"Benedictine Father Anscar Chupungco writes about the liturgy with the authority of a world-renowned scholar and the familiarity of a dear old friend. He treats both worship and Christian faith with an admirable and attractive sense of wonder. No one who cherishes the liturgical reform of the past fifty years can afford to overlook this delightful book. It's an inspiring read."

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Professor of Historical & Liturgical Theology
Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

"The genuine voice of Anscar Chupungco sounds in these pages—with the characteristic notes of deep fidelity to Catholic tradition, utter clarity, gracious wisdom, Benedictine humility, and gentle hints of humor. That voice is a treasure. Chupungco articulates a vital memory of the very heart of the liturgical movement and many of its formative leaders, and one slowly comes to see that he himself has been one such leader. He speaks a clear and authoritative criticism of the recently too frequent cases of liturgical reaction on the part of some Roman Catholic leaders, yet he loses neither hope nor dignity in the process. Reading this book, you will discover again the basic principles of Catholic liturgical reform and its ecumenical resonances. You will also be encouraged to *sentire esse ecclesiam*, to recover the empowered sense of being the church: yourself with others as you gather around the presence of Christ now in word and sacrament."

—Gordon W. Lathrop
Professor of Liturgy Emeritus
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB

What, Then, Is Liturgy?

Musings and Memoir

Foreword by
Mark R. Francis, CSV,
and Keith Pecklers, SJ

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For His Eminence
Gaudencio B. Cardinal Rosales
Archbishop of Manila

Contents

Foreword

For more than thirty-five years thousands of students from countries around the world have had the great fortune to study liturgy with Fr. Anscar Chupungco, OSB. In the best of the Benedictine tradition, he not only imparts his knowledge of the sacred liturgy but also his deep love for the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. The following pages offer a good idea of what classes and informal conversations with Fr. Anscar are like. He describes this book as a liturgical memoir, sharing with the reader his "memory of people and events" that shaped his profession as a liturgist.

Rather than giving a dry academic presentation, Fr. Anscar invites the reader to engage with him as a fellow believer in an account of the liturgical renewal, defined by a deep and profound sensitivity to the liturgy's potential for strengthening a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ. Drawing on what he learned from his own mentors, Fr. Anscar compares the study of liturgy to entering a forest. He warns us that it is not necessary to stop and admire every tree but to have a picture of the entire forest firmly in place. In other words, he has imparted to his students that to fully appreciate the liturgy and be transformed by it, much more is needed than a mere understanding of rubrics or issues surrounding the text, because the whole of the liturgy is greater than the sum of its parts. In his own words: "We should beware of ranking the rubrics ahead of good theology, historical consciousness, and pastoral care. Rubrics are meant to lead the faithful to an ever-deepening experience of the paschal mystery."

This book, then, essentially proposes a vision of the Church's liturgical life that comes from the Second Vatican Council. Fr. Anscar's mentors who were influential in both the drafting of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the crafting of the renewed liturgical rites of the Church exercised a profound influence on his approach to liturgical studies. Having studied at Sant'Anselmo in the 1970s, he had the good fortune of living and studying with some of the greatest liturgical scholars of the twentieth century and founders of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute: his doctoral mentor Fr. Burkhard Neunheuser, expert in liturgical history; Fr. Salvatore Marsili and Fr. Cipriano

Vagaggini, renowned liturgical theologians; Fr. Adrien Nocent, specialist in the areas of the liturgical year and Christian initiation; Fr. Herman Schmidt, SJ, who held a dual appointment at the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical Liturgical Institute.

From these masters he learned that there is an intrinsic relationship between liturgy and life to which we should be attentive. The liturgical assembly itself is called to live out this relationship. In the words of Fr. Anscar:

> The liturgical assembly invites human society to make a collective effort to affirm human equality, eliminate social injustice, and promote true fellowship among all. In this sense the liturgical assembly, like a prophetic symbol, will always contain an element of counterculture.

Because of this attention to the assembly, Fr. Anscar naturally emphasizes the importance of both history and culture as keys to helping the liturgy more effectively invite believers in the twenty-first century to enter into the mind and heart of Christ through communal worship. This serves as a helpful antidote to the unbridled individualism characteristic of so much of our postmodern society. Since active participation of the lay faithful in the liturgy is a hallmark of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, this subject becomes an overarching concern for his convictions regarding worship, as is well demonstrated in this book.

As the Second Vatican Council maintains, "full, conscious, and active participation" of God's people would be impossible without proper adaptation of the rites to their own cultural context. To this end, Fr. Anscar has been at the forefront of exploring what has come to be called "liturgical inculturation." Having served as president of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute, secretary of the Filipino Bishops' Liturgical Commission, and founder of the Paul VI Liturgical Institute at the behest of the Filipino bishops, he has both developed his thought in this area and had the opportunity to implement his vision—a vision that has influenced and inspired many scholars and pastors throughout the world, both in the Roman Catholic Church and beyond.

As a loyal son of the Church and a faithful Benedictine monk, Fr. Anscar has always been respectful of the Church's tradition as expressed in her worship. And as a consultor to the Roman Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for many years, he has put his erudition and pastoral sensitivity at the service of the Holy See and, therefore, the universal Church. His profound love

and appreciation for that tradition puts him in a unique position to offer constructive critique on the current liturgical tradition and offer a way forward.

As former doctoral students who have inherited the teaching of his two major courses at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute—"The Theology and Principles of Liturgical Inculturation" and "Liturgical History Across the Cultural Epochs"—we see the wisdom of our Catholic liturgical tradition, to which Fr. Anscar has given his professional life, reflected in the pages of this book. Today, thirty-five years later, he continues to enrich the Church's liturgy through his scholarship and pastoral sensitivity. We are all very much in his debt.

Mark R. Francis, CSV
Keith F. Pecklers, SJ
Rome, Feast of the Epiphany, 2010

Preface

I began to teach the theology and spirituality of liturgical worship in 1973 at Maryhill School of Theology in the Philippines. Though it is one of my favorite subjects, this is my first book about it. For several years the lion's share of my publications were on the topic of liturgical inculturation.

Unlike some of my previous work, the method of exposition I follow here does not merit to be called scholarly: I dispensed with documented footnotes and technical apparatus. I consider this book the product of my musings on liturgical worship after three decades of studying and teaching it. It is also a book of liturgical memoir. In it I share with my readers my memory of people and events that shaped or influenced my profession as a liturgist. When people compliment me for my liturgical output, I always answer that if I seem tall, it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants.

This work is not meant to be a textbook, but its contents can be useful to people who want to know more about liturgical theology without the usual book references and highly technical vocabulary. For several years I taught this subject according to the rules of the academe, but it dawned on me that the awesome mystery of Christ and the Church should also be the object of prayer and meditation. After explaining such profound topics as Christ's presence or the role of the Holy Spirit in the celebration of Christian worship I would always advise my audience to sit still and ponder.

In the course of this work I quote patristic writers again and again. I might disappoint those who expect me to footnote my quotations using the most recent editions. I take most of my patristic sources from the Liturgy of the Hours, and that is surely not the scholarly way to quote them. But I thank the experts that chose those passages for the Office of Readings, causing them to be objects of prayerful meditation. Reading patristic writers in a little book called Liturgy of the Hours is a treat. I take delight in the literary freshness and extravagance and in the lyrical beauty of several of them. Indeed, how else are we to speak about the awesome mystery of God in us?

I was formed in the liturgy of Vatican II at a time when the council ended and the work of postconciliar reform was in full swing. My

professors at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute were all active in the various Vatican commissions or the Consilium for the Implementation of the Liturgy Constitution. Obviously, my work is strongly premised on the principles and criteria of liturgical reform as my professors understood and taught them.

I have always upheld the principle that we do not enjoy the liberty to question the conciliar decisions that the fathers made with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I believe, however, that there are postconciliar revisions of the liturgical books and cases of implementation of the reform that are open to debate and further consideration in view of pastoral and cultural changes in local churches. This was true in the early Church as well, where after a heated debate on whether or not to impose the Mosaic Law on pagan converts, the apostles wrote a letter announcing: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials" (Acts 15:28). It is in this same sense that the interpretation of the conciliar decrees should be subject to healthy and helpful critique.

With a critical but respectful disposition I deal with some current trends that appear to me as a problematic reading of the mind of the Constitution on Liturgy. I am honestly ill at ease with anything approaching criticism of official position with respect to some controversial issues. Navigating on murky water requires skill, prudence, and the fundamental virtue of obedience. I hope that in this book I did fairly well in that regard. We can debate, but at the end of the day what matters are not personal opinions but what truly contributes to making the prayer of the Church an encounter with the person of Christ.

As I was writing this book I often remembered those gratifying hours when I stood before my students who believed that liturgical inculturation was not the only subject I could teach. I thank them—their number is countless—for their trust. In particular I thank Josefina Manabat who urged me to put down in writing what I had been teaching about liturgical theology.

Given the influence of my students, I planned this book like most textbooks of liturgical theology. Chapter 1 deals with the basic premises. It opens with the tensions generated by the liturgical reform of Vatican II. Why is it that fifty years after the reform there is still discontent with the "new" liturgy in some sectors of the Church? Is there a need to reform the reform of Vatican II? The rest of the chapter deals with some of the challenges facing the global Church today: the place

of technology, the observance of Sunday, progressive solemnity, the role of women, the shelved issue of inculturation, and the Liturgy of the Hours. The chapter concludes with a treatise on the human body as an essential component of liturgical worship.

Chapter 2 attempts to define what liturgy is. I have always considered liturgical worship something so multifaceted that it defies any satisfactory definition. When something is both human and divine, like the Incarnate Word, we can only stand in awe and be lost in wonderment.

Chapters 3 and 4 follow the typical treatise consisting of the Trinitarian and ecclesiological components of liturgical worship. The third-century *Apostolic Tradition* (chap. 7, 8, 9, and 21) has this doxology: "Through your Son Jesus Christ, through whom be glory and honor to you, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and through all ages. Amen."

Chapter 5 refers to the outward shape of liturgical worship, namely, symbols, language, rites, music, and vesture. I borrowed the title *Per Ritus et Preces* from the Constitution on Liturgy: "Through a good understanding of the rites and prayers the faithful should take part in the sacred service conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full involvement" (48).

The concluding chapter completes the treatise by expounding the deeper meaning of liturgical worship, which is spirituality. With Pope Paul VI, we breathe the air of optimism that because of the liturgical legacy of Vatican II, "supernatural faith is reawakening, eschatological hope is guiding ecclesial spirituality, and charity is reassuming its life-giving, active primacy."

Studying the theology of liturgy is like entering a forest of doctrines, symbols, metaphors, and poetry. We may take delight in the loftiness of a doctrine or in the beauty of a symbol, but we should not lose sight of their deeper spiritual meaning. In the liturgy every metaphor hides an aspect of divine reality; every piece of poetry conveys the message of salvation. It is my hope that this volume will aid the reader to discover the face of God in liturgical worship.

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Excerpts from the following patristic texts are my translation: *Didaché*, Tertullian, Hippolytus of Rome, Saint Ambrose, and Saint Augustine (*Didaché*, ed. W. Rordorf-A. Tuilier [Sources Chrétiennes 248, 1978]); Tertullian's *De Baptismo* (Corpus Christianorum 1/1, 1954); *La Tradition apostolique de Saint Hippolyte*, ed. Bernard Botte, (Münster 1989); *De Sacramentis/De Mysteriis*, ed. Bernard Botte (Sources Chrétiennes, 25bis, 1962).

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Chapter One

Both Human and Divine

> For you, the former rite of Mass is a sign of your false ecclesiology and a matter on which to assail the Council and its work of reform. You take as pretext or as your alleged justification that only in the former rite are the authentic sacrifice of the Mass and the authentic ministerial priesthood preserved, their meaning unobscured. We reject out-of-hand this erroneous judgment and unjust accusation; we cannot permit the divine Eucharist, sacrament of unity, to be made the source of division (see 1 Cor 11:18); we cannot permit you to make use of it as an instrument and symbol of your rebellion.

These stern words were addressed by Pope Paul VI to Archbishop Marcel Lefèbvre on October 11, 1976. The archbishop, who was a council father, had accused the Holy See of embracing neo-Modernism and neo-Protestantism as clearly proven by the decrees of Vatican II and the postconciliar reforms. Perhaps there is no better way to describe Lefèbvre than as a person who could not accept that times and culture have changed even in the Catholic Church and that the Holy Spirit has continued to guide the course of Church events after the Council of Trent. To complete the story, I merely note that in a fatherly effort to mend division, Pope John Paul II allowed in 1984 and again in 1988 a restricted use of the Tridentine Missal. Finally, on July 7, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI published *Summorum Pontificum*, permitting the wider use of the said missal as *forma extraordinaria* of the Roman Mass.

The tenor of *Summorum Pontificum* allows us to believe that the Holy Father issued it as a final gesture of peace and reconciliation to those who still adhere to the Tridentine liturgy. His paternal gesture, however, put the clock back by forty years. Surely he does not mean to lessen the importance of the Vatican II liturgy, which he wants to retain as the *forma ordinaria* of Catholic worship. *Summorum Pontificum* is in the genre of *via media* or compromise to please both sides. This ingenious technique was often employed during the council's debate on the liturgical reform.

