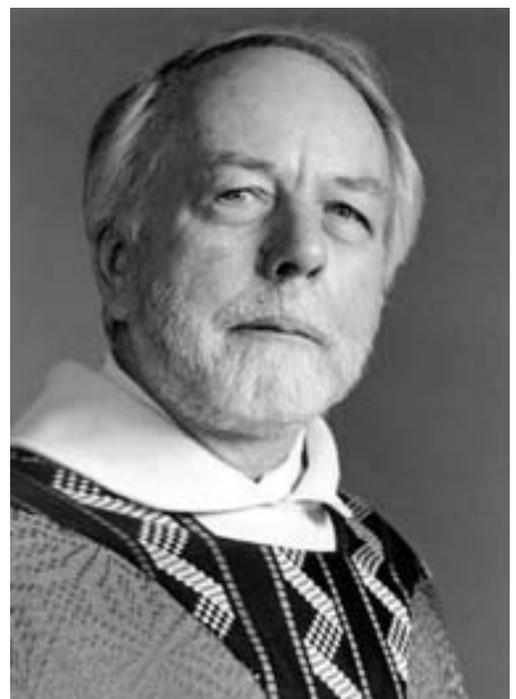


Sacred Signs: Commitment and Healing

Essays in Honor of Robert W. Hovda
Series III

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Foreword

BY J. MICHAEL McMAHON

PASTORAL MUSICIANS SERVED on the “front lines” of liturgical renewal long before the publication of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* in 1963, and they have continued to serve while a multitude of ritual books and documents have been issued over the past forty years. In collaboration with bishops, offices of worship, pastors, scholars, and other liturgical leaders, pastoral musicians have often been given significant responsibility for helping to shape the liturgical and sacramental life of parish communities.

Since the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) was founded in 1976, the Association has benefited from the contributions of scholars in various areas of study, including music, liturgy, theology, Scripture, and catechetics. All of these fields play an important role in the practice of pastoral music ministry and in forming pastoral musicians to promote authentic liturgical renewal. The NPM Hovda Lectures have become an important vehicle for helping to deepen the understanding of our members in areas vitally related to their ministry.

The first series of Hovda Lectures was delivered during the 2001 NPM National Convention held in Washington, DC, and it was published by the Liturgical Press with the title *Toward Ritual Transformation*. The second set, *Singing Faith into Practice* (NPM Publications, 2005), was presented at the 2003 National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, and offered scholarly reflections on various facets of liturgical renewal on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council.

The planning team for the 2005 NPM National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, decided that the Hovda Lectures should focus on sacramental

theology, including both general issues and theological foundations of various sacramental rites. The present volume brings together the five lectures from the 2005 Convention. Each of the theological reflections in this book is solidly rooted in Roman Catholic tradition, is responsive to the liturgical renewal of the Second Vatican Council, and reflects a profound belief in the transformative power of the Church's liturgy and sacraments.

We are publishing the 2005 Hovda Lectures in book form to make more widely available the insights of Paul Ford, James Schellman, Gordon Truitt, Paul Covino, and John Leonard. We offer them as a service to NPM members and to other musicians, clergy, liturgists, and leaders of worship to deepen and update their study of liturgical and sacramental theology.

The lecture series from which these essays are drawn is named in honor of Rev. Robert W. Hovda, whose prophetic voice summoned Catholics and other Christians in the United States to recognize the transforming power of worship. In his own writings Hovda challenged members of the Church to live out an uncompromising vision of social justice that flowed from the very act of celebrating Word and sacrament. Faithful to the vision of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, he recognized that the liturgy is the heart of the Church's life and is intrinsically linked to action that proclaims God's reign of justice and peace.

It is our hope that these essays will contribute to the continuing reform of the liturgy, the renewal of the Church, and the advancement of God's reign in the world.

J. Michael McMahon
President
National Association of Pastoral Musicians

Five Principles for a Renewed Sacramental Theology

BY PAUL F. FORD

SACRAMENTS ARE SACRED SIGNS. Sacraments are prayers. Sacraments are liturgies. Sacraments flow from the proclaimed Word of God. Sacraments are celebrated by and for those who share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ on behalf of the world. If we understood these five principles, we would begin to grasp the implications of our Church's renewed sacramental theology for our musical and ritual choices, especially at Sunday Mass.

Invocation

It is a great privilege to be invited by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians to give the first of this series of lectures honoring Robert Hovda. Over us all I invoke his passion for liturgy and justice.

I also invoke the spirit of St. Irenaeus whose feast day we are celebrating today. Everyone knows the gorgeous, lapidary sentence of Irenaeus: "The glory of God is the human being fully alive; the life of the human being is the seeing of God."¹ But Irenaeus ought to be equally famous for his earlier statement: "The glory of the human being is God; the work of God—and the receptacle of all God's wisdom and power—is the human being."² Our bodies, our selves: *We* are the objects, the recipients, the "targets" of God's work, God's wisdom, and God's power. God is trying to get at us in every way possible; so although we are going to focus here on the seven sacraments "of the new law" or sacraments "in the strict sense" (as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to them), the fact that Irenaeus was getting at is that our whole life is sacramental.

Sources

An underlying aim of this lecture is to suggest some essential reading so that we all can better take into our bodies the work of God and, thus, God's wisdom and power. If I could lead you to a just few sources during the course of this presentation, I would want you to read first the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Its beautifully written sections on the liturgy and sacraments are the work of a great French theologian, the Melkite Dominican Jean Corbon, whose book *The Wellspring of Worship*³ is the second source—in addition to the *Catechism*—that every pastoral musician must chew over in *lectio divina*.⁴ As a theologian in Beirut, Father Corbon (1924–2003) sat on the frontier between East and West. For his entire life he answered the call of Pope John Paul II: “The Church must learn to breathe again with its two lungs—the Eastern one and the Western one.”⁵ Corbon breathed with both lungs for a very long time, but we in the West have been pulmonarily impaired. We are very much in need of the sacramental theology of the Eastern Church.

Corbon wrote some key paragraphs about the Holy Spirit (737 to 741) that summarize the work of the Holy Spirit as the organizing principle of the entire *Catechism*, thus making the *Catechism* one of the first products of the effort to breathe with both lungs. In paragraph 737, Corbon named the four principal activities of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit [1] *prepares* us and goes out to us with his grace, in order to draw us to Christ. The Spirit [2] *manifests* the risen Lord to us, recalls his word to us and opens our minds to the understanding of his death and resurrection. This same Spirit [3] *makes present* the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile us and [4] to *bring us into communion* with God, that we may “bear much fruit.”

