing something of utilitarian value that can "get results" (in this case, the cure of a disease). As Chauvet has so beautifully argued, what happens in the divine-human encounter of Christian liturgy is rather more a matter of a gift exchange, wherein the value of the person, the worth of his or her being as a further gift to the community, is primarily what is being celebrated and thus built up.³¹ Sacramental celebration is not so much about *having* something at the conclusion that one did not have before but rather about *being* more deeply aware of oneself and others as the very site of the loving faithfulness and gracious mercy of God, in whatever condition we find ourselves.

All of this, of course, can only be so if the sacramental ritual in question is approached as paschal celebration, as liturgy. "Paschal" indicates that in liturgy we seek a deeper affective knowledge of ourselves as part of the history of the God revealed in Jesus. The ultimate revelation of this God who is for humanity in the death and resurrection of Jesus requires awareness of at least two key factors about the life of faith: first, that it is founded upon a paradoxical story, the inexplicable revelation of God as Father, Son, and Spirit *through* the events of the life, death, and glorification of Jesus; and therefore, second, the irreducibly narrative structure of this revelation.³² The scandal of the Gospel, of the crucified God it reveals, can never be worked into a total systematic theory or a complete metaphysical explanation. This

³¹ See Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 117–27; *Symbol and Sacrament*, 99–124, 266–89.

³² "By [paschal mystery] the church has intended to focus on the paradox of God's disclosure and hiddenness in Christ and, likewise, the hiddenness of human lives with Christ in God. . . . Here is mystery that requires form: word and act patterned after the witness to what Jesus said and did. The mystery is not a puzzle to be solved, but a liberating power of life to be received." Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 193.

is why Sacred Scripture is so fundamental to the content and practice of Christian faith, why tradition, including sacramental liturgy, always proceeds on the basis of and in obedience to the biblical word of God.³³ Thus is the liturgy of the church essentially a matter of word and sacrament, of myth (formative, revelatory story) and symbolic ritual, which draws people into the creative world of God's redemptive imagination, requiring that they, as participants, put to work the range of symbolic capabilities (narrative, art, architectural design, music, oratory, choreographed movement) with which God has endowed them. This is why ritual celebration is an essential, not an auxiliary, dimension of the church's sacraments.

THE LITURGICAL-THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM AND NEED FOR REFORM

Perhaps the import of this argument for sacramental liturgy as essentially paschal celebration can become more evident by expounding what it seeks to correct. Despite the risk of reducing the complexities of history and social (ecclesial) constructions to caricatures, one can nonetheless observe the sorts of theological and pastoral problems that both necessitated the Second Vatican Council's mandate for liturgical reform and renewal, and remain daunting challenges forty years later. These are intricately intertwined and therefore not easily ordered in terms of causal priorities among them.³⁴ Still, one might perceive the primary poles of hobbled Catholic sacramental practice to be an extremely, if not exclusively, metaphysical explanation of their purpose and function and an excessive clericalism in the understanding of their ministration—all to the detriment of their pastoral, humanly beneficial efficacy.

³³ See Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Ground: A Liturgical Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 25–50. See also, *Lectionary for Mass: Introduction* (1997), no. 3; and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 24, 35, 51.

³⁴ One helpful historical-theoretical template for studying this problem is Bernard J. Cooke's argument that beginning in the fourth century the originally powerful symbolic immediacy of God's personal presence in sacramental liturgy became increasingly eviscerated by developments in philosophical theology, hierarchical structures of authority, and the adoption of imperial ritual forms. Those three problems, according to Cooke, remain the challenge for contemporary liturgical renewal. See *The Distancing of God: The Ambiguity of Symbol in History and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 37–56.