As I mused on the possible effect of the Apostolic Letter on the liturgical reform and the global Church, I confess that I entertained a bad thought, which I hope would not be taken as insolence. In 1957, on the eve of Vatican II, Pope John XXIII issued the letter *Veterum Sapientia*, insisting on the use of Latin in seminaries. When the council met, the first document to be discussed was the Constitution on Liturgy. The fathers spent several days debating the use of the vernacular in the liturgy. Finally, a *via media* was reached, allowing Latin to remain as the official liturgical language but opening the way to the use of the vernacular at the discretion of the local Ordinary. Consequently, local churches shifted to the vernacular liturgy, and Latin was practically abandoned. The shift from Latin to the vernacular in the liturgy had a parallel effect on the use of Latin in seminaries. Because of the Latin debate in the council, *Veterum Sapientia* did not get off the ground. Will *Summorum Pontificum* suffer the same fate in those places where Latin is a dead language and the Tridentine Mass a historical curiosity? Will it not be flying in the face of the irreversible reality of cultural and theological changes?

As expected, there were different reactions to the Liturgy Constitution and the subsequent implementation of its directives. One reaction was gratitude, which was sometimes mixed with reckless euphoria. Another was outright disenchantment with the reform itself. It was a type of disenchantment that failed to make the needed distinction between conciliar principles of reform and postconciliar implementation. I have always held that there may be instances when the postconciliar interpretation and implementation of the Liturgy Constitution are debatable, but we should carefully distinguish them from the principles promulgated by the ecumenical council. My liturgy mentor, Fr. Adrien Nocent, was a zealous advocate of the Liturgy Constitution, yet he was an outspoken critic of the postconciliar rites of confirmation and penance. Asked what could be done to improve them at that late hour of the conciliar reform, he replied with typical repartee, "Nothing is ever late; there is always time to reform the reform."

After several decades of liturgical reform there are still contrasting opinions about what the council had really intended to achieve. I had the occasion to ask Fr. Cipriano Vagaggini, another mentor of mine and one of the framers of the Liturgy Constitution, what "substantial unity of the Roman rite" meant. The phrase is obscure, yet crucial to inculturation. His answer was quite revealing: "I asked the same question when we were drafting the Constitution but no one in the

commission had an answer!" Strange indeed are the ways of the Spirit during the council and surely after the council. But if it is any consolation at all, tension can be considered an encouraging sign that people's interest in the liturgy has not abated over the years. When Abbot Primate Benno Gut of the Benedictine Confederation established the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome in 1962, professors of theology, like prophets of doom, alerted him that liturgy was a fad that would not exceed their lifetime.

In his posthumous book *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948–1975* Annibale Bugnini keeps record of much opposition to the conciliar and postconciliar reform. Among the antagonistic groups that he has identified the following clearly harbor a countercultural mentality. The first is *Una Voce*, an international group, for the defense of Latin, Gregorian chant, and sacred polyphony against the vernacular and modern music. The second are splinter groups that were often hostile to the liturgical changes being advanced by the Holy See. Among them Bugnini names the American Catholic Traditionalist Movement and individuals like the Italian journalist Tito Casini, who in his book *La tunica stracciata* acidly attacked the use of the vernacular; Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani and Cardinal Antonio Bacci, who staunchly supported opposition to the new Missal because of its alleged "heretical," "psychologically destructive," and "Protestant" elements; and the French Abbé Georges de Nantes, who called for the ousting of Pope Paul VI, whom he accused of heresy, schism, and scandal. Even some of the devout faithful that frequented the Mass were adverse to the use of the vernacular. In the Church of Sant'Anselmo an elderly lady corrected me as I was offering her Holy Communion: *"Non dicitur 'Il corpo di Cristo,' sed 'Corpus Christi'!"* (In perfect Latin she bade me say "The Body of Christ" in Latin, not in Italian.)

Bugnini himself, then secretary to the Congregation of Divine Worship, was not spared. He was a systematic person who programmed the liturgical reform and courageously pushed its implementation against all opposition. I remember that in one of his visits to the Pontifical Liturgical Institute he declared, "I am the liturgical reform!" In more ways than one his self-assessment was correct. The postconciliar reform would not have progressed with giant steps had it not been for his dauntless spirit and tenacity. To crown his liturgical accomplishments the Vatican promoted him to the rank of papal delegate to Iran, where he became famous in the secular world for successfully negotiating the release of American hostages.

TENSIONS GENERATED BY THE LITURGICAL REFORM

The title and content of this preliminary chapter are inspired by the lofty opening lines of the Constitution on Liturgy: "It is of the essence of the Church to be both human and divine, visible yet endowed with invisible resources, eager to act yet intent on contemplation, present in the world yet not at home in it; and the Church is all these things in such wise that in it the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come which we seek" (2).

In his address at the opening of the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII reminded the fathers that it was not the principal task of the council to discuss Church doctrines again. "For such type of discussion alone," he said, "there was no need to convoke an ecumenical council." What needed to be done, he explained, was to translate the deposit of faith in word and deed that the people of today could understand and accept. It was a clarion call for the Church to set out with a fresh vision into a world that had changed long ago. The word *aggiornamento*, or updating, with which he laid down the agenda of the Second Vatican Council, became a catchword and the order of the day. In every sector the Church needed to engage in *aggiornamento*, not of course by being conformed to this passing age but "by thrusting itself boldly and without fear in the work demanded by our time."

It was to be expected that *aggiornamento* would be the undercurrent of every conciliar document. This we read like a refrain in the first document, the Constitution on Liturgy, promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963. I should note that the opening line of the document carries the vision-mission statement for the *aggiornamento* not only of the liturgy but also of every aspect of Church life: "This Sacred Council has several aims in view: it desires to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions that are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of humankind into the household of the Church." Properly understood and fittingly celebrated, a renewed liturgy can contribute immensely to the realization of this conciliar vision. At the turn of the twentieth century the Benedictine Lambert Beauduin, who fathered the classical liturgical movement that the council later adopted, advanced such a scheme of Church renewal. Consequently, the opening line of the

Constitution announced that "the Council sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy."

The drafters of the Constitution were convinced that every liturgical rite, if adapted to the culture and traditions of the people, has a message to convey to the modern world. A renewed liturgy nourishes the spiritual life of the faithful, promotes Christian unity among the Churches, and contributes to the Church's mission of evangelization. In short, the liturgy is a major protagonist of the conciliar *aggiornamento*. In fact, liturgical reform, ecumenical understanding, and evangelization held a prominent place in the agenda of the classical liturgical movement.

Who drafted the Constitution on Liturgy? A couple of them were my mentors and my future colleagues at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute. They were pastors and scholars who supported and actively promoted the cause of the liturgical movement. Burkhard Neunheuser rightly claimed that thanks to them the fifty-year-old liturgical movement entered the council hall and was finally enshrined in its most fitting place: the conciliar document on the liturgy.

After Pope John XXIII had announced that he was convening an ecumenical council, a preparatory commission on the liturgy was established on June 6, 1960. Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani was president (succeeded by Cardinal Arcadio Larraona in 1962) and Annibale Bugnini secretary. The members were Karel Calewaert, Bernard Capelle, Enrico Cattaneo, Romano Guardini, Josef Jungmann, Joseph Malula, Johannes Quasten, Mario Righetti, and Aimon-Marie Roguet. Among the consultors were prominent liturgy scholars: Bernard Botte, Antoine Chavasse, Godfrey Diekmann, Balthasar Fischer, Pierre-Marie Gy, Anton Hänggi, Johannes Hoffinger, Pierre Jounel, Theodor Klauser, Boniface Luykx, Frederick McManus, Aimé-Georges Martimort, Herman Schmidt, Cipriano Vagaggini, and Johannes Wagner.

Although Pope Paul VI applied himself to the work of ecumenism and evangelization, he is best remembered for having courageously and solicitously undertaken the arduous postconciliar reform of the liturgy. In his 1964 letter *Sacram Liturgiam* he writes that it has been "the concern of earlier popes, of our self, and of the bishops of the Church that the sacred liturgy be carefully safeguarded, developed, and, if needed, reformed." He deserves the epithet "architect of the liturgical reform," though he was at the same time the indefatigable engineer who attended hands-on to the progress of the entire project.

On February 2, 1966, I had the singular privilege of offering a candle to Pope Paul VI at a ceremony in the Vatican Basilica. I was struck by

his piercing eyes that seemed to probe my innermost thoughts. When I informed him in my nervous Italian that I was from the Philippines, he smiled subtly and said, "I bless the Philippines!" In 1990 some Philippine bishops urged me to return home after twenty-four years in Rome to establish a liturgy institute. I did not have to search for a name. It was going to be the Paul VI Institute of Liturgy. A colleague in Rome wondered why I did not name the Institute after Pope John Paul II. I quipped that had I the chance to ask him what name to give the Institute, he would have surely replied, "Paul VI." The noble simplicity of Paul VI's funeral at Piazza S. Pietro, emceed by my former mentor Archbishop Virgilio Noè, was the epitome of the conciliar liturgical reform's *sobrietas romana* and noble simplicity that his papacy championed with clear vision and firm determination. The coffin was slightly raised above the ground. It was draped in plain white cloth with the Book of the Gospels on top and the paschal candle nearby. The rite was carried out with dignity, gravity, and noble simplicity. The spontaneous applause of the people as the coffin was carried inside the basilica for interment was a moving tribute to the pope who successfully steered the Church through the calm and tempest of Vatican II's *aggiornamento*.

The Constitution on the Liturgy has a monocular view of liturgical reform. Article 14 reads: "In the reform and promotion of the liturgy, full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else. For it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit." Active participation, which I will address again in connection with contemplative worship, is vital to Vatican II's agenda of liturgical reform. It is the reason why article 21 of the Constitution instructs that "both texts and rites should be so drawn up that they express more clearly the holy things they signify and that the Christian people, as far as possible, are able to understand them with ease and take part in the rites fully, actively, and as befits a community." In the council's thinking, active participation involves not only congregational acclamations, songs, and gestures but also, as article 29 explains, those ministerial functions exercised by servers, readers, commentators, and members of the choir. The faithful take part in the celebration not only by being active members of the assembly but also by ministering to its needs.

Full, intelligent, and active participation urged the Church during and after the council to reform the liturgy of Trent. Active participation was the matrix within and from which the entire reform was to take

shape. It was to be the source and expression of Christian spirituality. To promote active participation the council fathers approved the use of the vernacular, the revision of existing rites, the creation of new rites if opportune, greater involvement of the laity in liturgical ministries, and inculturation.

The liturgical reform was expected to be a ferment of change stirring up the entire Church after the council. Like other changes of this magnitude, it drew forth contrasting reactions and caused uneasy tension among Church leaders and the faithful. There were those that wanted the liturgy to retain its aura of timelessness in a world helplessly swept away by change. They regarded any departure from the familiar way of doing things as a breach in the Church's fidelity to its tradition. Tension was fueled by a type of liturgical romanticism. With my classical background I treasure the Latin language and delight in Gregorian chant. Nevertheless, I question the wisdom and pastoral prudence of reviving them as the normal language and song of the liturgy. In my thinking such revival is an indication that there are people who have not followed the historical process and kept up with the changing times.

It is true that articles 36 and 116 of the Constitution, given the peculiar circumstances surrounding the council declared Latin and Gregorian chant to be among the distinctive elements of the Roman liturgy. It is also true that until the fourth century the Roman Church deferred replacing the Greek *koinè* with the vernacular Latin as its liturgical language. But in the end it had to let go of Greek, the language that had been hallowed by the biblical books and its numerous martyrs. But in our time, to restore Latin as the everyday language of the liturgy, regardless of whether or not the assembly can follow the readings and prayers, is to my historical mind a departure from the Roman "sound tradition" and an impediment to what the council fathers had anticipated as "legitimate progress" of liturgical worship.

But there are two sides to a coin. While there are people who want the liturgy to be hermetically sealed from the contemporary world, there are others who hold that the liturgy needs to be in constant dialogue with what goes on in the Church and the world. They rightly claim that if the liturgy is to be an agent of renewal, it should address today's cultural, religious, socioeconomic, and political issues. We must admit, though, that during the early stages of reform exaggerations marred its image, compelling the Congregation for Divine Worship to issue in 1970 the Third Instruction, *Liturgicae instaurationes*. The Instruction lamented that under the pretext of pastoral needs some

people "could not wait for the promulgation of the definitive reforms. In consequence, they have resorted to personal innovations, to hasty, often ill-advised measures, to new creations and additions or to the simplification of rites. All of this has frequently conflicted with the most basic liturgical norms and upset the consciences of the faithful. The innovators have thus obstructed the cause of genuine liturgical renewal or made it more difficult."

I belong to the generation of postconciliar liturgists, and I still recall the proliferation of newly composed Eucharistic Prayers, some of which can be censured for mediocre content and literary style, the blaring sound of jazz ensembles, and, alas, the reported proscribed use of wafers and soft drinks for the Eucharist. Wishing to curtail abuses, the Congregation had to set down stringent rules: "Any liturgical experimentation that may seem necessary or advantageous receives authorization from this Congregation alone, in writing, with norms clearly set out, and subject to the responsibility of the competent local authority."

Wanting to make the Eucharist more relevant to our contemporary situation, someone seriously entertained the horrendous idea of "fast-food Eucharist," open twenty-four hours a day so that the faithful could come any time at their convenience. All they had to do was switch on the television for the Liturgy of the Word and afterward approach the altar for Communion. The idea was motivated by a desire to make the liturgy conform to the situation of people on the move and to the declining value of family meals. What I detect is the failure to regard the liturgy as a countercultural statement, as a Christian critique of modern conventions and systems that impair the foundations of human community and family life.