Put even more succinctly by St. Basil of Caesarea, in words carved on my heart by my late mentor, Father Vincent Martin, OSB:⁶ “The Father speaks His Word on His Breath.”⁷ No more than we can speak without breathing—but never breathe *without* speaking or at least sighing—the Father has only one Word to speak and never says it without his Breath.

Who Celebrates? And Why?

I am, as I promised, going to discuss the sacraments as signs, prayers, and liturgies and how they flow from the proclaimed Word of God and are celebrated by and for those who share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ on behalf of the world. However, I am not going to start with sacraments as signs because that is the hardest, most obscure part of sacramental theology.⁸ I am going to start with an easy principle: who celebrates the sacraments and why we celebrate.

I am married to a philosopher, thanks be to God, and I let her do the hard thinking. She says that philosophers ask very precise questions and write very well-worded answers concerning trivial matters and theologians think very sloppily and enthuse rhapsodically about things of the utmost importance. Let me then *enthuse* by saying first of all that the sacraments are celebrated by and for those who share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ on behalf of the world. From the very first dialogue in every sacramental

liturgy—"The Lord be with you."/"And also with you."—we are engaged in that wonderful volleyball game of liturgical prayer. This dialogue is not a polite exchange like "Good morning."/"How are you?" It is a two-way prayer. The presider—who is a deacon, priest, or bishop—prays: "May the Lord who is the Spirit given to you in baptism and confirmation be rekindled within you." And we pray for the presider: "And the Lord who is the Spirit given to you in the sacrament of orders be rekindled within you."⁹ Unlike a volleyball game, in which we are setting up our team members to defeat the other side, the game of liturgy is one in which we trying to set up the volley of the *other* side.

It is the Christian East that tells us that we cannot start any liturgy without this dialogue. I once attended a wonderful Orthodox chrismation of a man coming into Orthodoxy from Seventh-Day Adventism. Father Paul greeted this big, middle-aged farmer at the door of the small church (which had been converted from a clapboard home). Before Father Paul even opened the door, he prayed in effect: "O God, send your Holy Spirit. Help me mean what I am about to say and do. Help me avoid just going through the motions. Help me be present to what I am about to do." Then he and the person to be chrismated went through these wonderful rites of exorcism, turning to the West and spitting on Satan and coming into the church and being received. Father Paul breathed on the waters, submersed his crucifix in the waters, and then nearly drowned the farmer in the waters. (What he did next, when he chrismated him, I will describe below.)

One of the things we can learn from the East is that, from the moment a sacrament begins, all through a sacramental rite, and at the heart of every sacrament is the fact that sacraments are the work of the Trinity. That is the first thing that we have to know—that God is at work.¹⁰

We talk a great deal about the real presence of Christ, especially in the Eucharist, but Herbert Vorgrimler reminds us:

From a theological point of view there is only one presence of God, namely, God's self-communication to what is not God. But this presence is experienced and consciously perceived in different types of presence, in which God's presence as grace affects human beings dynamically. This effect may always have different levels of intensity. The goal, however, is always the same: genuine, grace-filled, personal communication between human beings and God.

. . . In terms of Trinitarian theology we may say that the presence of God promised in the liturgical assembly is not simply that eternal, ineffable divine mystery that Jesus addressed as his Father and ours. **It would be wrong to think that the liturgy makes God the Father present. Instead, it is *we* (also) who in and by means of the liturgy are made present to God the Father, are brought before his face: *through his Son Jesus in the Holy Spirit.*** The divine Spirit who is the common possession of Jesus and of the community is, in the liturgy, the medium of the presence of Jesus, his person, and the whole of his life and fate. The precise ways in which this medium—the Spirit of God—is active in the liturgy, bringing about the presence of Jesus in his person and actions, are the symbolic actions of the church (or "effective signs"—preeminently the sacraments—as the definition of liturgy cited above expresses it), in which Jesus is the real actor, the Word whose voice is heard when it is proclaimed, read, or meditated as the word of God, as also in the prayer and song of the assembled community (SC 7).

It should be clear from what has been said that God's becoming present through Jesus in the Holy Spirit is effected through the initiative of the divine

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possible

Spirit, and that initiative is also the author of the faith of the Church, which is celebrating the liturgy. But this making present of God reaches its goal only when the means of mediation, especially the liturgy, are consciously and emotionally brought into awareness. Self-surrender to the liturgy, whose basis and bearer is always Jesus Christ, means in every case (and thus in every sacrament) remembering Jesus. Participation in the liturgy is a celebration of the memory of Jesus, and its intensity depends on the Jesus-mysticism of the human being who is taking part. That participation is always a self-surrender to the will of God revealed in Jesus, and thus its intensity is also measured by one's willingness to engage in a praxis of life that accords with that of Jesus.¹¹

In effect, God is never absent, but we may be. All the work of liturgy is to enable *us* to be present.

God cannot fail to be present, otherwise we would go out of existence. If God had one of those senior moments and forgot me, you would have an hour free to do something better in life than reading this particular essay. So God can't cease to be present, but we need to learn how to be *really* present to the work of God and the work of heaven in the liturgy. The work of liturgy is not just the Trinity's all by its lonesome. Of course the persons of the Trinity are not lonesome — all of heaven is at work, as James Savage noted so beautifully in his glorious 1999 speech at the Collegeville Conference on Liturgical Music on the liturgical role of the choir, quoting the closing formulas of the prefaces of the entire liturgical year:

And so, as earth unites with heaven, while the joy of the resurrection renews
the whole world, now, today and every day of our lives,
in the temple of your glory, before your presence, in your presence,
through Christ our Lord, with thankful praise, with joyful hearts, with
hearts full of love, with steadfast love, in our joy, in our unending joy, with
adoration and joy, in company with, in communion with all the choirs of
angels,
with angels, with angels and archangels, with the angels of heaven, with all
the angels of heaven, with the whole company of heaven, with the great
army of angels, with the choirs of heaven, with the angels and all the choirs
of heaven, with the choirs of angels and all the powers of heaven, with the
angels and saints, with all the angels and saints, with the apostles and all
the angels and saints, with the hosts of heaven, with the whole company
of heaven,
we proclaim your glory, we worship in awe before your presence, we praise
you for ever, we sing, we sing the unending hymn of your praise, we sing
your glory, we sing to your glory, we sing forever to your glory, we praise
and worship your glory, we rejoice, we bless and praise your greatness, we
praise your glory for ever, we glorify the wonders of your power, we cry
out with one voice, we adore and praise you for ever, we join the angels
and the saints, we echo on earth the song of the angels, we blend our voices
with theirs,
we join in their unending hymn of praise, we make their hymn of praise our
own, we offer their prayer of adoration, we join the angels in the hymn of
endless praise, in the triumphant hymn, in the hymn of praise, in the song
of joy, in thankful praise, in the hymn of your glory, in our joyful hymn of
praise, in the new song of creation, in the song of the angels in heaven, in their
triumphant hymn of praise, in the unending hymn of praise, for ever:

*Holy, holy, holy . . .*¹²

I wept as I listened to that bold proclamation, the speaker wept, and the

whole place fell apart, yet all he did was to take all of the conclusions of all of the prefaces together. With all the angels and saints, in other words, what are we doing? If you look at the various formulas for that in the prefaces, we know that our liturgy is going on at many levels and is going on with our brothers and sisters around the world. It is going on because we brought our own churches to church: We brought our holy places (our bodies) and our own families to the gathered body of Christ and the family of the Spirit.

So sacraments are celebrated by all of creation in this little place. Sacraments are celebrated by those who share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus is the principal celebrant, but, as Saint Basil said, “He is the Word spoken on the Breath of God.” Just as we cannot speak words without breath, so Eucharist is never just the work of Jesus. As Yves Congar complained,¹³ we Western Christians are functionally monotheists of the Second Person: We do not know the Father or the Spirit. We are Christians to the exclusion of the Father and the Spirit in some ways. But breathing with both lungs makes us aware that every sacrament is a Trinitarian work that cascades from the Father through the Word in the Spirit and returns to the Father through his Word on his Breath.

And we do liturgy, especially sacramental liturgy, not just *for ourselves*; we do it *for the world*. If our liturgy does not transform us, if it does not produce a change in the world, it is stillborn. Congar tells us that at every Mass—and the Mass is the “Sacrament of sacraments”¹⁴—something happens and something else begins to happen. St. Thomas gives the name of the first kind of happening the Latin term *res contenta*, the thing done; the second is the *res non contenta* (or the *res significata*).¹⁵

What is the *res contenta* at Mass—the act that is accomplished? It is the transformation of this bread and this wine into the body and blood of Christ—in the West unleavened bread (the bread of affliction) and wine (always the sign of our joy). They are also what earth has given and the fruit of the vine *and* what human hands have made—they represent our works, our joys, and our sufferings. They are definitively transformed.

How transformed? One of the issues I want you to live with is that in some ways our sacramental theology has been so distorted that some of us think that the bread and wine have disappeared, and what remains is only Jesus. But the Eucharistic elements cannot be Jesus *without* those signs. Those signs remain, as Herbert McCabe says to us in his beautiful essay called “Eucharistic Change”¹⁶ which is reprinted in Nathan Mitchell’s book *Real Presence: The Work of the Eucharist*.¹⁷

(A second book about the Eucharist with which we should be familiar is *Wine and Bread* by Sister Photina Rech, OSB, one of the unsung heroes of the liturgical renewal.¹⁸ She was a colleague of the monks of Beuron Archabbey and Maria-Laach Abbey—the centers of the liturgical movement in the German-speaking world. She wrote an incredible two-volume work called *Inbild Des Cosmos — The Key to the Cosmos*—wherein she ransacked the fathers and mothers of the Church for every significant thing they said about all the materials, gestures, and postures we use in liturgy.)

Back to the point: As Herbert McCabe tells us, the bread finally becomes bread when it becomes the body of Christ. The wine finally becomes wine when it becomes the blood of Christ. What bread and wine promise us, they can really never deliver. Whatever you had for breakfast this morning is

beginning to fade away. Its rejuvenating effects are disappearing, and you are losing consciousness at this very minute. The caffeine especially is not pulsating through your bodies any more. What did whatever you ate this morning promise you? Life. But the fact is that we have to keep eating, for our regular food doesn't give us Life (*Zöe* in the Greek text of the New Testament); it gives us *Bios* (life with a small l). We are all circling the drain, and we are paddling madly to avoid drowning, but God knows this and so has been pouring into us *Zöe* through all of the sacraments, especially through the bread and the wine that have been transformed by the experience of Eucharist.¹⁹

Thomas Aquinas tells us that something does happen at every Eucharist: It is the *res contenta*. But, he reminds us, in every sacrament there is also the *res non contenta*—something that begins that *we* have responsibility for. The second epiclesis of all of our Eucharist Prayers (except the Roman Canon, Eucharistic Prayer I) is called the “communion epiclesis.” It always asks, in some way: “May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.”²⁰ The communion epiclesis is all about helping us become something for the world. We become bread for the world; we become the sign of joy and help people experience what they need to experience on a daily basis. So we have become priests in baptism, and that priesthood sends us to the Eucharist. Confirmation makes us royal servants and sends us from the Eucharist into the world.

Now I am going to say something very old fashioned, and I know that it is going to upset some purists. I suggest that even though, in adult initiation, confirmation should happen before Eucharist, still confirmation should be *experienced* as the mandate to cooperate in bringing about the *res non contenta*. The history of confirmation's migration to its position after first Communion in the West, I believe, could be the work of the Holy Spirit. I interpret Father Vorgrimler's statement that confirmation is “fundamental for all states of life and ministries in the Church”²¹ to mean that confirmation is the sacrament of vocation, the sacrament of mission. Even if confirmation began, as Aidan Kavanagh says, merely as a dismissal rite from baptism into the Eucharist that has since been misplaced,²² I think that confirmation, coming after the first sharing of Eucharistic Communion, may serve as a dismissal to work on behalf of the rest of the world. It is, in other words, the sacrament that tells us to “go in peace to love and serve the Lord,” as every Eucharist is trying to say.

Even wine and bread are telling us this, as Photina Rech reminds us. Wine and bread are not grapes and grain; they are products of human labor which takes raw materials and transforms them so that they can transform us. The oldest record of what the earliest Sunday Eucharist looked like is preserved in the *Didache* (*The Teaching*), which goes back to the first century. In chapters nine and ten, we find a text that Christians have been singing for nearly two thousand years:

Father, we thank thee who hast planted
Thy holy name within our hearts.
Knowledge and faith and life immortal
Jesus thy Son to us imparts.
Thou, Lord, didst make all for thy pleasure,

Didst give us food for all our days,
Giving in Christ the bread eternal;
Thine is the power, be thine the praise.