The scholastic turn to metaphysics to explain the supernatural reality of the Eucharist and other sacraments of the church in the Middle Ages cannot but be appreciated as one attempt to understand what might be called the grace dimension of salvation, the divine presence and action in human lives that exceeds all human phenomena *and* effort. The historical problem, however, has been that, whereas the various medieval theologians had applied the abstract categories of matter and form, cause and effect, substance and accident, to the concrete sacramental practices of their day, the subsequent manual (schoolbook) theology of the sacraments ultimately reversed the relationship between (pastoral) practice and (theological) theory. The latter came to shape the former. Such formulas as instrumental cause and principal effect came to reduce each of the seven official sacraments to narrowly defined objectives and results focused upon the minimum of material and formulary needed to assure, canonically, that the imperceptible dispensation of grace had indeed occurred.

Crucial to the orchestration of the matter and form of a sacrament, moreover, was the authority of the priest, whose ecclesially invested power assured the transmission of grace. The sacramental order of ministry is of great value and indeed necessity for the continuance of apostolic tradition in the church through history. The problem, however, became (and far too often remains) the all but exclusive identity of the church with the priest to the neglect of Christ's liturgical presence in the active participation of all the faithful assembled.³⁵ The historical result, to this day, has been a persistent dualism in the church's sacramental practice. What really matters about a sacrament in any given case is that a priest use the officially sanctioned materials and words that guarantee the dispensation of grace, which the (canonically eligible) faithful receive. That constitutes the sacred, the really holy, content and purpose of the sacrament. All the rest of the ceremonial (music, environment, perhaps even the proclamation of the Word) is ancillary, a question of what might prove secondarily beneficial to people's experience of the rite.

³⁵ Thus has the Second Vatican Council's identification of the full, conscious, active participation of all as the key priority in the restoration and promotion of the liturgy remained the guiding principle for a great deal of the ensuing theological scholarship and pastoral development of the liturgy. See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 14.

This marginalization of both the fundamentally symbolic-ritual effectiveness of liturgy and the distinct roles of various nonclerical members of a given assembly has been sustained by an operative metaphysical view of the sacraments that cannot but cut off the divine presence and action from human bodily participation. As Chauvet and other leading sacramental theologians have astutely argued, any metaphysics of causality always fails to address the gap between the supernatural order of grace and the natural medium of human life and experience. Sacraments come to be seen as things that answer ideas, as means to supernatural ends, and thus the focus is on the supernatural agent (the priest) while the biblical *content* of the words and materials he uses become of minimal concern to their recipients. A sacrament is a supernatural instrument delivering a guaranteed product rather than a revelatory sign engaging the participants in a way that changes their perception of themselves and their world.³⁶

The resulting symbolic minimalism, clerical instrumentalism, and narrow juridicism characterizing modern Roman Catholic sacramental practice, let alone much of the theory and ideology surrounding it, have all contributed—along, of course, with other social, economic, political, and religious factors—to ever-increasing numbers of the faithful drifting away from regular participation in the rites. These just do not matter so much in the regular rhythms (if there is such a thing in postmodern society) of people's lives. As punitive images of God and church authority have diminished in the increasingly postmodern worldviews of the middle and younger generations of Roman Catholics in the West, fear of ultimate (eternal) consequences for not assisting at Sunday Mass or confessing grave sins or marrying in the church has collapsed as a motivation for seeking out these and other rites. Furthermore, if sacramental liturgy effectively remains, in people's thought and imagination, predominantly a matter of metaphysical changes (even if the vast majority of folks would not utilize such a term) and canonic obligations executed by a priest for people, then their practical irrelevance can only, unfortunately, increase. In my experience as an ordained pastoral minister and religious educator, I find that people either bemoan or shrug off what they themselves describe as the utter disconnection between liturgy and life. It is not, to my observation, that people lack respect for priests or the sacramental rites. On the contrary,

³⁶ See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 7–45, 128–40.

they often hold them in great but problematic respect as sacred realities at an awesome distance from the profane commerce of life.