The liturgical reform of Vatican II generated tensions and uncertainties about the proper implementation of the conciliar decrees. There were people who received liturgical changes grudgingly or simply resisted them because they invaded their comfort zones. They courted the preconciliar liturgy with an attitude often deprived of historical and pastoral basis. They behaved like a terrier snapping at the heels of conciliar reform. What dismays me, to push the analogy, is that today the number of such terriers is on the rise. The humility to accept an ecumenical council's decision is surely a more salutary attitude than a romantic adherence to the past, however glorious that past might have been. In the Office of Readings for Wednesday of the Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time St. Augustine has this timely reminder about

"the good old days" that we tend to idealize when new ways of doing things disrupt our routine: "You hear people complaining about this present day and age because things were much better in former times. I wonder what would happen if they could be taken back to the days of their ancestors—would we not still hear them complaining? You may think past ages were good, but it is only because you are not living in them." I would not present an honest picture, however, if I did not mention those who, driven by an unquenchable thirst for novelty, chose to ignore the right order of things. They were the recklessly euphoric who, unwittingly, gave others a reason to be wary of the conciliar reform.

CHALLENGES OF THE LITURGICAL REFORM

In his October 29, 1964, address to the members and consultors of the Consilium for the Implementation of the Liturgical Reform, Pope Paul VI compared the liturgy to "a mighty tree, the continual renewal of whose leaves shows its beauty; the great age of whose trunk, with deep roots and firm in the earth, attests to the richness of its life. In matters of liturgy, therefore, no real conflict should arise between present and past." In another address to the same body two years later he reminded them of the necessity to respect liturgical tradition. The criterion, he said, is what is best, not what is new. "Nevertheless," he concludes with this vigorous statement, "the voice of the Church today must not be so constricted that it could not sing a new song, should the inspiration of the Holy Spirit move it to do so." The Consilium must move ahead with its projects in order to let the Church sing a new song, while bearing in mind that the Church possesses "a priceless heritage worthy of veneration."

Much has been achieved, yet much still remains to be done, even as the Church, caught between tradition and progress, pursues its pilgrimage amid the changes and chances of this world. What role should liturgical worship play in the Church's mission as advocate of authentic values and progress? The liturgical movement and the council wanted worship to be an agent of human renewal. There are times when, as I step back to view the state of liturgical reform, I become disheartened by what seems to be a misplaced concern for rubrical details that have little consequence on what goes on in the world.

Conflict among ethnic groups resulting in genocide, armed strife resulting in political tyranny, and socioeconomic inequity resulting in

poverty and ecological destruction—this is the reality of the world in which the Church moves; it is the reality with which the liturgy should dialogue. Despair casts its shadow also on the community of believers. There are Christians who fall away from the Church or no longer talk to God because the meaning and purpose of life have eluded them. There are Christians who commit suicide or practice euthanasia because there is nothing more to look forward to in a life dominated by pain and suffering. This too is a reality with which the liturgy should dialogue if it is to be an agent of spiritual renewal. Is the postconciliar reform of the liturgy capable of addressing some of the challenges of our time?

What are the challenges? Bugnini identified three basic challenges facing the reform of the liturgy after Vatican II: the translation of liturgical texts into the vernacular, the revision of Tridentine liturgical books, and adaptation, which is better known today as inculturation. Below are some of my musings. I realize that they are limited in scope and number and that they represent only the tip of the iceberg. I am not so naive as to think that a truly meaningful celebration of the liturgy will radically and immediately change the course of world events, but I believe that in time it can become a leaven of renewal. For example, when liturgical worship absorbed the culture and preoccupations of the Greco-Roman world, it gradually and subtly imprinted the Christian mark on Western civilization. In the words of Josef Jungmann (*The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great*), "Society, political life, the lives of the people, family life, the position of women, the appreciation of human dignity, whether slave, child, or infant yet unborn—all this was transformed in a slow but sure process of fermentation: out of a pagan society a Christian society was born."

Liturgy and Technology

Culture is in constant evolution. Although many of its traditional components have survived the test of time, new elements are continually being introduced and integrated into it. Societies that have been traditionally agricultural are quickly shifting to industry. The Fourth Instruction on the Liturgy, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship on January 25, 1994, is keenly aware of this. It calls for a balanced approach to this situation: "Liturgical inculturation should try to satisfy the needs of traditional culture, and at the same time take account of the needs of those affected by an urban or

industrial culture." Once upon a time people earned their living by hunting, fishing, and farming. Because liturgy mirrors what transpired in the world and indeed accompanies humans in the different aspects of their life, the Church instituted liturgical feasts in the context of agricultural and pastoral life. Masses were held to ask God to intervene by sending rain in time of drought or to stop excessive rain so as to have fair weather for planting and harvesting. The four seasons of the year became the basis of the liturgical calendar of feasts and festivals.

With the advent of the industrial age should we not expect the Church to incorporate this reality in the liturgy? If we confine our attention to agricultural liturgy, we might leave out the daily affairs and cares of a great number of the faithful in urban communities. Our medieval liturgy still bears, and very rightly so, the marks of agricultural realities. Obviously, our earth must continue to produce enough food, which is a basic requirement of industrial and technological advancement. But should we not perhaps consider a liturgy for people who live in an industrialized setting, where labor unions, strikes and pickets, layoffs, and collective bargaining agreements play as important a role in the life of industrialized world as do the changes in the seasons of the year in agricultural societies? Will the creation of such liturgy contribute in some measure to the realization of the council's agenda "to gather the dispersed children of God" divided by industrial systems?

But even before the liturgy turned its attention to the industrial world, another reality made its presence felt. I refer to technology and, particularly, to what is known as information technology. When asked what I thought about the use of laptop computers to replace the Sacramentary on the altar and the Lectionary at the ambo, I thought the question was meant to be included in the book of liturgical humor. But it was asked in earnest because a priest had already mastered the use of a "liturgical laptop." As I said, my instinctive reaction was hilarity. How did the assembly react to the carrying of the computer in procession and to incensing it? What part of the computer did the priest kiss after reading the gospel from it?

When I was taking the intricate course on liturgical books, Prof. Adrien Nocent warned that if we did not learn them we would be handicapped the rest of our lives. Studying the liturgy without being familiar with its sources, he declared, is like studying Scripture without knowing the biblical books. His warning was one compelling

reason why I held printed sacramentaries, lectionaries, and the Book of the Gospels in great honor.

This background held me back from giving outright justification for the use of computers in the liturgy. On the surface it looks too banal for liturgical use. But if we regard modern technology as one of God's greatest gifts to humankind, can we simply ignore or dismiss its entry into the domain of liturgical worship? In short, can we allow computers to replace our printed liturgical books? When libraries are now being built to store the collection of computer disks rather than books, should the liturgy of the new millennium stick to printed books? I still have to make up my mind whether information technology is so helplessly secular that it cannot have a place in a sacred action. I am reminded of the controversy between Rome and the Church of Milan about the rite of washing the feet of neophytes as they came out of the baptismal pool (*De Sacramentis* III, 4–7). Rome had sharply criticized St. Ambrose for the practice on claims that it was a secular symbol of hospitality and as such had no place in the sacred rite of baptism. The *Rule of Benedict* (chap. 53) directs the abbot and the entire community to wash the feet of guests as a gesture of hospitality. The answer of St. Ambrose was a retort: "Rome used to wash the feet of neophytes, but it stopped the practice when their number considerably increased. If Rome has its reason to stop the practice, we in Milan have our reason to continue it."

Sunday Observance

My musings lead me to another challenge that touches the heart of the Church, namely, the observance of Sunday. Article 106 of the Constitution on Liturgy urges the faithful to gather together on Sunday so that through the word of God and the Eucharist, "they may call to mind the passion, the resurrection, and the glorification of the Lord Jesus." It exhorts that Sunday, which is the first among all the holy days, should "become in fact a day of joy and of freedom from work." I remember those preconciliar times when people confessed the sin of servile work on Sunday. There were people who could not afford not to work for pay on Sunday. These people had to confess again and again the same sin, which they could not avoid because of poverty. The conciliar decree on "rest and freedom from work" on Sunday puzzled me the first time I read it. For a council that declared to be pastoral, this particular decree seemed to be out of character.

I did a little research on the conciliar proceedings and was relieved to find out that it had not been the council's intention to make Sunday rest an absolute norm. The council in fact regarded it as a matter of secondary importance, compared with the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist that defines Sunday as the Lord's Day. Emperor Constantine introduced the Christian observance of Sunday rest in order to encourage the faithful to participate in the solemn celebration of the Eucharist. Up until then Saturday was kept as a holiday in the Roman Empire, and Christians, like all others, worked on Sunday, though they set aside the early morning hours of the day for the Eucharistic celebration. We know that the Jews, who had been accidentally privileged by the Roman civil holiday on Saturday, were annoyed by the change that favored the Christians.

Today, in developed countries and among the middle class Sunday has become part of the modern phenomenon called weekend. Weekend, which grew in some way from the observance of the Sunday rest, is characterized by tourism and recreation. This has caused the problem of absence on Sunday from one's parish and in some instances also of diminished participation in the Sunday Mass. But in the situation of poverty where it becomes necessary to earn a living even on Sunday, freedom from work is like an unreachable dream. The reminder of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is timely: "Those Christians who have leisure should be mindful of their sisters and brothers who have the same needs and the same rights, yet cannot rest from work because of poverty and misery" (2186). In *Sacramentum caritatis* Pope Benedict XVI counsels that while people rightly uphold the dignity of human work, they "should not allow themselves to be enslaved by work or to idolize it, claiming to find in it the ultimate and definitive meaning of life" (74).

For the parish community, Sunday rest should not mean rest from works of love and social concern. The professional service of doctors, lawyers, and teachers offered freely to the poor of the community should become a distinguishing mark of the parish Sunday observance. The Sunday assembly does not end in church but continues on in parish clinics and classrooms. Lay leaders visit the sick and the homebound in order to bring them Eucharistic Communion and the community's spiritual comfort. Sunday Eucharist is incomplete if it does not overflow into community service. Apropos I quote the Decree of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines reminding all that "service should complement worship in sanctifying Sunday as the Lord's Day" (art. 38, no. 2).

Weekday Order of Mass

For many years now I have been toying with the idea of a "ferial Order of Mass." As things stand, the same Order of Mass published in 1970 is observed every day, with minor features—like the Gloria and Creed and a second reading— added for Sundays and solemn feasts. This gives the impression that the ferial, or daily, Mass is a slightly simplified version of Sunday Mass. The fact, of course, is that we do not have a ferial Order of Mass. This reminds me of a somewhat similar case. Until 1969 there had been no rite of baptism specifically prepared for children. The rite of baptism published by Pope Paul V in 1614 was merely a shorter version of the rite of baptism for adults with all those gruesome formulas to expel the demon from the child.

Pope Gregory the Great mentions *Missae cotidianae*, or daily Masses, in one of his letters (*Letter* 9). He contrasts these with Sunday Masses. The litanies, he informs us, are not said in daily Masses, and "we recite only the *Kyrie eleison* and *Christe eleison*." Gathering bits and pieces of information from medieval sources, we can only guess the format of the daily Mass in the time of Pope Gregory, but guesswork at this point is both futile and unproductive. We wrestle with difficult historical data. What I wish to propose instead is that we apply the principle of progressive solemnity to justify the ferial Order of Mass. Without progressive solemnity the system of ranking the liturgical feasts cannot be fully appreciated.

The concept of the liturgical year is premised on the distinction between feasts and ordinary days, and the degree of solemnity proper to the feast is reflected in the way Mass is celebrated. The ferial Order of Mass will furthermore free the theology of the liturgical year from the exaggerated notion that one day is as good as the other. I keep reminding people with a penchant for festivity that if daily Masses are celebrated with the full complement of a Sunday Mass, they will have to stretch and strain imagination to satisfy progressive solemnity. Although the daily Mass is rightly regarded as the center of the daily rhythm of worship, it should be neatly distinguished from Sunday Mass. I should point out that the presence of a large congregation at a weekday Mass is not a valid reason to elevate it to the rank of a Sunday Mass. On the other hand, a small assembly should not be an excuse to strip the Sunday Mass of those distinctive elements that belong to its celebration.

Prominent liturgists have written about possible revision of the present Order of Mass. Many of them appeal to the *sobrietas romana* as

criterion. I refer to Adrien Nocent, Robert Cabié, and Mark Searle, who favor a simple entrance rite consisting only of a greeting, silent pause, and the opening prayer. Thomas Krosnicki, a classmate of mine in Rome, shows partiality to the greeting *Dominus vobiscum*. I agree with him. The other biblical greetings are surely rich in doctrine, but I find them long-winded. Frederick McManus, the eminent canon lawyer and liturgical scholar I profoundly respect, thinks that the offertory *berakah* ("Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation") should be suppressed and the rite of the offertory streamlined. It seems to me that the application of the traditional *sobrietas romana* to the Order of Mass is a challenge that the postconciliar reform should address.

Although the ferial Order of Mass will be somewhat shorter than the *forma typica* of the Roman Missal, progressive solemnity, not brevity, is the overriding criterion. It can happen, however, that the ferial order will exceed the typical form, especially in those instances when the assembly comprised of religious and seminarians takes its time reflecting silently after the readings.

What shape do I envisage for the ferial Order of Mass? To avoid arbitrariness it is useful to recall a rule set down in the *Directory for Masses with Children*: "Apart from adaptations that are necessary because of the children's age, the result should not be entirely special rites, markedly different from the Order of Mass celebrated with a congregation" (21). Sharp contrast between the typical form and the ferial order will not be pastorally productive. Bi-ritualism can be very demanding upon any assembly. Hence, I believe that new rites, acclamations, and responses should not be introduced. Novelty of such sort can produce a jarring effect on the flow of the celebration. Ancient *Ordines Romani* (57) do not dispense with the responsorial psalm. However, elements not considered integral parts of the Mass, like the penitential rite that on occasion is replaced by another rite and the sign of peace that is optional, need not be regular features of the ferial order. The penitential rite is more meaningful in Lent. Likewise, it is quite meaningless to retain songs of accompaniment when the action is not fully performed. I do not see much sense in singing an entrance song while the priest walks from the adjacent sacristy to the sanctuary or chanting the *Agnus Dei* when only one host is broken. The invitation "Behold the Lamb of God" before Communion can take care of the biblical symbol of the lamb. Regarding the washing of hands, McManus remarks that "possibly the symbolic washing before the Eucharist begins—or even before the preface of the anaphora—might

have saved it from recent neglect and even disrepute" ("The Roman Order of Mass," *Shaping English Liturgy*).