Watch o'er thy Church, O Lord, in mercy,
Save it from evil, guard it still,
Perfect it in thy love, unite it,
Cleansed and conformed unto thy will.
As grain, once scattered on the hillsides,
Was in this broken bread made one,
So from all lands thy Church be gathered
Into thy kingdom by thy Son.²³

Sacraments Are Prayers

Now there is more to say about priesthood—the priesthood of Jesus and the priesthood of all believers.²⁴ But it is not obvious that we are all priests at worship, is it? How many people know that the prayer of the faithful—which is part of every sacrament, every proclaimed Word—should be included in every gathering for worship, even if it doesn't issue forth in a sacrament? In some ways, the prayer of the faithful is a quasi-sacrament.

The earliest document of the current liturgical reform is the statement *Oratio Universalis*, which was published just five months after the close of the Second Vatican Council. It restored the prayer of the faithful and told us two things.²⁵ The first is that this prayer needs to be part of every liturgy of the Word, and the second is that a liturgy of the Word that doesn't issue in prayer—the prayer of the baptized—is not a complete liturgy. An ordained presider should not be praying this prayer; it has to be so constructed that *we* (the baptized) are praying it. If you want a good idea of how that might look and sound, take up *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979) and go to form two of the “Prayers of the People.” A leader asks for the community's prayers “for God's people throughout the world.” There is the call—“Pray for the Church”—and then there is silence, and you get the distinct impression that you should be praying for the Church, or for the people of all the nations, or for those in need. There is no canned “Lord, hear our prayer” response to a spoken (often inaudible) petition.²⁶

How many of us have experienced, at least at daily Mass, the spontaneous petition “for a special intention”? You often wonder what you have just prayed for. What follows is a true story that happened at St. Joseph the Workman Parish in Berkeley, California. A British priest was assisting for the summer. One day he answered the rectory doorbell and admitted a woman who said: “I want you to say a Mass.” So he went to the office for the book of intentions and asked: “What is the intention?” She said: “I want you to say Mass to curse my sister.” The priest said: “I am afraid that I cannot do that.” She said: “I will pay you twenty dollars.” “It isn't the amount of money in question,” he replied, “it is the intention.” She was indignant and stormed out. About ten minutes later the bell rang again, and the visiting priest went to the door, and there was the same woman. She said: “I want to have a Mass said.” He asked what the intention might be, and she said: “For a special intention.”

So we have to worry about the shape of our prayer, in particular the shape

“You know, I can't go on until you have prayed. Why did you come here today, what is on your mind, what are you celebrating, what are you agonizing about? Pray about that.”

of the *oratio universalis* (literally, the “universal prayer,” also known as the “general intercessions” or “prayer of the faithful”), which is an act of prayer performed by the whole priestly people of God, the baptized. The priest (or deacon) has two responsibilities: to excite prayer and to set it aflame. He should have been doing that already, but at this point he does the first part through the invitation to pray. He sets our prayer on fire through the brief concluding collect prayer that concludes the common prayer, but he should not orchestrate the prayer itself. Even though our deacons traditionally read the intentions of this prayer, the shape of the petitions has to allow space for us to pray. Every time we gather for common prayer, we join in the work of heaven, and we get to play our part in that great work.

So the second point I want to make about sacraments is that they are prayers. That fact came to me as a revelation because many of us experience liturgy as the last place where prayer is taking place. Every one of the opportunities to pray within the liturgy involves a five-fold process that begins with the priest’s call to kindle prayer in us through the invitation: “Let us pray.” How do we take up that invitation? There is a wonderful old Irish priest in a parish near where I live who, if he notices a restlessness in the room during the silence that follows this invitation to pray, will say: “You know, I can’t go on until you have prayed. Why did you come here today, what is on your mind, what are you celebrating, what are you agonizing about? Pray about that.” Then he goes back into silence. Then he proclaims the appointed prayer that concludes our shared silence, addressing God and petitioning God. He concludes this vocal prayer, and everyone adds their acclamation, as the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* now says: “The people, uniting themselves to this entreaty, make the prayer their own with the acclamation, *Amen*” (GIRM, no. 54). If they haven’t learned how to pray in the silences and in the petitions of the prayer of the faithful, then many people won’t arrive at Eucharist spiritually until the “Our Father!”

Sacraments Are Liturgies

Sacraments are prayers first, before they are liturgical prayer. One of the things about which I would like to remind you is the theology of prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas outlined in the *Summa Theologiae*:

Hence: 1. The Lord is said to hear the desire of the poor either because desire is the cause of their petition, since **a petition is [the interpreter of] desire**, or to show how quickly the poor are heard, for God hears the poor even before they offer a prayer, as it says in Isaiah, Before they call, I will answer.

2. As stated above, the will moves reason to its goal; hence an act of reason can be directed by the will to union with God which is the goal of charity. Prayer motivated by charity tends toward God in two ways: first, in so far as the thing requested is concerned, because when we pray we should ask principally to be united to God, as the Psalmist says, One thing I ask of the Lord, this I seek, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, secondly, in so far as the one praying is concerned, because one ought to approach the person from whom he requests something, either in place when from a man, or in mind when from God. Hence Dionysius says, when we call upon God *in our prayers we unveil our mind in his presence*, and in the same sense Damascene says, prayer is the lifting up of the mind to God.²⁷

(Thomas stole this theology from Augustine and from Pseudo-Dionysus.)

The first of Thomas's two definitions of prayer (in question eighty-three in the second part of the second part of the *Summa*) is: Prayer is the interpreter of desire. In other words, you can't pray unless you want something. A lot of people don't come to Mass expecting anything. Or maybe they do expect something, but the flame of desire—and of prayer—hasn't been kindled. They haven't been reminded that prayer is the interpreter of desire and that, until we have desires, we can't pray.

The second thing that Thomas reminds us of—his second definition, borrowing from Pseudo-Dionysus—is that prayer is the unveiling of ourselves before God. (From this insight we get the catechism definition of prayer as the “lifting up” of our hearts and minds to God, but the oldest version of this image speaks of “unveiling” ourselves.) What did Adam and Eve do when they sinned? They clothed themselves, they “veiled” themselves before God. In prayer we “unveil” and become our most real selves. But often the language we are given for prayers is so august that we think we have to dance madly before God to get the divine attention. We don't have to do that; all we have to do is take off our clothes! (Please do not go and say that the best way to pray liturgically is naked.) What I mean is this: If we don't realize that sacraments are prayer, we are lost, and we don't know what we are doing.