People may well be consoled in the church's providing a menu of what effectively serve as rites of passage across the life cycle, but if left at that, the genuine evangelical power of sacramental liturgy can only be missed, the pastoral treasure of the reformed rites of the church, squandered. Such liturgies as the Order of Christian Funerals or the sacrament of confirmation or the Rite of Marriage become, at best, genuinely sincere *expressions* of what people *already* think and know about themselves, each other, the world, and God. What the liturgy adds to such expressive experience is its divine endorsement in the person of the ordained priest, the sacramental objects, and the sacred space of the church. The clergy's own understanding and execution of the rites by means of the very same mindset only exacerbates the problem. Without exaggerating I would say that this is tragic, for I am convinced of the far greater pastoral-theological potential of the reformed rites, of the glory they can give God through their transformative impact on (their sanctification of) people's lives. Here one brief example of the problem, a situation concerning the sacrament of anointing the sick, may help to demonstrate the types of understanding that remain at odds with the healing potential of the rites.

A PASTORAL-LITURGICAL EXAMPLE

The scenario I will briefly describe and analyze here entails the contrast between perceiving the sacrament of anointing as (1) an instrumental action a priest does in order to signal and spiritually allay the immanence of death and (2) a liturgical celebration deepening a sick person's, as well as the assembled community's, awareness of his or her evolving participation in the paschal mystery. A few years ago I became involved in a pastoral initiative at a Catholic college, an original effort to celebrate the sacrament of anointing as part of the larger complex of rites comprising the Pastoral Care of the Sick. An institution whose administration, faculty, staff, and students all expound highly vocal pride in its strong sense of community, this relatively small residential campus seemed an environment well disposed to exploring a new way of supporting some of its members who might be struggling with chronic or acute health conditions. Having consulted chaplains and student-life administrators, I led a group of students in launching a three-point pastoral-liturgical initiative to evangelize, catechize, and finally, celebrate a communal rite of anointing the sick during Mass.

The project met widespread indifference and even resistance. I realize that multiple factors contribute to the attractiveness or irrelevance of a pastoral initiative in a particular community. The notable, recurrent feedback I received on or around the scheduled first catechetical gatherings, nonetheless, included people's strong perception of the sacrament as relevant only to the deathbed, despite all efforts we had made to educate to the contrary. People were not receptive to the written quotations from the reformed rite with its clear articulation of the sacrament as being for the benefit of those suffering from chronic or recurring illnesses or conditions, nor to its encouragement for communal celebrations.³⁷ My conversations with a staff member in her forties and a student in his early twenties were almost identical: "Father, for people this sacrament is what the priest does to somebody who is dying. It's the last rites. And that's it." Likewise, more than one of my fellow clergy on campus told me how bemused they were at my "trying to do something" with "extreme unction" (one priest's words) or "the last rites" (another's). The consistent language of the instructions and ritual texts of the rite bespeak healing and strengthening, comfort and pardon through the ministration of Christ as healer, savior, messiah, and physician.³⁸ The people with whom I spoke, on the contrary, seemed adamant in perceiving the sacrament only as providing a final forgiveness of sins at the last possible moment of earthly life.³⁹

What difference does it make, this obstinacy of clerics and laity, young and old, toward a reformed understanding of, if not participation in, the sacrament of anointing? Well, a lot it would seem, given

³⁷ See International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1983), nos. 8, 13, 97, 99, 108.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, nos. 5, 6, 91, 125, 145.

³⁹ Summarizing discussions at an international symposium on the sacrament of anointing the sick held in 2001, Genevieve Glen reports Catholics' resistance to its reform and renewal: "Both by its layout and by its content, *Pastoral Care of the Sick* makes clear the distinction between the rite of anointing as the sacrament that sustains us through sickness and the rite of viaticum as the sacrament that prepares us more immediately for death. . . . Yet a great deal of the formal and informal conversation in this gathering has reflected the tacit presupposition, often quite unrecognized, that anointing is the sacrament normally given to those on the point of death." *Recovering the Riches of Anointing: A Study of the Sacrament of the Sick*, ed. Genevieve Glen (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 119.