Below is how I would shape a ferial Order of Mass.

Introductory Rites

After the people have assembled, the priest goes to the altar, making the customary signs of reverence before he goes to the chair. After the sign of the cross, he greets the assembly: "The Lord be with you." *During Lent the penitential rite may follow the greeting, otherwise the priest recites the opening prayer after the invitation* "Let us pray."

Liturgy of the Word

After the first reading the responsorial psalm is sung or recited. If the Alleluia is not sung, it may be omitted. If there is no homily, a period of silent reflection follows the reading of the gospel, after which the general intercessions are made.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

The priest prepares the Eucharistic offerings in silence. The berakah is not said and the rite of the washing of hands is not performed. Then the priest says: "Pray, brothers and sisters," *and recites the prayer over the gifts.*

The daily singing of the Sanctus is recommended. If the memorial acclamation is not sung, it may be omitted, so that the priest continues the Eucharistic Prayer without interruption.

After the Lord's Prayer the embolism is omitted. The doxology "For the kingdom" *concludes the Lord's Prayer. The sign of peace is omitted, but the preceding prayer* "Lord Jesus Christ" *is said. Thereafter, the priest invites the assembly to Holy Communion. After a period of silence the priest recites the prayer after communion.*

Concluding Rite

The celebration ends with the usual greeting, simple form of blessing, and dismissal.

If there are liturgical days that call for greater solemnity because they are feasts, there are others that do not because they are not feasts. In tradition these days came to be known as ferial days. They do not recall any particular aspect of Christ's mystery or celebrate a saint. The

foregoing ferial Order of Mass is my idea, call it reverie, of providing the ferial days with a corresponding *ordo*.

Role of Women

As I turn my attention to another challenge, I should preface my musings with a word to the reader that I will be treading on uneven ground. No one ignores the giant strides the Church has made allowing women to take active ministerial roles in the liturgy. Women may read the word of God in the sanctuary, where in the past they had to read it outside the sanctuary. Women are neither ordained deacons nor instituted as lectors or acolytes, but they can hold the functions of extraordinary ministers of communion, altar servers, and readers. They can preside at Sunday assemblies in the absence of a priest. In some parts of the world bishops deputize women catechists to administer solemn baptism. They also delegate women to assist as official witnesses at Church weddings when no priest or deacon is present (Code of Canon Law 861 and 1112). These are some encouraging gains that we can regard as significant stirrings of progress in today's Church. They reassure us that legitimate progress in the liturgy can be achieved without prejudice to sound tradition.

The reinstitution of the permanent diaconate and the lay ministries of lector and acolyte are a gift of Pope Paul VI to the Church. Even if, by some superior option, these ministries are reserved to male persons, they implement in a limited way the council's principle of full, active participation by God's people through active ministry. But I wish to recall that our liturgical tradition, which does not know of women presbyters, knows of women deacons who received from the bishop the sacramental hand-laying or *cheirotonía*. Church documents as early as the third century speak of the ordination of women to the diaconate. History attests to the ministry they exercised in the Churches of Eastern and Western Syria, Chaldea and Persia, Egypt, Armenia, Constantinople, Gaul, Italy, and Rome until the end of the tenth century, despite the earlier prohibition by Pope Gelasius. Things changed around the year 1000 when adult baptisms gave way to infant baptisms. This new development caused the gradual disappearance of women deacons, whose principal role had been to anoint adult women catechumens during baptism. Now that adult initiation is restored, should the Church consider reopening the question of the ordination of women to the diaconate? Or does it remain a closed book?

There was a lively debate between two eminent liturgists on the ordination of women to the diaconate. One was Fr. Cipriano Vagaggini, who presented ancient documents to prove that the deaconesses in the early centuries were sacramentally ordained. The other was Msgr. George-Aimé Martimort, who countered that women were not sacramentally ordained, although they were designated with the title of deaconesses. The present official thinking of the Holy See favors the second opinion. I suspect that there is a lurking fear that the ordination of women to the diaconate might lead to their ordination to the priesthood, and God knows, eventually to the episcopate.

I am not in a position to address the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood. I leave that to systematic theologians and canon lawyers. A statement from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith affirmed that the practice of not ordaining women to the priesthood is part of the deposit of faith. The statement is puzzling. I cannot comprehend that the apostles deposited nonexistent practices as an item of our belief. I always thought that the deposit of faith is an existing doctrine or practice, not the absence of it. All I know is that the ordination of women to the priesthood does not exist in liturgical tradition, and I will not make the blunder of arguing against the current doctrine and discipline of the Church. I want to believe that there is pastoral prudence and centuries-old wisdom in its decisions and declarations. What interests me is, so to speak, not the entire loaf of bread but the crumbs that fall from the table: the ordination of women to the diaconate. Several years ago the International Theological Commission discussed this issue. The conclusion was that if ever the practice would be reintroduced in the Church, it should not be regarded as a sacramental ordination, even if these lucky women will be called deaconesses.

The institution of women lectors and acolytes is, it seems to me, a slightly easier question to settle. When Pope Paul VI issued *Ministeria quaedam* in 1972, he cited the "ancient tradition of the Church," which reserved these instituted ministries to men. We know that because of their close connection to the liturgy, the lectorate and acolytate had been called minor orders. In the late fourth century Pope Siricius started the movement to clericalize liturgical ministries. As a result, lectorate and acolytate were reserved to male persons. Though *Ministeria quaedam* has extricated them from the clerical state, it continues to require them as stages of the clerical *cursus*. Apparently this is the reason for not instituting women to these ministries. Circumventing

the *Motu proprio*, the Church gradually allowed women, without the benefit of institution, to be readers, extraordinary ministers of Communion, and altar servers, in keeping with their duty and right to share, where possible, in the Church's ministry. Given these progressive changes, I like to picture Pope Paul VI, the pope of liturgical *aggiornamento*, smiling complacently at the prospect of women being instituted as lectors and acolytes.

Inculturation

The topic of inculturation received a good deal of attention from the Liturgy Constitution. It was Burkhard Neunheuser who established the course on liturgical inculturation in the Pontifical Liturgical Institute. Because of my dissertation, which advocated the adaptation of the Easter symbols in places where it is summer or autumn at Easter time, I was invited to teach the course in 1973. I literally groped in the dark about the shape of such a novel course, but in time I managed to create a decent outline and publish a couple of articles. My first two books on the topic (*Towards a Filipino Liturgy* and *Liturgical Renewal in the Philippines*) were published in Manila in 1976 and 1980. My third book (*Cultural Adaptation of the Liturgy*) was published by Paulist Press in New York in 1982.

At a time when some people in the Church began to be cynical about the present state of liturgical reform—think of the indult restoring the Tridentine Mass and the official preference for the literal translation of liturgical texts—the Instruction "Roman Liturgy and Inculturation" was a timely affirmation of the Holy See's continued commitment to the conciliar decrees. For some time I chaired the Vatican committee that drafted the document, and I take pride in having successfully pressed for the adoption of my definition of inculturation. I had always insisted that inculturation is a dynamic translation of the typical edition of the liturgical books. Inculturation does not create alternative rites. What it does is translate the Roman rite into the language of the local Church by integrating suitable cultural elements. By translation I mean dynamic equivalence, not formal correspondence that is highly favored today in some Church circles. With due respect to authority, I feel that *Summorum Pontificum* has cast a menacing shadow on the future of inculturation. But I have a word to the wise: take note of a door the Apostolic Letter has opened. It established two forms of the Roman Rite, one ordinary and another extraordinary. I would like to consider this a basis for the Holy See to declare

inculturated forms of liturgy as "other extraordinary" forms of the Roman Mass along with the Tridentine rite.

What are some of the challenges of inculturation? Let us form a mental picture of a Sunday assembly composed of people from various races, languages, and socioeconomic circumstances. A Hispanic sits next to an Asian. The underprivileged mingle with the wealthy, the children with the adults, the employees with their employers, and no one feels like a stranger: they all belong to the *domus ecclesiae*. Different ethnic groups are allowed, even encouraged, to express the faith of the Church in the language, rites, and symbols of their traditional culture. Every member of the assembly is grateful for the experience of singing to the tune and rhythm of another's native music, delighted to listen to the children's choir, and attentive to the announcement by an employee of a forthcoming strike. Yet no ethnic group is hurt when told that a certain rite indigenous to one's country of origin or a type of musical rhythm is not liturgically appropriate or suitable. Everyone accepts the fact that there are liturgical rules as well as cultural premises that need to be respected. This is, of course, an idealized image of a liturgical assembly, but I should like to think that it aptly describes what inculturation means for multicultural and multiethnic communities that are now a sociological reality in many parts of the world.

The challenge concerns our readiness for liturgical pluralism rooted in cultural or ethnic diversity. Will the community be comfortable with the Sunday Mass in which the different languages spoken in the parish are used: prayers in English, readings in Spanish, song lyrics in Filipino? Actually, the idea is not the product of my fantasy. We know that until the seventh century the liturgy of Rome was bilingual because of the migrants from Eastern Europe. Liturgy highly values hospitality. Greek *koinè* and Latin were used for the readings on special occasions like Easter and Christmas and for some rites of adult catechumenate. The tradition lives on in the solemn papal Masses that are celebrated in a variety of tongues in consideration of the faithful who come from every part of the world.

Another question is whether the community will allow the architecture and furnishings of the church to be influenced by native architectural and artistic designs. Viewed from one angle, the *domus ecclesiae* will look African, and from another, Hispanic or European. It will not look like the traditional gothic or baroque church; it might not even pass for a postmodern building. What it will represent is not the fixed canon of church architecture but the image of a multicultural

community gathered in worship, a sign of unity in our divided world. I can make the same observation on the style of the Eucharistic table, lectern, vessels, and vestments.

There is, of course, a principle involved here, namely, the need to produce a sense of harmony among the different cultural symbols, a kind of unity among various elements, an eloquent symbol of the multicultural and multiethnic community that is gathered as a liturgical assembly. This form of inculturation affirms that in the sight of God and the Church all races and ethnic groups are equal. It means that all languages are suitable for the worship of God; that all musical forms, provided they enhance the liturgy, are welcome; and that all cultural rites and symbols, provided they harmonize with the true and authentic spirit of the liturgy, can be raised to the status and dignity of ritual language and symbols. To paraphrase a well-known line in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, in the Church no culture should claim to be more equal than others.

The success of genuine inculturation is in the hands of the local bishops and the Vatican Curia. The two agencies need to work together in mutual respect and understanding. Bishops, who are the liturgists of their dioceses, are expected to master not only canon law but also liturgy. On the other hand, Vatican officials will do well to immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of local churches. The apostolic visits of Pope John Paul II to the different continents of the globe bore good fruit. In his speeches he gave his support to the progress of liturgical inculturation. He formulated its definition, laid down its theological foundation in the mystery of the incarnation, and adopted the neologism "inculturation" to make certain that changes in the liturgy would not remain on the surface of ceremonies.

I cannot forget the time I was called by Cardinal Josef Ratzinger to a meeting with the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. The subject for discussion was the type of flour to be used for the Eucharistic bread. In my excitement I prepared a short paper about the question of using non-wheat flour. It soon dawned on me that my paper was nothing more than youthful impertinence, because it turned out that the meeting was called to deal exclusively with the query whether honey could be added to the flour to sweeten the host. We were informed that some groups were doing it under the inspiration of the psalm: "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet"!

On another occasion the good cardinal asked what I thought about this invocation of ancestors in the entrance rite of the Zairean Mass:

"Oh you, our ancestors of righteous heart, stay with us." The obvious problem is that the ancestors who had not been baptized are now invoked together with the Christian saints. In my answer I recalled the disastrous decision of Rome banning the Chinese ancestral rites. The hundred-year controversy between the Jesuits and the Franciscans with their Dominican ally fuelled the antagonism of the Chinese people toward the "Western" religion. History might be telling us that it would not be prudent to delete the Zairean invocation, since the veneration of ancestors, as in China and other parts of the world, is the bedrock of African civilization. The invocation stayed, but as the cardinal wisely noted, no explanation should be made about it.

Liturgy of the Hours

My final consideration deals with the Liturgy of the Hours, which I shall discuss below in connection with the official character of the liturgy. The breviary is sometimes called the priest's wife. It should be his companion day and night and he is expected to remain faithful to it, finding strength, consolation, and joy when he prays it. But I am not sure this matches reality. A good number of priests confided to me that they do not find their "wife" attractive enough. Although the Liturgy Constitution stresses the two chief hours of Lauds and Vespers as the hinges of the prayer life of the Church, we are aware that these hours do not necessarily figure in every priest's daily routine.

The crusade to bring the Liturgy of the Hours back in reach of the faithful resulted in a form that is more suited to public or communal, rather than private, recitation. Every liturgical action is, of course, an action of the entire Church, even if it is held in the privacy of one's bedroom. But I am afraid that this has disadvantaged the principal users. In 1535 Cardinal Quiñones published a type of breviary for the use of the clergy. Marked by brevity and simplicity, it gained popularity among the priests. However, it neglected the communal aspect of its celebration. It was withdrawn from use in 1568.