We are talking, of course, about public prayer, so we have to exercise a little decorum (in the vesture department as in other ways), but these are prayers of a very special kind. They are *epicleses*, effective invocations: The Father always hears the prayer. Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work through the Holy Spirit. It is Christ who baptizes, who acts in the sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The *Catechism* says that “the Father always hears the prayer of his Son's Church” — that is the epiclesis of every sacrament, and every sacrament has an epiclesis, even though it may not have words. (Unfortunately there isn't an explicit epiclesis in the marriage rite, but the East tells us that the epiclesis appears in the holding of hands over the couple and the crowning of the bride and groom.) In the epiclesis of each sacrament, the Church expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit.

One of the earliest gifts God gave me, as a consequence of my trying to be a monk, was noticing the difference between Matthew and Luke in their telling of Jesus' words about asking and receiving. Matthew's version (7:7–11) ends with this sentence: “If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” Luke's version (11:9–13), influenced by Luke's theology of the Holy Spirit, concludes this way: “If you then who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit [or, in some versions, ‘will the Father give the Holy Spirit from heaven’] to those who ask him!”

How do we ask for the Holy Spirit, and what do we ask the Spirit to do when we ask? We ask in Eucharistic Prayer II: “Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy.” That's easy for the Spirit to do. The bread and wine, very humble, get themselves out of the way and become what they always wanted to be. But when we ask, in the second epiclesis in that

“What were you doing? You were forbidden to do this.” St. Emeritus responded: “Without Sunday we cannot be.”

same prayer, that “all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit,” that’s a much harder task for the Spirit to accomplish. It’s easy for the Spirit to transform the bread and wine, to let them “become for us the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” It’s much harder for us to become one body, one spirit in Christ. If we want unity to take place in the Church, it is the Holy Spirit’s work. It is hard to be Catholic; it’s so easy to be non-Catholic. There is a centrifugal force pulling us out of unity all the time, and we are constantly pulled out of our best selves, and the Spirit has got to work overtime to pull us back. That is the *res non contenta* of every sacrament, and that is what the Holy Spirit is trying to do to us. This is the surefire prayer, the prayer that God cannot fail to hear: “Father, in the name of your son Jesus, send your Holy Spirit.”

That is what an *epiclesis* is. The reason why sacraments work is not because they are acts *ex opere operato* (that is, they are effective just by being performed), for that’s where people get the mistaken idea that sacraments are magic. Sacraments are prayers; they don’t happen automatically. They happen when the Church asks: “Father, in the name of your son Jesus, send your Holy Spirit.” The Father always hears the prayer of his Son’s Church. You might demur and say he is hearing but is not saying “yes.” The Father *always* says yes to the prayer for the Spirit, and that is why the sacraments work.

Now I am going to say something rather bold: It is through the Holy Spirit that sacraments work outside the context of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. It could be that God is ordaining women in other Christian communions because of the prayer for the Holy Spirit. Our friends beyond the bounds of the Roman communion of Churches are asking the Father to send the Spirit in the name of Jesus. Is God going to say, “No way; I have an appointment with the Catholics today”? No. So our unity is shattered, broken, but it is also a real unity. Something real is happening. Even the *Catechism* (no.1400) suggests—almost says—that something real is happening in ecclesial communities other than ours.²⁸

We have been talking about the sacrament as prayers, particularly as liturgical prayers, and therefore, as liturgies, they assume an assembly. That is why it is good, even for the anointing of the sick, to draw a crowd. Even though we don’t yet believe this is the case in the sacrament of reconciliation, we draw a crowd. Crowds are required in liturgy, and as liturgies these prayers presume song. They presume proclamation, solemnity, intercession, gesture, and ritual activity. No longer shall we be content with the minimalist activity going on in most of our Roman Catholic churches. Robert Hovda and so many others have been inviting us for decades to use our signs lavishly so that we understand what we are doing. It is through our bodies that we discover and know what God is up to in the universe.

Sacraments Flow from the Proclaimed Word of God

When I was growing up, the readings were read or chanted in Latin, and they were repeated in the local vernacular just before the priest’s sermon, and they were never referred to at Mass from that point on. The sermon (if there was one) could have focused on anything; it was not required that the

preacher even give lip service to the texts just proclaimed. Now, although we have a new Lectionary and a call for homilies that provide “a living commentary on the word . . . as part of the liturgical action” (GIRM, 30), the deadest letter of the Second Vatican Council is not, as some might suspect, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* but rather the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*. Perhaps “deadest” is much too strong a description: We are still in the initial phases of the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church, and much may yet happen. That dogmatic constitution tells us that everything is the fruit of the Word of God. Its truth is reflected in the first ten paragraphs of the 1981 revised version of the Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass* (which we received in 1999, when we finally received the second edition of our Lectionary—much tampered with). But many of us have not yet read this Introduction, especially its first paragraphs. These are not the passionate meanderings of a starved celibate in Rome; this text is the first fruit of a deepening awareness that we cannot live without the Word of God.

That sense of dependence on the Word was echoed wonderfully in *Dies Domini* (no. 46). There, Pope John Paul II evoked the fourth century martyrs of Sunday—St. Saturninus and his companions in Abatina in North Africa. (We need to restore their memory through an obligatory memorial on February 12, those forty-nine women and men who were hauled off during the middle of the liturgy, taken first in front of the local authority.) Their books had already been burned before they began that liturgy, so they didn’t have any lectionary to read from, but the readers knew the reading by heart. Saturninus Junior was one of the lectors. The liturgy had begun in the house of St. Emeritus, a wealthy man who risked everything by having Eucharist in his home. When they were arrested, the magistrate asked this rich man: “What were you doing? You were forbidden to do this.” St. Emeritus responded: “Without Sunday we cannot be.” Hilarion, who was four or five years old, said: “I was at the collects.” (Notice that is what he called Mass. He knew the structure of “let us pray” and silence to let him pray about his little concerns which are so big in the life of our little ones.) These people knew that the Word needed to be taken in deeply, that every liturgy is “founded on the word of God and [is] sustained by it [and so] becomes a new event and enriches the word itself with new meaning and power”—as paragraph three says in the Introduction to the *Lectionary*.