the highly positive experience we shared in our catechetical process (a series of weekly sessions modeled on the RCIA principles of gathering in an atmosphere of prayer, Scripture reading, psalmody and song, faith sharing, instruction, intercessions, and blessing), as well as the actual Mass with Anointing (celebrated almost entirely in song and with the help of professional liturgical dancers). Among the dozen people anointed during that liturgy, for example, was a woman in her twenties who several months later died from complications following surgery. She was the type of person who would not have seen much sense in being anointed alone in a hospital bed. Indeed, I learned she was not anointed again, that is to say, after that Mass, prior to her surgery. She did see the value, however, in being part of a communal assembly celebrating word and sacrament with music and processions and gestures. She was not alone, and that mattered greatly. Another participant in her sixties was suffering from cancer that had for several years been in remission. Her life had recently become extremely stressful, causing tangible diminishment in health. She needed to be anointed again, she discerned. She was able to describe to me the great benefit the liturgy afforded her at that time. That Mass with Anointing became a personal resource as the subsequent year became a time for her to make the decision to retire from her job in the college. Having negotiated changes in locations and commitments, she continues in her life to contribute to and receive from the lives of others as well as in her prayerful relationship with God.

Nor were those anointed the only clear beneficiaries of the celebration of the sacrament in the context of that Mass and the wider pastoral initiative (for which we had done much publicity). Among the students anointed was a young man in his first year of college, struggling not only with new complications from a severely debilitating congenital condition but also with the stressful knowledge that the mother he had left back home was failing quickly to a cancer that had emerged from several years' remission. She (by then significantly weakened and in a wheelchair) and the young man's father traveled to campus to assist at our Mass with Anointing. They came not for the mother's anointing, for she had suitably been anointed at various turning points in her own illness, but rather to participate in the sacramental celebration of a crucial moment in their son's life. The mother died less than two weeks later. Many of our catechetical (by that point, mystagogical) group went to the wake. As I met the young man and his father, the latter immediately told me, "Father, I cannot thank you enough for that Mass during

which you anointed our son. The moment after my wife and I watched you anoint him, she turned to me and said, 'Now I know he is going to be okay.'" I was left speechless, marveling at how the anointing her son had received gave this dying mother the assurance that she could let go of him in peace. That assurance had in turn become a consolation to her now grieving husband and child.

Finally, a quite different indication of the benefit of our work with the Pastoral Care of the Sick and the sacrament of anointing was given me by the director of the college's campus ministry, who told me that although not a large number of students had taken part in the sacramental process, still the very public steps of the initiative (from the initial evangelization by student presentations at weekend Masses and a broad-ranging written and personal information campaign through the final Mass) had generated a significant measure of discussion on campus about health issues as part of the larger picture of individual and communal life. The director told me that I should not doubt the number of counseling sessions that had taken place between students and chaplains and other professionals, as well as dialogues among friends, peers, and resident assistants concerning personal health issues.

All these positive pastoral outcomes, nevertheless, stand in contrast to those who resisted the project from start to finish, and they were many. To them the sacrament of anointing the sick remains a privatized affair at the deathbed, a moment to seal the imminent end of earthly life, a chance to ascertain that God blesses them. Up to that point, however, people struggle along as best they can, utilizing counselors and therapists, social workers and healthcare providers, even as we read repeated complaints over the absence of effective rituals in our late-modern contexts. That is what is at stake.

People really do, of course, desire wholeness, a sense of their world that answers their ongoing search for meaning. The broad indifference to our initiative in that Catholic college community, let alone the overt rejection I encountered by some, left me questioning finally just what these people do mean by healing. I gradually became sensitive to the extent the word is used in our contemporary context. It clearly is highly charged symbolically. The next chapter, therefore, studies what seems to be going on when people engage the rhetoric of healing, what is the scope of the experiences being addressed, as well as the ways they go about addressing various of these.