The message is clear. The Liturgy of the Hours is liturgy and should, at least theoretically, be shaped for public prayer. Vatican II's reform did not envisage a form of the Liturgy of the Hours for private recitation. Instead, it adopted a form that includes antiphons, a great majority of psalms that even the Jewish faithful did not recite every month, and a format that is not user friendly. A simpler format with a limited selection of prayerful psalms might have been more attractive to priests who are engaged in pastoral ministry day and night and

who, in all probability, will not be able to form a stable community of laypeople with whom they could pray at least the chief hours of Lauds and Vespers.

My musings on the Liturgy of the Hours bring me to the question of the Office of Readings. Once upon a time it was a nocturnal vigil observed by communities of monks and nuns. Now it is meant to offer priests daily spiritual reading. If this is the intention, there is perhaps a need to reexamine its form. Let me think aloud at this juncture. Should not the Office of Readings be connected with the priest's ministry of Sunday homily? If so, should not the readings be grafted, so to speak, on the Lectionary for Mass, with special attention to the gospel of the day, and with corresponding commentaries both patristic and contemporary so that the priest will be provided with useful material to prepare his Sunday and daily homilies?

Daytime prayer does not enjoy the prominence that Lauds and Vespers have in the estimation of the Church, but in the daily grind of pastoral life its significance should not be passed over. It is the propitious time of the day for priests to pause from work, sit back, and converse briefly with the Lord. In antiquity prayers were said at nine o'clock, twelve, and three. Because of their brevity they were called little or minor hours. Tertullian (*De oratione* 25) explains that these hours "stand out in daily life, because they divide the day, establish the rhythm of business, and are signaled by public bells." The minor hours are thus a momentary pause from daily business or routine, "compelling us to snatch a moment from business" in order to pray. All too often our day can appear like an endless movement from one meeting to another, with a lunch break hurriedly taken, and a short nap to prepare for whatever surprises the afternoon might bring. I propose that the daytime prayer is an interlude that breaks the routine, allowing us to recollect, recover a lost good humor, and secure us from the dreaded disease of being "burnt out" in the service of the Lord.

However, to require active priests to recite three psalms or three segments of a long psalm at midday can be quite unrealistic and even inconsiderate. I believe that daytime prayer can be reformatted in consideration of the reality of pastoral ministry. Why not merge it with the prayer before the midday meal, in much the same way that we recite the Angelus before lunch? Salvatore Marsili had pointed out that the Angelus is a popular Marian version of the Liturgy of the Hours, consisting of three antiphons followed by a Hail Mary, a verse, and the concluding prayer. Several years ago I was appalled when I heard that

Pope John Paul II was toying with the idea of declaring the Angelus a substitute of the daytime prayer. Today I am no longer appalled, but I propose that an abbreviated daytime prayer be integrated with prayer before the midday meal.

Visions, tensions, and challenges: to my mind these are the essential components of liturgical *aggiornamento*. Visions breed tensions, but tensions generate challenges. Vatican II seems like many ages ago, but I like to believe that it still echoes down the corridor of our time. My musings rest upon liturgical tradition and pastoral sense. But I admit that imagination and fantasy are also at work in them. Perhaps certain issues I address—none of them merits the adjective "ebullient"—create uneasiness among those who do not wish to rock the boat or stir the waters. Although I made sure that I have some historical and theological basis for my musings, some of them might seem groundless affirmations that are best ignored. To some others they might cause a feeling of disaffection. However, fantasy is the mother of science. We know that when we lose the gift of fantasy, we lose vision as well. When the Paul VI Institute of Liturgy opened in 1990, a bishop exhorted me: "Just teach your students the basic liturgy found in approved books. Forget all about creative liturgy; it is all fantasy."

THE CHURCH INTENT ON CONTEMPLATION

Active participation in the liturgy is one of the many gifts of Vatican II to the Church in modern times. It amazes me that shortly after the council active participation became a conventional phrase among Catholic faithful. We do not, of course, overlook the fact that in 1909 Dom Lambert Beauduin advocated active participation in the liturgy as an effective remedy for the socioreligious apathy among many Catholics. But are not a hundred years rather long to achieve active participation? I would say no, if we consider that at the close of the patristic era active participation had begun to wane and that it was only in the twentieth century that the Church gave serious thought to active participation.

I have often heard the claim that Rome is eternal. Should we be surprised if its liturgy takes an eternity to be recast? Patience is a virtue I have acquired when dealing with Rome's lengthy process of liturgical renewal. I beg not to be charged with impertinence. I believe that the proverbial prudence of Rome should be matched by the patience of the faithful. After all, prudence and patience are twin virtues. Perhaps there is a less intimidating way to put my thoughts across. I should

say that the Roman Church periodically adapts its form of worship to the changing times. My study of history tells me that the liturgy has time and again been assessed, revised, and edited to suit contemporary needs. But the Roman Church with its proverbial wisdom of the ages takes its time.

Before Vatican II, the last major revision of the liturgy took place after the Council of Trent. It contested Protestant innovations that were then considered harmful to the Catholic faith. To crush the danger of gratuitous innovations, Pope Pius V decreed in 1570, under pain of apostolic wrath, that no one was henceforth allowed to introduce changes in the Tridentine Missal. Although active participation was not envisioned, I think the decree was an enlightened move. For one thing, it definitely warded off any unwarranted innovation for the next four hundred years. For another—and this is also praiseworthy—the mystic and arcane way in which the Mass was celebrated encouraged contemplation of heavenly realities. To those who wish to abandon the Tridentine Mass, its protagonists make the timely reminder that countless number of saints drew spiritual nourishment from it. Who would doubt historical facts?

But times changed. At the dawn of the twentieth century the Church faced fresh challenges brought about by new scientific findings, modern philosophy, secularization, industrialization, labor disputes, socialization, civil uprisings, and the weakening of the Christian faith. The council fathers of Vatican II were deeply aware of this. They responded with the insightful and inspiring Constitution entitled "The Church in the Modern World."

The advent of modern times had a profound effect on Catholic worship. The Tridentine liturgy lost much of its relevance for a good number of Catholics living in a secularized society. There was a compelling need to introduce new ways of drawing spiritual nourishment from the liturgy. I suspect that the nineteenth-century Age of Enlightenment had subtly influenced the way the Church formulated its answer to challenges: the liturgy should not merely serve as an occasion or backdrop to contemplate divine realities; it should above all be understood, so that the assembly can pray it and actively participate in it. If its texts, symbols, and gestures are understood, the liturgy can enlighten, exhort, and persuade the assembly. I have always maintained that active participation requires from churchgoers some measure of liturgical comprehension. If they do not understand Latin, can they claim that they take active part in the Latin liturgy merely because they are

able to recite the Latin formularies? If the rites and symbols of the liturgy are alien beings in their world of symbols, can they participate actively? In order to pray the liturgy, should they not understand the words they say or hear?

Intelligent and active participation became a byword in the liturgical renewal of Vatican II. Probably the word "canon" would be a more accurate word than "byword." I have read again and again the conciliar provision on active participation, and I admit that sometimes it strikes me as a kind of obsession. Article 14 of the Liturgy Constitution is purposeful: "In the reform and promotion of the liturgy, full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else. For it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit." There is determination and precision in these words: reform and promotion, full and active participation, all the peoples, aim before all else, primary and indispensable source, true Christian spirit. These were the same words my mentors in the Pontifical Liturgical Institute zealously iterated as I sat in awe at their feet. They were the architects of the conciliar liturgy constitution and the postconciliar reform. They were the giants that roamed the world of Christian worship.

How can I forget my mentors in Sant'Anselmo on the Aventine Hill? Cipriano Vagaggini, Salvatore Marsili, Adrien Nocent, Burkhard Neunheuser, Jordi Pinell, Emmanuel Lanne, Herman Schmidt, Augustinus Mayer, and Virgilio Noè are masters I have always admired and emulated. After their morning sessions in the Vatican, they would come to the classroom with contagious enthusiasm to share with their fascinated students the progress of the reform. Every so often other giants visited us to add to the excitement of acquiring more information that frequently included funny and juicy trivia. That was the time I had the privilege to listen to Georges-A. Martimort, Pierre-Marie Gy, Balthasar Fischer, and Annibale Bugnini. What springtime in my liturgical formation that was! I cannot thank my mentors enough. Words fail me. I should add that even later when I had the honor to be counted among them as a young colleague, their solid scholarship, deep humility, and unsullied loyalty to the Church never failed to awe me. I remember with gratitude the Jesuit Herman Schmidt, who prevailed upon the authorities of the Gregorian University to give way to the Benedictines of Sant'Anselmo to open the liturgical institute. Liturgy, he argued, belonged to the sons of St. Benedict. He took particular interest in furthering my liturgical career by having

my articles published in the periodical *Concilium* and inviting me to join him in some of the meetings he attended. I enjoyed especially the meeting with Jewish scholars about the proposal to observe a common Easter date. Yet he bragged that he had given me a barely passing mark for his course on Introduction to the Western Liturgy.

Earlier, I remarked that when the Tridentine liturgy lost its appeal to secularized Christians, Vatican II had to devise a new strategy in order to offer them the spiritual nourishment the liturgy had been able to provide in earlier times. The strategy was to re-propose to the people the doctrinal resources contained in the liturgy. In a sense it was a question of repackaging the contents of the liturgy. The council was convinced that, if understood correctly, the liturgy could nourish the spiritual life of the faithful. If understood correctly—in my opinion this is the basic requirement for the strategy to work. Hence the task assigned to the postconciliar reform was to recover the original noble simplicity of the Roman liturgy that had disappeared in the tenth century due to external influences from the Franco-Germanic Churches.

As a matter of fact, those young Churches in Northern Europe had been tampering with the noble simplicity and sobriety of Rome's liturgy since the eighth century. In earnest they introduced into the Roman rite their local traditions, thereby producing a hybrid type of liturgy that can be named Franco-Germanic Roman liturgy. Among their local traditions were prayers and symbols that appealed to the senses, human emotions, and down-to-earth concerns that we find especially in their book of blessings. I should not neglect to point out that there was beauty and refinement in their church architecture, liturgical furnishings, miniatures, graphic arts, music, and poetry. These were veritable contributions to the cultural treasury of Christian worship. However, in the process of inculturation—that was what they were doing—the simplicity, sobriety, and practical sense of the Roman liturgy gave way to useless repetitions, allegorical interpretation of rites, and the mystery-laden symbols that were typical of the northern people at that time. The loss of the *sobrietas romana* was the price paid for inculturation. The German popes of the tenth century (Clement II, Damasus II, Leo IX, Victor II, and Stephen IX) adopted this hybrid type of liturgy for the city of Rome. The Tridentine Mass was a by-product of this hybrid liturgy.

Why did Vatican II's agenda include the restoration of the original seventh-century Roman rite? Would it not brand the conciliar reform as an archaeological exercise in the twentieth century? The council's

reasoning is crystal clear: the simpler the rites and symbols are, the easier they will be understood; and the better the people understand, the more fully they can participate. Since the liturgy is "the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit," every effort should be made to lead the people to fully and actively participate in it. The council's adoption of the vernacular has a historical precedent. To make sure that the people really understood the liturgical texts, the Roman Church officially allowed in the fourth century the use of the vernacular Latin to replace the elitist and foreign Greek *koinè*.

Active participation is Vatican II's prized gift to the Church. As I ruminate on this, my thoughts turn to the vibrant participation I often witness in some parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, especially in some of their remote villages. People do not just sing: they sway and cheerfully clap their hands. The atmosphere of festive and active participation is electrifying. Having been brought up in the tradition of *sobrietas romana* and reverential awe of the sacred, I admit that I am not always comfortable with such mirthful manifestations. As a liturgist whose main hobby is inculturation, I always encourage and enjoy the celebration of inculturated liturgies where local rites and symbols are sometimes displayed like ostentatious and frolicsome rococo art. But at the end of the day I confess that my personal preference is still in favor of the sober, short, and unencumbered Roman rite that I studied at the feet of my masters and have learned to love.

But the majority of my experiences of active participation point to a composed and collected assembly that recites the Lord's Prayer without having to hold each other's hands, that sing without the deafening electric instruments to accompany them, that observe the prescribed postures and gestures without the clapping of hands, and that dutifully laugh or smile only when the presider decides to amuse them with a joke. Knowing where my mentors, who were architects of the postconciliar reform, were coming from, I might be correct in my conjecture that the above scenario of active participation was what they had in mind. I am quite certain that most of them would frown upon swaying or dancing, clapping, kissing, and roaming the length of the church to offer the sign of peace. On the other hand, I can imagine how they would have reacted to restrained, somber, and expressionless participation.

I consider our Sunday liturgy in Sant'Anselmo on the Aventine Hill when I was student and professor a classic example of hieratic liturgy.

All the rites were performed with gravity and demureness typical of monastic restraint. The liturgy looked very much like a still-life painting. Adrien Nocent had a classic name for it. He called it the "liturgy of the death of God." In fairness, I should admit that owing to Sant'Anselmo's liturgy, especially of the Easter Triduum that sharply contrasted with my Philippine experience, I came to understand and appreciate the meaning of *sobrietas romana*.

A frequent lament about active participation is that, unlike the Tridentine liturgy, it does not foster prayerful and contemplative celebration. It is averred that while the Tridentine liturgy encourages contemplation, the Vatican II liturgy, which requires active participation, does not leave room for contemplation. The lament is probably born from the erroneous conception that action and contemplation are mutually exclusive, or that the liturgy of Vatican II does not support dignity, prayerfulness, and awe in the celebration of Christ's mystery. To argue thus is, I believe, to stand logic on its head. I believe that the framers of the Liturgy Constitution were preempting such debate when right at the beginning of the document they wrote: "It is of the essence of the Church to be both human and divine, visible yet endowed with invisible resources, eager to act yet intent on contemplation, present in this world yet not at home in it" (2). In the Church "the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the invisible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation." The contrasting binomials are consistent with the traditional description of the Church: human and divine, visible yet invisible, eager to act yet intent on contemplation. What I find significant is the unqualified subordination of action to contemplation.