This language, though in typical Vaticanese, needs passionate affirmation. Though the text (which applies to every lectionary, including those for all the sacraments and other liturgies) affirms that “every liturgical celebration is founded primarily on the word of God,” that is not yet true. Even though *Music in Catholic Worship* and *Liturgical Music Today* tell us to start with some of the readings in preparing and selecting music for worship, what do some of us do? Our eyes glaze over at the thought of re-examining familiar texts, and we think: “I have been here before, and anyway I like this song.” “Founded primarily on the word of God and sustained by it”: When this happens, the liturgical celebration “becomes a new event and enriches the word itself with new meaning and power.” There is a reciprocal relationship between event and proclamation.

The proclamation enables the event to happen, and the event returns to the proclamation a new sense of what is going on. So the most important choice we can make for Sunday Eucharist is the Communion song, if we understand

that the Communion song needs to be taken from the Gospel of the day. When Augustine said that the Eucharist is “a visible word” — also a tastable and smellable word (the wine) — he meant that the words that consecrate the bread and the wine are not just “this is my body” and “this is my blood.” That is a minimalist interpretation of the Eucharistic Prayer. Remember that when St. Thomas Aquinas sat down to write the *Summa*, there were twenty-one candidates for sacramental status. Of course, seduced by the neatness of the prime number seven, he distilled all those candidates into seven formal sacraments. Then he distilled what happens at sacraments into matter and form. For many of us, Aquinas’ philosophical categories imply an approach to liturgy that is about the littlest matter possible and the littlest form possible. In the case of Eucharistic consecration, that “littlest form” means the words of institution. For Augustine and everyone up to the time of Thomas, on the other hand, *all* the words of the Lord at Eucharist are consecratory.

So this Eucharist is never the same old thing. This Eucharist has been changed by this Word. So this coming Sunday, if we are not singing an echo of the Gospel and the other readings at Communion, we have let the people of God down, because they will not know yet what this Word has done to this bread and this wine. And that is an exchange that is happening to all in the sacraments — the proclaimed Word shapes the sacrament, and the act of making sacrament transforms our hearing of the Word.

The sacraments flow from the proclaimed Word of God; every liturgy of the Word makes a promise that the sacrament fulfills. So we have to establish for ourselves and others the connection between the promise and the answer to that promise. Remember, though, that it is an answer that is in two stages. God always delivers on the promise. What is the essential promise of every liturgy of the Word? It is the promise of the three words from the burning bush (Exodus 3:14), *ehyeh asher ehyeh* — “I shall be there (for you) as Who I am shall I be there (for you)” — in the wonderful translation of John Courtney Murray, sj.²⁹ The three words that compose the personal divine name YHWH, used to describe the divine being, mean something like: “I shall be there for you with all of my power as who I am shall I be there for you” (and not simply the familiar translation “I am who am”). Thus God’s name is a promise of active, powerful, caring presence. He definitely delivered on that promise in Yeshuah (the Hebrew name rendered as Jesus, which means “YH[WH] is saving us right now”), the Emmanuel (“God with us”).³⁰ He continues to deliver on that promise by ever-sending the Promised One, the Holy Spirit, to be with us forever.³¹ “Let your spirit come upon these gifts and make them holy,” we pray. Come upon us and make us one in mind and one in heart.

The bottom line of every liturgy of the Word has got to be some promise — the renewal of God’s promise “I will be with you.” So when we go to Communion or share in any other sacrament, God is with us in a new way. Sacraments presume faith, of course, so all I am saying here is that one of the biggest roles we have as pastoral liturgists is to enable our people to be present to the Real Presence. In every way possible, we need to be there because God is there — The Holy One can’t fail to be there. What is God’s response when we ask: “Father, in the name of your Son, Jesus, send your Holy Spirit”? Is God going to say: “I’ll think about it”? No. God is a cataract, as C. S. Lewis says. God is a waterfall, a Niagara Falls. The outpouring

just comes. We have to work really hard to keep God out, but we are pretty successful, aren't we? We have to take advantage of every opportunity to awaken our people to how much God wants to be there for them.

Sacraments Are Signs

Confirmation is the most impoverished sacrament that we have, I think, yet it uses one of the most lavish signs, but because we use that sign so poorly we don't know what we are doing. Let me tell you about my most disgraceful experience of the sacrament of confirmation. (All of us have horror stories.) I have a dear godson whom I met at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, where I was teaching. He was a wonderful pagan who decided to become a Christian. After completing the process of adult initiation with some other candidates, he was ready for sacramental initiation at Easter. However, at this university the students are off for Easter, so we did the sacramental celebration the following week. We did a vigil service in broad daylight. (The phrase "as helpless as a Jesuit in Holy Week" really comes alive when you participate in something like this.) There was a birch table with no cloth on it, wheeled out from the sacristy, and topped with a plastic punch bowl. The young people to be baptized were not immersed, though I think they were at least sprinkled. Then, as at the Vigil, they were to be presented with the light of Christ. A Jesuit, with his back toward the assembly, was furiously trying to light the candles with his cigarette lighter, while I, the sponsor, was standing across the sanctuary from him and whispering: "Light it from the Easter candle!" That's what finally happened, but then it was time for confirmation. From the sacristy, the sacristan brought a petri dish containing the oldest chrism in Christendom. I don't know what was living on its surface, but the presider used it to confirm every one of these people with the smallest cross possible. Naturally, the good sister who had taken these people all through the rites came behind him with a cotton ball and wiped off what little chrism had been placed on each forehead!

Now look at what the *Catechism* says about oil: Oil "is a sign of an abundance of joy; it cleanses (anointing before and after a bath) and limbers (the anointing of athletes and wrestlers); oil is a sign of healing, since it is soothing to bruises and wounds; and it makes radiant with beauty, health, and strength" (no. 1293).

In order to get them to understand the richness of our sacramental signs, I have to take my students on a field trip to experience a crushing of grapes, since most of them—like most of us—think that wine is something that happens in the supermarket. We actually have to bake bread; we actually have to harvest the wheat and the grapes. The San Jose Dominican sisters have revitalized the 427 olive trees that Padre Serra planted, and they are harvesting the olives now for use in the sacred chrism. I want to take my students to see the harvest because we have to see all of these as the work of human hands and know the glory of olive oil.