Active participation should lead the worshipers to the contemplation of the sacred realities they celebrate. Frankly, as a presider I have always found this challenging, and I suspect that worshipers struggle with the same problem. Not that I have ever committed the mistake of equating contemplation with ecstasy, rapture, or transport to the seventh heaven. A presider simply cannot afford to experience such heavenly bliss while standing at the Eucharistic table. Would it not be odd if the assembly went into ecstasy at the elevation of the sacred host? Such disruption of the rite is surely "un-liturgical"!

What is contemplation? It is a state of awareness of God's presence in the assembly, in the proclamation of the word, in the breaking of bread, and in the shared fellowship. Contemplation is awareness of divine presence. When I mean the words I say, words as routine as

the greeting "The Lord be with you," I become conscious of God's presence in the assembly. When I utter the awesome words "This is my body," I perceive in faith that Christ is truly present in the lowly element of bread. When I recite the words of absolution, my thoughts return to the parable of the merciful Father and I vicariously experience the compassion of God. When I accompany the dead to their resting place, the liturgy persuades me to feel at least in my heart the pain of the mourners. These are surpassing moments of encountering God and recognizing the face of Christ in his people, in his words, and in his sacraments. Contemplation is awareness of God's presence, and the liturgy provides the assembly with the words, symbols, and fellowship so they will experience that presence.

Sometimes, in an honest effort to make the liturgy spirited and vivacious, we end up producing a celebration that has the features and qualities of showbiz. In the process we overlook the liturgy's awesome and hieratic character. The cross always casts its long shadow on our celebration. Amid the festivity of song and dance there always appears the image of him who "offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears" (Heb 5:7). Enthralled by this *mysterium tremendum*, worshipers turn spontaneously to prayerful silence. In this type of contemplation actions and words can become quite superfluous. Silence supersedes the rituality of the liturgy. I am a believer in the value of silence, the kind of silence that offers occasion to relish in the depth of the heart God's presence in the celebration. Not surprisingly, the Liturgy Constitution regards silence as one of the constituents of active participation: "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 bearing. And at proper times all should observe a reverent silence" (30).

Silence is not a momentary pause from activity; it is a form of liturgical activity when the mind and heart ponder the *mysterium tremendum*. Silence is the language of contemplative prayer. It is the attitude of a worshiper who gazes with awe on Christ the *Pantokrator* in the apse of a Romanesque church or with tenderness on the Child resting in the arms of his mother. Silence is the only valid response to Christ's mysterious words "This is my body which will be given up for you." Awe elicits silence. "Let all mortal flesh keep silence" as the liturgy transports us into the sacred realm of the Last Supper, the cross of Calvary, and the empty tomb of Easter. The Liturgy Constitution assures us that in the earthly liturgy we already have a foretaste of that

heavenly liturgy where we shall behold Christ the Lord sitting at the right hand of God (8).

"In the reform and promotion of the liturgy, full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else. For it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit." This conciliar declaration should not be read in isolation from the other conciliar declaration that orients and subordinates action to contemplation. Action and contemplation are not mutually exclusive words, but there is a hierarchy of relationship between them. While active participation should not distract from contemplation, contemplation should not disengage itself from active participation. The liturgy is the action of Christ and the Church: it should not be regarded merely as background for personal contemplation. One without the other would not be representative of the council's vision of liturgical reform. This is obviously easier said than done. To strike the correct balance between the two will always be a challenge. Perhaps a good way to conclude this rumination is to quote article 12 of the Liturgy Constitution: "The spiritual life is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. Christians are indeed called to pray in union with each other, but they must also enter into their chamber to pray to the Father in secret."

LITURGY AND THE UNIVERSE

It was Salvatore Marsili who introduced me, as a young student of liturgy, to the function of the natural world in the liturgy. His spiritual insights, steeped in patristic thinking, on springtime, spring equinox, and full moon relative to the theology of Easter left a deep impression on me. Born and raised in a country where the only appreciable changes in the climate are the wet and dry seasons, I took delight in the northern hemisphere's seasonal shifts. Autumn, with its riotous colors and temperate climate, appealed to my sense of drama, especially when I realized that it foreboded the death of nature. I was quite disappointed to discover that the liturgy has little use for my favorite season.

Under the guidance of Burkhard Neunheuser and Balthasar Fischer I set about to research the roles of spring, equinox, and full moon in the history, theology, and calendar date of Easter. I entitled the work "The Cosmic Elements of Christian Passover," an esoteric title I have since regretted. My avowed aim was to propose that in their own right the other seasons of the year were as suitable as spring to

express the Easter symbol of new life in Christ. In the equator Easter falls during the summer months of March and April when nature is scorched by the sun. On the other hand, the month of May is marked by rainfall and an abundance of fruits and flowers. In my thinking at that time, May would be the perfect time to celebrate Easter in the tropics. Neunheuser was obviously alarmed. He pressed me to think again and think in favor of not messing up with the date of Easter. We reached a happy compromise. My work would propose new symbols for Easter drawn from the season (or month) of the year like summer (in the equator) or fall (in the southern hemisphere) but stick to the traditional date. A youthful enterprise is how I would describe my first serious liturgical work.

The liturgy engages the entire person: mind, heart, soul, spirit, and body. Worship in spirit and truth is a performative act that involves the participation of the mind that understands, the heart that ponders, the soul that is nourished, the spirit that soars, and the body that performs the action. The liturgy is thus an activity that is spiritual and physical, intellectual and emotional, heavenly and earthly. It is in light of this that I see the universe as an integral element of the liturgy. The heavens, the seasons of the year, the cycle of day and night, the elements of fire, water, and earth, the fruits of the land, and the products of human labor constitute an essential unit of the liturgical action. Baptism uses water, the Eucharist uses bread and wine, and confirmation and anointing of the sick use oil. Feasts orbit around the seasons of the year, the months, and the weeks, while the Liturgy of the Hours tracks the daily rhythm of day and night. The participation of the universe in divine worship is encompassing.

I perceive a theological thesis in it. In the Middle Ages it was believed that the unconsecrated hosts were consecrated by contact with the consecrated hosts in the same ciborium. The theory was called *virtute contactus*. The belief is just short of being theologically ingenuous and should not be entertained, but I would not consider it entirely idle and unprofitable. Does not fire transmit heat by mere proximity? Do not intimacy and fellowship induce character change in people? Does not a dominant culture alter or subject itself to the culture it gets in contact with? I would like to consider the medieval case of consecrated and unconsecrated hosts an example of what happens to the universe when the liturgy absorbs its properties and qualities.

A ceremony at the start of the Easter Vigil illustrates the relationship between the liturgy and the universe. I am always fascinated by the

liturgical text used for preparing the paschal candle before it is lit and brought inside the church. The text is crisp and concise, solemn and powerful. It reverberates in the silence of the night as it claims that by his resurrection Jesus Christ has gained dominion over the entire universe: "Christ yesterday and today / the beginning and the end / Alpha / and Omega, all time belongs to him / and all the ages." These sublime words, which are biblical in origin, project on the wide screen of the universe the powerful image of Christ the *Pantokrator*.

This particular text has been a constant object of my rumination. I say "rumination" because I have not gotten close to doing scientific research on it. I am afraid I have not cudgeled my brains enough. Yet I have dared time and again to share my thinking with anyone willing to listen. It embarrasses me to admit that I tinker with a venerable liturgical text. But I justify my action purely from a sense of theological satisfaction that I derive from it. Somehow the product of my unscientific meditation has enriched my understanding of the Easter Vigil. That perhaps is justification enough, even if my liturgy mentors did not tolerate undocumented affirmations. Adrien Nocent inherited the intransigence of his master Bernard Botte, who in typically dismissive words wrote in his review of a liturgy book: "If we accept what this author claims as the origin of the Gregorian Sacramentary, we have every reason to believe that Christ was born in Yugoslavia."

"Christ yesterday and today / the beginning and the end / Alpha / and Omega / all time belongs to him / and all the ages." These words are a profession of the Church's faith that by his resurrection Christ gained dominion over the entire universe and all ages. He is the key to the Christian understanding of the universe, the human world, and us. The current year is written on the paschal candle to signify that this year, like all the preceding and coming years, is also the year of the Lord, that is to say, it belongs to him.

"Christ yesterday and today." This segment is a shortened version of the original biblical text from Hebrews 13:8 that proclaims, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever." The biblical context is a warning about being swept off our course by all sorts of strange teachings. The risen Christ is the one and same person begotten by the Father before all ages and born of a woman in the fullness of time. His life and teachings are not subject to periodic revision. There is something here about history being irreversible. We cannot reinvent Christ, though we can delve deeper into his person and the meaning of his words. To know the Jesus of history I avidly studied

theology. Brought up in the Thomistic school, I was initially perplexed, yes even scandalized, by the way non-scholastic theologians described his person, conjectured about his human relationships, and interpreted his doctrine. But as time went on I realized that there are so many loose ends in my historical knowledge of Jesus. As I read the gospels, I found myself asking all sorts of strange questions: Did he really say that? Was it how he said it? What did he mean by it? Was it really a miracle or was it an interpretation, perhaps, a perception of faith?

Who is Jesus Christ, the one who is "the same yesterday and today and forever"? My theological training had led me to search for the answer in the Church's enchiridion of conciliar and dogmatic definitions. What other document could offer a more secure guarantee of truth about Christ? However, that phase of my quest for the person of Christ suddenly came to a standstill when I studied liturgy. What and how does the liturgy speak about Jesus Christ?

We are familiar with the axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which is somewhat difficult to interpret. The rule of prayer is the rule of belief, provided of course that orthodox belief has previously quickened the liturgical rite. In this sense it is also correct to say that the rule of belief is the rule of prayer. The corpus of the Church's official worship, consisting of texts, rites, symbols, and feasts, is a compendium of what the Church preaches about Christ, "from his incarnation and birth until his ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of the blessed hope and of the Lord's return" (SC 102). The Church unfolds the whole mystery of Christ as it celebrates the Eucharist, the sacraments, the Liturgy of the Hours, the sacramentals and blessings, and the liturgical year.

What differentiates the liturgy from systematic theology is what I would describe as "the experience of the mystery." By mystery I mean the person of Christ, his life, and his saving work. Systematic theology feeds the mind with doctrinal statements about Christ. Liturgy, on the other hand, furnishes us with the surpassing experience of Christ's presence *per ritus et preces* in the assembly's celebration of worship. In the liturgy believing is the same as experiencing. Understanding the doctrine of the faith entails the formation of personal relationship. Intellectual assent leads to the persuasion of the heart. What the worshiper encounters in the liturgy is not the compendium of the Church's beliefs about Christ but the amazing person of Christ himself.

When we experience the presence, the power, and the compassion of Christ in the liturgy, questions about the historical Christ and

the historicity of the gospel passages are silenced by the heart. They become peripheral. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever." The liturgy offers the security of faith that the love he manifested during his earthly ministry has not waned. He still speaks with power against God's enemies and whispers words of comfort and hope to the oppressed. He comes to the wedding feast and drinks from the couple's cup of joy. He has not ceased to hold the children in his arms and shield them from harm. He still calms the anxiety of the sick and the family. He continues to bring peace and reconciliation to sinners. He joins those who mourn for their dead, as once he shed tears for his friend Lazarus. Jesus Christ yesterday and today is still here with us in the preaching of the word, the breaking of the bread, and the fellowship of the assembled worshipers.

The second segment of this Easter Vigil text, from Revelation 21:6 and 22:13, declares that Christ is the "beginning and the end." The opening line of the Book of Genesis reads: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . . God said . . ." The opening line of the Gospel of St. John is a lyrical echo of this creation theme: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." The Genesis account of creation prefaced every act of God with the celestial words reverberating in the firmament: "God said." God created the universe by his mighty word. The Fourth Gospel identifies this word as the Word of God through whom all things were made and declares that the Word was God, took human flesh, and lived among us.

The Greek word for "beginning" (*archē*) carries the meaning of dominion or sovereignty. This meaning is faithfully kept by Colossians 1:16 and 18: "For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created . . . he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything." On Easter night the Church solemnly proclaims that by his resurrection Jesus Christ gained universal sovereignty. The whole of creation belongs to him and is subject to his authority and power because it was created through him and for him. My thoughts carry me away to that moment beyond time when God appointed the Word as the architect through whom he would create the universe. God saw the result and declared that it was good. The Letter to the Colossians says that it was for the sake of Christ that God created the universe. Christ is the reason why the universe exists. Rightly then, God handed it over to Christ after his resurrection as his

possession. Would it not be great to see the name of Christ written all over the universe as its architect and possessor? "All things have been created through him and for him" (Col 15).

The Greek word for "end," on the other hand, connotes completion and fulfillment. Christ as the end does not merely represent the consummation of the world. When I meditate about Christ as the culmination of God's creating power, what springs up in my mind is the thought of finality. Christ is the finishing touch of God's creation. But I can appreciate fully the beauty and endowments of creation when I acknowledge Christ as the person that imparts meaning to creation and brings it to completion. As I gaze on the Milky Way that spans the immense heavenly space or listen to the myriad of stars that noisily chatter on a clear night, I ask myself the question that the ancient humanists have posed but have not answered conclusively: is humankind the ultimate reason why the firmament exists? It is a humbling thought to consider humankind the center of the universe, yet the biblical account of creation supports this bold statement. God entrusted creation to humans, and humankind has been continually conquering the space, unraveling its secrets, and claiming ownership of creation. When Christians affirm that Christ is the beginning and the end of all created things, they perfect the thinking of the ancient humanists. For Christians it is not humankind as such but the person of Jesus Christ that bestows meaning and purpose to the universe of created things.

Christ is the beginning and the end: his name is written across the universe and etched in every part of it. Believers should be able to read Christ's name in the heavenly bodies and in all the things that make up planet Earth. "At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11). Indeed, the universe is a sacrament: it reveals Christ, it speaks about Christ, and it leads to Christ. Sometimes I receive amused grins from students of liturgy when I invite them to delight in the delicate beauty of a flower, rave about the dazzling sunburst, or experience nostalgia at sunset. To value the sacramental character of the universe, we need to fill our senses with the smell of burning leaves, the texture of stones and wood, the coolness of spring water, the heat of the scorching sun, and the doleful howl of night animals. We need to possess a keen sensitivity to the properties and workings of nature if we are to recognize it as a sacrament of Christ and ultimately as a venue for encountering him in the liturgy.

When the liturgy avails itself of the vast resources of nature and employs them as mediums to communicate the divine, nature rises to a higher level of existence. From being merely cosmos it acquires a "sacramental" character, a Christian attribute. What I have in mind is that the wonders, beauty, and order of the universe exhibit the presence not only of the Creator but also of Christ, the Incarnate Word. I cannot gaze at the immensity of the heavens and not direct my thoughts to Christ, who came to this planet Earth to make it his home. The tiny spring flowers on the grass as much as the raging winds from which I shield myself reveal to me Christ's tenderness and mighty power. Spring or the burgeoning of new life tells me what happens to the world when Christ is close at hand. Winter, on the other hand, conjures the image of a world that has distanced itself from God.

We relive this sacramental being of the universe in the liturgy as we celebrate the mystery of Christ in it. When we cleanse ourselves with water, eat bread, drink wine, and apply oil on our bodies, we remind ourselves that in the liturgy these same elements function as sacraments of Christ's presence. Bread and wine are the fruits of the earth and the work of human hands, but in the Eucharist they are the sacraments of Christ's body and blood. When we chant with the psalmist, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Ps 19), we behold in creation the image of Christ who is the glory of God and the perfect work of his hands. As every page of Scripture speaks about Christ, so every part of the universe mirrors the face of him through whom all things were made. In the liturgy the world crosses the boundary that divides the sacred from the profane. Nothing in this world is purely profane. The Latin *profanus* originally meant people and things excluded from the temple. The presence of Christ's saving mystery in creation has torn down the barrier of the world's alienation from God. No one and nothing, except sin, is any longer profane or excluded from Christ's temple and realm of influence.

The third segment of the liturgical text at the beginning of the Easter vigil is from Revelation 1:8, 21:6, and 22:13. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Earlier I thought it curious that the Book of Revelation should give such titles to Christ, who is more familiarly known as Son of God, Son of Mary, Savior, and Lord. In fact, even though the Easter liturgy chants year after year that he is the Alpha and the Omega, I have not heard anyone addressing him with these letters of the alphabet.

Perhaps this is due to the rather impersonal and non-relational character of these letters. We relate more easily to Christ as our Lord and Savior than as our Alpha and Omega!

And yet the Greek alphabet is an active unit of the scientific lexicon. Astronomy, mathematics, and medicine identify their discoveries, inventions, and products using letters of the Greek alphabet. Alpha is the chief or brightest star of the constellation, while beta stands second. Gamma is used in conjunction with radioactivity. Science rightly employs the Greek alphabet, considering the rich legacy bequeathed to Western civilization by the Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and the Hellenistic schools of Athens and Alexandria. Greek Alexandria was the center of mathematics, science, biology, and medicine. Hellenism, which the Arab scholars inherited and perfected, is synonymous with science and philosophy. The language of Hellenistic culture was Greek, and it was in this language that human progress and scientific discoveries were transmitted.

Hence it seems to me that it is not far-fetched to call Christ by the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These two letters encompass the whole range of the Greek alphabet. Christ is the Alpha, and the Beta, and the Gamma of all human knowledge, which we express through literature, mathematical formulas, scientific findings, and advancements in technology. For believers, Christ is at hand in every form of human knowledge and can ultimately be found in it. If every page of Scripture speaks about Christ, so does every work of culture and every form of human progress.

St. Augustine is credited for having Christianized the philosophy of Plato, and St. Thomas Aquinas, that of Aristotle. Thanks to the works of these two philosopher-theologians, medieval Christianity was able to make use of the two pillars of Western thought to construct its philosophy and theology. Modern technology, from the invention of the printing press up to the advent of space travels and informational technology, is a tribute to him who is the Alpha of human civilization. We are grateful to the medieval Benedictine monks, who with foresight and wisdom spent years, sometimes a lifetime, copying ancient manuscripts for posterity. They collected, preserved, and disseminated literary works of antiquity, both sacred and profane. If not for their scriptoria, we would probably not have known Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, and Cicero. The monks saved even the erotic works of Ovid and Sappho, because by some process of rationalization they were able to predicate Christian sentiments to them.

Christ is the Alpha and Omega of human progress. While it is not taxing for the mind to relate culture and arts to Christ, it takes some effort to see the connection between him and technology. Telephones, mobile phones, computers, and internet are some of the greatest and most fascinating inventions of humankind; they defy time and space. Connections with people in any part of the world through information technology and space travel have reached an unprecedented stage of progress. Our power to traverse in a few seconds the immense oceans and continents through a tiny mobile phone simply stuns and amazes me.

The myth of the god-messenger Hermes wearing winged sandals and the fable of the flying Daedalus and Icarus are deep-seated aspirations for fast communication among humans across the expanse of time and space. Modern means of communication have succeeded to make such aspirations a reality. The possibilities for further technological progress are limitless. Some would push for the sky as the limit. However, human achievement should not degenerate into the ill-fated Tower of Babel. For Christian believers, modern inventions would indeed be another Tower of Babel if the name of Christ, the Alpha and Omega of human progress, is not etched in them. Colossians 1:16 reminds us: "All things have been created through him and for him"—and all should ultimately find their meaning and purpose in him.

The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World explains that the "autonomy of earthly affairs" from the faith should not be taken as if the world did not depend on God and that we could use it as if it had no relation to its Creator. In fact, "the humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are" (36). The popular song written by Eleanor Farjeon, "Morning Has Broken," is an idyll of Christ's presence in creation: "Praise for the sweetness / Of the wet garden, / Sprung in completeness / Where his feet pass."

Time and again I have raised the question of why our liturgy has not outgrown its agricultural past. It can be argued, of course, that in this age of ecology and fear of global warming an agriculturally pervaded liturgy is exactly what the world needs. Yet the liturgy should not be defined extensively in the context of the natural phenomena with little attention given to technological advances. To be fair, though, the *Book of Blessings* lists some modern inventions. But to my knowledge, people do not ask that their mobile phones and computers be blessed.

In our technological age I do anticipate liturgical songs that will extol the ascendancy of Christ over the instruments of technology. Christ, after all, is not Lord only of the awesome cosmos but also of the formidable conquests of human genius.

The fourth segment of the Easter Vigil text reads: "All time belongs to him and all the ages." I find resonance in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, which alerts Christians regarding the second coming of the Lord: "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." "Times and seasons" is a cliché that affirms that God is outside time and yet exercises control over it. The statement "All time belongs to him and all the ages" broadcasts that Christ is the Lord of the ages and of human history. I do not know how well it will sit with some people, even believers, but I have this intuition that the text is telling us that Christ the Lord of all times has authority and influence on the course of events in the cosmos and the world. For believers, things happened, happen, and will happen with reference to Christ's entry into the world. I know that what I say sounds rather arbitrary, but how else can I explain the meaning of "when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (Gal 4:4)? "Fullness of time" is the time God has appointed. It is the messianic age that fulfills the yearning for salvation that every age in human history knowingly or unknowingly has expressed in hundreds of ways. All seasons belong to Christ and all times; they all converge in him and he binds them together.

The study of history is always a pleasant and rewarding occupation. What often arrests my attention in my study of history is the connectedness of events. The mind boggles at a seemingly insignificant incident that had a ripple effect on succeeding generations, or a decision of a leader that shook a nation or sometimes the world. More importantly, as a believer, how do I make the connection between historical events and Christ? Or for that matter, where do I position Christ in the scheme of what happens in my personal world?

Christ is the key that opens the door of our mind to the events both great and small that make up the history of the world and the story of every person. We interpret world events in the light of his person, mission, and teaching. This is not an easy thing to do. One instinctive reaction is skepticism. What has Christ to do with war, natural calamities, scientific progress, and human development? How has his gospel

changed the course of human history? How is it that after two thousand years the majority of the world population has not yet accepted, and seemingly will not accept, him as Son of God and Lord of history? I guess that only a profound faith in the mystery of the incarnation can satisfy such queries. In a word, one has to be a Christian to write the name of Christ across the borders of time and history.

If Christ binds together all times and seasons, he cannot be far away from them. He has risen and ascended into the heavenly realm, into the timelessness of eternity. But he has not dissociated himself from the affairs of the world; he has not distanced himself from human concerns. Christ is the bridge that connects time and eternity, the new *Pontifex* who not only builds the bridge but takes it upon his person to be the bridge. It is through him that we commune with the other world. Through him we can converse with those who inhabit that mysterious, silent world beyond us. We find no difficulty praying to God who is present everywhere in creation, but how do we speak with a relative or friend who has departed from this life? The answer is always Christ. They live with Christ and we can reach them through Christ. We can traverse the dark and unexplored gap between earth and the heavenly domain through him who had visited the earth and returned to where he came from.

The invention of telecommunication has beguiled the tenses of time. In some delusive but not illusory way the present, past, and future are compressed in one when two persons talk to each other from two different time zones. They are present to each other, though they are separated not only by immense distances but also by time differences. One speaks to the other who is still in yesterday's or already in tomorrow's time zone. Modern technology has effaced the distance that separates the three tenses of time. It has provided us with a basis to believe that we on earth are able to commune with the other beings outside the boundaries of time. When Christ by his incarnation broke into our time, he did not leave his Father's side. He pitched his tent among us but he continued to dwell in the bosom of God. He is the bridge that connects eternity and time.

"Christ yesterday and today / the beginning and the end / Alpha / and Omega / all time belongs to him / and all the ages." I conclude this meditation with a passage from the homily that Pope Paul VI delivered in Manila in November 1970: "Once again I repeat his name to you Christians and I proclaim to all: Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, Lord of the new universe, the great

hidden key to human history and the part we play in it. . . . Remember: it is Jesus Christ I preach day in and day out. His name I would see echo and reecho for all time to the ends of the earth."

THE HUMAN BODY AND LITURGY

Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* is a gruesome depiction of Christ's suffering and crucifixion. It is violent, nauseating, horrifying, and savage. It deviates from the sober crucifixion scenes and jeweled crucifixes we are used to. It is said that after watching the film Pope John Paul II muttered, "It is as it had been." Christ suffered in his body. I have so often read and preached about the gospel passion narratives and listened prayerfully to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, but somehow I failed to connect the narration with brutality. In her travelogue notices about the Good Friday celebration in fourth-century Jerusalem, Egeria reports that the bishop read the story of the passion in the Church of Golgotha amid the loud wailing and weeping of the assembly. The location must have contributed to such emotional outburst, which I would like to regard as a component of active participation in the liturgy. I am serious about it. Smiles, laughter, weeping, and moaning are human expressions that should naturally accompany liturgical celebrations. Why should the assembly not smile at a presider's jokes or antics? Why should the bereaved not shed tears during the funeral rite? Liturgy engages the whole person.

The entire mystery of Christ happened in his human body. The Prologue to the Gospel of John tells the story: "The Word became flesh and lived among us." His human body unfolded the rest of the story. In that body the Word grew and matured as a human person. In that body he preached, healed, and defended the rights of people. Before he delivered his body to the torment of the cross he bequeathed to the Church, which is his mystical body, the august legacy of his incarnation, the sacrament of his Eucharistic body.

Pope Pius XII called the Church the mystical body of Christ. Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* echoes it: "By communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those sisters and brothers of his who are called together from every nation" (7). The word "mystical" has invariably puzzled me when used for the body of the Church. I guess it is because the word connotes something that is neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intellect. My understanding of the mystical body of Christ is sensory: it is composed of people existing in physical, material bodies. The liturgy deals with humans in their bodily reality

from the time of baptism to the rites of funeral. The sacraments require the bodily presence of those who receive them.

The obligation to respect the human body explains why the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World makes this important reminder: "People may not despise their bodily life. Rather they are obliged to regard their bodies as good and hold them in honor since God has created them and will raise them up on the last day. . . . The dignity of human beings requires that they should glorify God in their bodies, and not allow them to serve the evil inclinations of their heart" (14). Not only should people not despise their bodily life, they should also hold their bodies in honor because they are sacraments that reveal the Creator; they have been raised to extraordinary dignity by Christ's incarnation; and they are integral members of Christ's mystical body. Similarly, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "the human body shares in the dignity of the image of God; it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit" (364; cf. 1 Cor 6:19-20; 15:44-45).

"The human body shares in the dignity of the image of God." I am not disturbed when God the Father and the Holy Spirit are depicted in human bodies, although only the Word assumed human flesh. Religious representations of the Blessed Trinity in human form reflect the stunning words of Genesis: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness" (1:26). It is naive to think that God, the pure spirit, resembles us who are corporeal. I think it goes the other way around: we resemble God. Richard Clifford, in his commentary on Genesis (*The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*), wrote that "the human is a statue of the deity." My liturgical frame of mind is inclined to replace "statue" with "sacrament." If inanimate creation displays the wonders of God and allows us to sketch an image of God, I should think that in the totality of their being, humans provide a more accurate description of God. Bodily human activities involving the soul, mind, and spirit share in God's qualities and portray God as creator, lover, savior, and provider. Human love, the acts of procreation, prayer and work, family life, and works of love and service all happen in the human body, and they splendidly depict the creative power, love, and mercy of God. Humans are sacraments of their Creator and their "human body shares in the dignity of the image of God."

The value and dignity of the human body was rejected by Manicheans who, like the Gnostics, believed in the eternal struggle

between good and evil, regarded the body as evil, and hence frowned on marriage and procreation. Pope Leo the Great fought them resolutely through homilies and euchological compositions. The Christmas prayer he composed proclaims the *humanae substantiae dignitas* (dignity of human beings) that God had created wonderfully and still more wonderfully restored through Christ. If the Word assumed the human body, how could it be evil? It might have been misused and abused, but it did not lose the original dignity that God had bestowed on it when he created it.

This brings us back to the Book of Genesis. God made humans in his image, so that as God is creative, they would in their bodies be procreative. By their procreativeness man and woman become sacraments of God's creative power. As spouses delight in their sexual relations, they participate in God's pleasure upon seeing the product of his creation, which he declared good and indeed very good. Even though sin defaced God's creation, it did not blot out humankind's participation in God's creative power. The first nuptial blessing, which predates the other two by several centuries, proclaims that married life is "the one blessing that was not forfeited by original sin or washed away in the flood."

The dignity and beauty of the human body are nowhere exhibited with such spectacle as in renaissance art, particularly in the works of Michelangelo. Who does not wonder at the perfect proportions of Christ's dead body and of the stately body of his grieving mother in the Vatican Basilica's *Pietà*? The statue in the Church of Sopra Minerva of the naked Christ embracing his cross could pass easily as a copy of an image of the Greek god Apollo. David's flawless body depicts the beauty and grace of youth and forecasts the splendor of the resurrection. The original beauty of human bodies created in the image of God was not defaced by sin. In the Sistine Chapel even the damned men and women in torment and agony possess perfectly proportioned bodies. That most of these artworks are in churches where the liturgy is celebrated confirms my insistence that the human body is a major player in the performance of the liturgy.

I must admit that as a young man trained to exercise modesty of the eyes, I was thoroughly scandalized when I first visited the Sistine Chapel with its plethora of naked men and women, and when I saw in a church the statue of Christ like Adam before the Fall. There was a time when I had to close my eyes when I saw a picture of the Blessed Mother breast-feeding her Child! In my young mind the liturgy surely

needed the human body, but the body should be wrapped in decent clothes. I simply could not comprehend why the saints or whoever entered the church in the form of art should be without clothes. Neither could I tolerate the opinion that words referring to human sexuality should be inscribed in the liturgical lexicon. But I have outgrown that stage. A religious group, wishing to avoid the mortifying word "womb" in prayer, replaced the Hail Mary's "fruit of your womb" with "fruit of your love," not realizing the flustering implication. I had the occasion to explain to the group the nobility, dignity, and sanctity of the womb: after all, we all came from there. Rightly, the baptismal font, where Christians are born again, is called the womb of the Church. At the end of life's journey it will be the womb of Mother Earth that will enfold us: from the womb to the tomb.

A saying from Tertullian that I find truly lapidary is *caro, salutis cardo*. The phrase says that the human body is the hinge of salvation. In simpler words, it affirms that God achieved his saving deed by using the human body. That is why Christ took the human flesh, worshiped the Father in the body, performed his mission of preaching and healing in the body, submitted it to crucifixion and death, was buried, rose from the dead, and returned to heaven in a glorified body, and will come again on the last day in a heavenly body. Salvation history took place in the human body of the Incarnate Word. Obviously, the liturgy, which extends the presence of salvation history, takes place also in the human body. The human body is an essential component of the liturgy, just as the body of Christ was the instrument of his work of salvation.

Tertullian has a very fine description of what the liturgy does to people through their bodies: "The body is washed so that the soul may be cleansed; the body is anointed so that the soul may be consecrated; the body is signed so that the soul may be strengthened; the body is overshadowed by the laying on of hands so that the soul may be enlightened by the Holy Spirit; the body is fed with the body and blood of Christ so that the soul may be nourished by God" (*De resurrectione mortuorum* 8). Tertullian speaks of body and soul. Although the phrase suggests philosophical dualism, its message bears out the unity between soul and body, between what is visible to the senses and what is invisible to them. Through the human body God touches the soul, in the same way that Christ cured the body in order to heal the whole person. The human body is like a door that opens to the heart, to the soul, to the spirit. Through the body we fathom a person's innermost sentiments and thoughts.

In baptism the human body is washed or immersed in the water of rebirth. This is a necessary condition for the person to receive the Spirit of adoption who is present in the water. Bodily contact with the sacramental water is the means whereby the Spirit claims the baptized person as daughter or son of God. The other sacraments require some kind of bodily presence. The body of the sick is anointed with the oil of healing in faith and hope that both body and soul will receive the comforting power of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. In the Middle Ages anointing was performed on the five senses or on that part of the body that hurt most. Although this therapeutic factor of the sacrament eventually gave way to a penitential character of the same—sin and hence illness entered the body through the senses—the overriding concern was always the healing of the human body and ultimately the spirit.

An eloquent liturgical symbol is hand-laying on the body of persons that receive the sacrament. In confirmation, the rite of penance, holy orders, and anointing of the sick the priest lays his hands on the body of the recipient to signify the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit on the whole person. The Holy Spirit consecrates, forgives, and heals through the minister's contact with the human body. Tertullian's axiom is always worth remembering: *caro, salutis cardo*.

In the course of the liturgical year, feasts celebrate the bond between salvation history and the human body. What else does the Solemnity of the Annunciation commemorate but the conception of the Word in the virginal womb of Mary? The Word took flesh from her so that God might appear in human body and in it accomplish the work of salvation. What is Christ's nativity but his coming forth from his mother's womb in the body of an infant? Previous to the calendar reform of Vatican II the Octave of Christmas was called Feast of the Circumcision. Considering that in my country male circumcision has no religious significance and is often connected with the boy's coming of age, it amused me that a liturgical feast should be so named. I made my amusement known. During a homily my mentor Adrien Nocent painstakingly vindicated the meaning of the feast: the Son of God not only took a human body but he also chose to belong to the race of Abraham from which God had required circumcision as a bodily mark of membership. Although the requirement is moot for Christians, his circumcision has bound his members to Father Abraham and enrolled them among those that share the promised inheritance. I found his explanation most satisfying. But sad to say, after I began to appreciate the mystery of the circumcision, the feast was renamed Solemnity of

the Mother of God, which is simultaneously Octave of Christmas and World Day of Peace.

The memorial of the Last Supper when Christ instituted the sacrament of his body and blood solemnly ushers in the Easter Triduum. Who is not perplexed by the awesome declaration he made as he dined with this disciples: "This is my body; this is the cup of my blood"? His body would henceforth be symbolized by the broken bread, because it was a body that would be "given up," that is to say, offered in sacrifice. The fraction rite at Mass signifies that his body was "broken" so that it could be shared as sacrament. Breaking is a painful experience: broken home, broken dreams, broken heart. The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's body that he willed to be "broken" on the cross in order to be shared with us. For there is no other way to express love than by sharing, and there is no other way we can share than by breaking ourselves for the persons we love. The Eucharistic bread acquires its full meaning when it is broken and shared in Communion. The popular devotion of making vigil before the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday night heightens the sacrificial character of the Eucharistic bread. Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is a lesson in Eucharistic catechesis. During the passion it makes several flashbacks on the Last Supper to remind the viewers that the two events are indeed inseparable.

"This is my body; this is the cup of my blood." These mysterious words have since echoed down the corridor of time. With these comforting words Jesus assures us that he is present in what goes on in our world, that he is part of our homes, and that he accompanies us through life. And he stays with us not with words alone but with his body and blood, with his own gracious self. For our faith tells us that when these sacred words are recited over bread and wine, the almighty power of God transforms them into the body and blood of Christ.

But his words refer also to us. When they are spoken at the table, Christ rests his glance upon us; he recognizes and claims each one of us to be his own body and blood. He tells us in effect: "You also are my body." He identifies himself with us. I believe this is what celebration of the Eucharist is all about. Not the bread on the table or tabernacle alone, but the assembly as well. Whatever our station in life, poor or rich, saint or sinner, we are his body; we are the grains of wheat ground and baked to become one bread, Christ's body. This is not the place for homily, but I believe that the topic presents itself as

a timely occasion for some soul-searching reflections. Christ identifies himself with us, yet we witness daily the reality of human bodies being subjected to torture and abuse for sheer pleasure and selfish gains. People close their eyes to the squalor of poverty that surrounds them. They plug their ears to the cries of hunger and injustice. "You also are my body." These are the words Jesus speaks to us, and these are the words we should learn to speak to others. Every person we meet is our brother or sister, whose bodies we are enjoined to respect and honor as if they were our own.

Saints are also celebrated in the liturgy, especially on the day of their *transitus*, or passage from this world to the Father. In the beginning only martyrs (except for the Beloved Disciple) were honored in the liturgy. The shedding of blood configures martyrs to Christ, the Martyr of Calvary. To honor the body of the martyrs a chapel called a *martyrium* was built on top or beside the tomb for the celebration of the Eucharist, especially on the anniversary of their martyrdom. We are told that every year the faithful gathered at the tomb of Saint Polycarp to honor his remains and find spiritual strength in the face of persecutions. The practice of interring relics of saints under the altar originated from the *martyrium*.

The veneration of the bodies or relics of saints is a sad chapter in the history of the liturgy. In the Middle Ages dealers made a big business out of the sale of bones purportedly of saints but later discovered, thanks to modern technology, to be of animals. Unsuspecting devotees bought them and built magnificent chapels to house richly adorned reliquaries. When I was a student in Europe it was one of my diversions to look for some of the most amusing kinds of relics: a feather of St. Michael the Archangel, a piece of cloth stained with the milk of the Blessed Virgin, one of the prepuces of the Child Jesus, and, believe it or not, a bottle containing the darkness of Egypt! The great reformer Martin Luther, appalled by aberrations committed on relics, fiercely took issue with the Catholic Church. Indeed, who would not be scandalized by reports that when priests were compelled to celebrate only one Mass a day to stifle the abuses surrounding Mass stipends, some had the temerity to simulate the Mass and raise the relic of a saint at the supposed moment of consecration? I can still hear my mentor Adrien Nocent's dismissive remark when he listened to stories of relics, private apparitions, and saccharine devotions: "It's another religion!"

Gradually, the deaths of non-martyr saints, starting with Martin of Tours, were also marked in the Western Church with annual liturgical

feasts. These saints did not shed blood physically, but their daily struggles to grow in the love of God and neighbor was considered another form of martyrdom or witnessing to Christ. As someone from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints pointed out, "sometimes it takes only some hours to die as a martyr, but it takes a lifetime of martyrdom to remain loyal to the faith."

Abstracting from the deviations of the past and from the odd practice of displaying dismembered parts of the bodies of saints for public veneration, it is important to keep in mind that the liturgy gives special honor to the human body, whether it is of a great saint or a departed ordinary Christian. The reason, as told by Tertullian and worth repeating, is that "the body is washed so that the soul may be cleansed; the body is anointed so that the soul may be consecrated; the body is signed so that the soul may be strengthened; the body is overshadowed by the laying on of hands so that the soul may be enlightened by the Holy Spirit; the body is fed with the body and blood of Christ so that the soul may be nourished by God."

With regard to the practice of honoring the bodies of saints, the Catholic Church believes that God granted a singular privilege to the Mother of Jesus: her body did not suffer the corruption of death. The belief is celebrated in the feast of the Assumption. It originated in the fifth century in Jerusalem after the Council of Ephesus (431), which defended the doctrine of the Theotokos, Mother of God. By the sixth century the feast came to be known as the "falling asleep" or "dormition" of the Blessed Virgin Mary and was extended to the whole Byzantine Empire by Emperor Maurice. The feast reached Rome in the seventh century. In the eighth century it came to be known in Rome as the "Assumption of Mary."

For Catholics the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary should not cause ecumenical embarrassment. After her death she was raised body and soul to heaven, because it is not possible that the body from which the Son of God took flesh should see the corruption of death. Mary's assumption is a pledge of what awaits the bodies of the other members of Christ. In Mary's assumption we are made to contemplate the image of the Church in its future glory. At the same time, her assumption is a symbol of hope and comfort, especially in our world torn by misery and war. Mary's bodily assumption assures us that life does not end in the death of the human body: there is something glorious that awaits us, and Mary has preceded us in its attainment. Pope Paul VI wrote in *Marialis cultus*: "This is a celebration

that offers the Church and all humankind an exemplar and a consoling message, teaching us the fulfillment of our highest hopes: our glorification is happily in store for us whom Christ has made his brothers and sisters" (6).

The Christian notion of death as a falling asleep recalls the words that Jesus declared concerning the dead daughter of Jairus: "She is not dead but sleeping" (Luke 8:52). We find similar words in the case of Lazarus: "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him" (John 11:11-13). The disciples took his words literally; but Jesus was talking about death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. The idea is beautifully expressed in a song quoted in the letter to the Ephesians: "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (5:14). The human body rests in the sleep of death until such time as God awakens it to his embrace. The Greek icon of Mary's dormition shows her on her deathbed, while Christ who stands beside her embraces her as if she were a little child clad in white funeral robes. It is a touching gesture where the roles of Mother and Child are reversed.

To conclude, let us read again the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "The human body shares in the dignity of the image of God; it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul, and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit" (364). Is it any wonder that the liturgy sanctifies, celebrates, and venerates the human body, because it "shares in the dignity of the image of God"?