What then do we do with the olive oil? Paragraph 1300 of the *Catechism* explains that "in the Latin rite, 'the sacrament of confirmation is conferred through the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand' and with words stolen from the East: "*Accipe sig-*

All the signs we use—oil, water, wine, bread, sexual activity, forgiveness, healing—finally become what they are when they are made sacraments.

naculum doni Spiritus Sancti" ("Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit"). On the other hand, this same paragraph describes in the next sentence what happens with this oil in the Eastern Churches. "After a prayer of epiclesis the more significant parts of the body are anointed with myron [consecrated by the patriarch]: forehead, eyes, nose, ears, lips, breast, back, hands, and feet." As I noted above, I saw this farmer chrismated by the Orthodox, and if they could have stripped his clothes off him again, he would have been slicker. The whole idea is that we are holy from head to foot.

I am going to propose to the Roman Rite bishops in the United States that we stole the words for confirmation from the Eastern Churches, now let us do the same with the rites. Let's have the laying-on of the hands by every confirmed person in the room. I think we should cancel all of our Masses in the deanery when we do confirmation, and in cities we need to rent stadiums and turn them into outside cathedrals. Make sure that people who have been to Mass recently attend, because isn't one of the problems at confirmation the fact that relatives and friends come who are not very comfortable with places like churches? Such people need to be surrounded by us and every confirmed person needs to have—the way they do in Protestant ordination ceremonies—the laying-on of hands by all the confirmed. If baptism can be conferred by a person who isn't even baptized, can't confirmation be co-conferred by all of us who are confirmed? That is what I am suggesting.

Then when the bishop comes and all the priests and deacons—deacons are allowed to use chrism even if chrism is not allowed in their ordination—then I really believe that we need to emblazon the bodies of all of these people with chrism on the head, eyes, ears, nose, and breast. The whole idea of putting oil on our chest is that it drips down to our private parts, for they are holy too. How many people still get out of the lay minister's line at Communion and go to Father's line because his hands are holier? If we knew about the real meaning of confirmation through the rich use of anointing, then we would know that every person gathered for Eucharist is holy right down to their calluses.

What are kids doing when they get themselves pierced, what are they doing when they get tattooed? They want to be changed; they want to be touched. What is the oil doing? It is meant to saturate, to soak in, and so every effort that we can make at these liturgies should be directed toward using these signs lavishly so that people can understand them.

The chief point that Nathan Mitchell makes in his book *The Real Presence*—quoting Herbert McCabe, who went to heaven much too soon, and who was writing about Eucharist—is that all the signs we use—oil, water, wine, bread, sexual activity, forgiveness, healing—finally become what they are when they are made sacraments. We can understand our sacraments better by looking *through* the signs to what they are trying to say. Ronald Knox titled his book on the Eucharist *The Window in the Wall*³² (which you should *not* read because it is well-intentioned but almost entirely invented—you would not *believe* how he accounts for the origins of the various parts and gestures of the Mass!). Knox's chief metaphor is still the best — The Eucharist is a window in which we look *into* eternity, *through* which eternity reaches into the present moment. *All* of our sacraments are that.

A Final Paradigm

Finally, let me introduce to you a paradigm for all the sacraments that is used in the *Catechism*. This paradigm is the Magnificat antiphon for Second Vespers of the Solemnity *Corpus et Sanguinis Christi*, written by St. Thomas Aquinas: “*O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur, recolitur memoria passionis ejus, mens impletur gratia, et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur*” (“O holy banquet in which Christ is consumed, the memory of his passion is recalled, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us”). Aquinas is saying that in every sacrament something happens in the present moment, something from the past comes into the present, and something from the future comes into the present.³³ Sacraments operate in past, present, and future; they operate as faith, love, and hope.

Clearly, I haven’t covered all that a pastoral musician needs to know about sacramental theology, but I have tried to emphasize that sacraments are the work of heaven, the work of the entire priesthood. I have tried to say that they are the fruit of the proclaimed Word of God. I have tried to say that sacraments are prayers and they *work* because they are prayers, especially because they are liturgical prayer. I have tried to say that sacraments are signs—holy signs, natural signs—and that we have to look at the signs to understand what they are, and that we have to use these signs lavishly.

Maybe some of these points were “duh” for you; but it’s often the most obvious things that we overlook. For me my discovery was sacraments are prayers. I have been saying “duh” and “wow” every since.

Notes

1. “Gloria Dei vivens homo; vita hominis visio Dei.” Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses* IV 20, 7.

2. “Gloria hominis, Deus; operatio vero Dei, et omnis sapientiae eius, et virtutem receptaculum, homo.” *Adversus Haereses* III 20, 2.

3. Jean Corbon, *The Wellspring of Worship*, second edition (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 2005). Read excerpts at <http://rumkatkilise.org/wellsprings.htm> and an essay, “Jean Corbon and the Catechism,” at <http://rumkatkilise.org/corbon.htm>. Corbon taught liturgy and ecumenism at the University of the Holy Spirit in Kalik, Lebanon, and the University of St. Joseph in Beirut. He was secretary of the Ecumenical Commission of the Assembly of the Patriarchs and the Catholic Bishops of Lebanon.

4. C. S. Lewis is famous for saying, “For my own part, I tend to find the doctrinal books often more helpful in devotion than the devotional books, and I rather suspect that the same experience may await many others. I believe that many who find that ‘nothing happens’ when they sit down, or kneel down, to a book of devotion would find that the heart sings unbidden while they are working their way through a tough bit of theology with a pipe in their teeth and a pencil in their hand.” This comment appears in “On the Reading of Old Books” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), 200–207, here 205.

5. “La Chiesa deve imparare di nuovo a respirare con i suoi due polmoni, quello orientale e quello occidentale.” John Paul II, Speech to the College of Cardinals, June 28, 1985 (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1985/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19850628_sacro-collegio_it.html), §8, ¶4.

6. See <http://www.valyermo.com/mnk-vin1.html>. Vincent Martin was an ardent student of the writings of St. Irenaeus and of an early Christian theology still in contact with the synagogue; see his *A House Divided: The Parting of the Ways between Synagogue and Church* (New York, New York: Paulist Press, 1995). Martin was a personal friend of Yves Congar, who wrote: The Spirit “is the communion between the Father and the Son, but he is first of all the Breath of God. The Son is the Image, but he is first of all the Word coming from the mouth of the Father and accompanied by the Breath, and therefore accompanied by the power that

sets things in motion.” Yves Congar, OP, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Volume III: *The River of Life Flows in the East and in the West* (New York, New York: Crossroads, 1983), 148. Or, as Congar says more succinctly: “The entire life of the Church is unfolding in the breath of the Spirit of Pentecost.” Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Volume I: *The Experience of the Spirit* (New York: Crossroads, 1983), 172.

7. Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius* 3, 4; *On the Holy Spirit* 16, 38; 18, 46; 19, 49. The latter reference may be found at http://www.monachos.net/patristics/basil/on_holy_spirit_b.shtml. For more about Basil on the Holy Spirit, see Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2004), chapter two.

8. For more about the sacraments as signs, read Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995) or his more accessible volume, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 2001). See also Antonio Donghi, *Actions and Words: Symbolic Language and the Liturgy* (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1997).

9. When lay people preside, they do not use this prayer; they do not use the *orans* gesture in praying the orations, and they do not trace the sign of the cross in the air in blessing the assembly or anyone or anything else. See the pertinent places in the *Liturgy of the Hours*, the *Book of Blessings*, and similar ritual books. See my “Overview to the Introduction to the *Book of Blessings*,” *The Liturgy Documents, Volume Two*, ed. David Lysik (Chicago, Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000), 346–350; available at <http://www.pford.stjohnsem.edu/ford/courses/sacramental-theology/docs/Blessings%20Intros.pdf>. See also my essay, “‘The Lord who is the Spirit be with you’ – ‘And may the Spirit be also with you’: Some Pre-Pentecost Ponderings,” *AIM* (Summer 2001), 22–27; available at <http://www.pford.stjohnsem.edu/ford/courses/ecclesiology/docs/on%20Holy%20Spirit%20for%20AIM.pdf>.

10. Here we may need to revise Søren Kierkegaard’s justly famous insight: “Many Christians tend to view the minister/priest as the actor, God as the prompter, and the congregation as the audience. But actually, the congregation is the actor, the minister/priest merely the prompter, and God the audience.” Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is To Will One Thing* (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 180–181. Actually God is working in the assembly *and* in the ministers.

11. The best-organized and most accessible textbook in sacramental theology is Herbert Vorgrimler’s *Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), here 25–26, bold face added.

12. James Savage, “On the Liturgical Role of the Choir,” proclaimed at Saint John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota, during the institute “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing,” June 13–17, 1999; expanded in his plenum presentation at the 2004 NPM Central Regional Convention in Chicago, Illinois; and published as the closing paragraphs of his article, “What Do We Sing Now?” *Pastoral Music* 29:1 (October/November 2004), 32.

13. Yves Congar, OP, “Pneumatologie ou christomonisme dans la tradition latine?” in *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta, Lumen Gentium. Mélanges théologiques. Hommage à Mgr. G. Philips*, ed. E. Descamps (Gembloux: Duculot, 1970), 41–63; cited in Walter Kasper, “Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of Baptism,” *The Ecumenical Review*, October 2000, note 22.

14. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* prepared for the United States of America, hereafter CCC (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994), no. 1211.

15. Congar says:

I would like to have what Thomas Aquinas meant by *res non contenta* investigated more closely. Examples concerning other sacraments would lead me to think that it means the effect to which the sacrament points (*res significata*), but what is not obtained or produced by the sacramental act alone. It calls for the intervention of another energy. It is true that the sacrament of the Eucharist . . . is brought about by the consecration of the bread and wine and their “conversion” into the body and blood of Christ. In that sense, the spiritual fruit of the sacrament, which takes place in the one who receives communion, is “extrinsic” to it. Thomas, however, knew that a sacrament was “the sign of a sacred reality insofar as it sanctifies men,” in other words, that the spiritual fruit belonged to the sacrament and that it was its *res* or “thing.” . . . But . . . if the sacrament is to have, in the life of Christians, its “reality,” that is, the fruit to which it points, what is required is an intervention on the part of the Spirit, who is, in us, the author of charity. And that charity is paschal, it is of the Church, and it is orientated towards God’s work in the world and towards his kingdom. Jesus is in us, but, if his sacramental presence is to have its effect, the Holy Spirit must add his breath, his fire, and his dynamism.

Congar, "The Holy Spirit in Our Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ," in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, III: The River of Life Flows in the East and in the West* (London: Chapman, 1983 and New York: Seabury, 1983), 266.

16. Herbert McCabe, "Eucharistic Change," *Priests & People* 8:6 (June 1994), 217–221.

17. Nathan Mitchell, *Real Presence: The Work of the Eucharist* (Chicago, Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001).

18. Photina Rech, OSB, *Wine and Bread*, trans. Henz R. Kuehn (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998). Kuehn wrote a brief, affectionate biography of Rech in the Introduction to this volume.

19. This distinction between *Bios* and *Zöe* is the foundation of Book IV, "Beyond Personality: First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity," of *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis.

20. Eucharistic Prayer II. In the English translation of Eucharistic Prayer III, the intention is expressed this way: "Grant that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ." In Eucharistic Prayer IV, the communion epiclesis prays: "Lord, look upon this sacrifice which you have given to your Church; and by your Holy Spirit, gather all who share this one bread and one cup into the one body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise." Eucharistic Prayer I for Masses of Reconciliation asks: "By the power of your Holy Spirit make them one body, healed of all division. Fill us with his Spirit through our sharing in this meal." Eucharistic Prayer II for Masses of Reconciliation has this petition: "Fill us with his Spirit through our sharing in this meal. May he take away all that divides us." This prayer continues powerfully: "May this Spirit keep us always in communion with [Benedict] our Pope, N., our bishop, with all the bishops and all your people. Father, make your Church throughout the world a sign of unity and an instrument of your peace."

Eucharistic Prayer I for Masses with Children asks: "Fill us with the joy of the Holy Spirit as we receive the Body and Blood of your Son," though this doesn't adequately translate the Latin: "*Mitte nobis Spiritum Sanctum ut, Filii tui Corpus et Sanguinem sumamus, et simus cor unum et animam unam.*" Eucharistic Prayer II for Masses with Children petitions: "Send the Holy Spirit to all of us who share in this meal. May this Spirit bring us closer together in the family of your Church . . ."; while the underlying Latin asks: "*Exaudi nos, Domine Deus, et dona Spiritum tui amoris cunctis, qui de hoc participant convivio, ut in Ecclesia magis magisque sint unum . . .*" The Latin text for Eucharistic Prayer III for Masses with Children asks: "*Pater sancte, qui nos vocasti, . . . per communionem Spiritus Sancti unum corpus in caritate fiamus,*" inadequately translated as: "Father in heaven, you have called us . . . to be filled with the joy of your Holy Spirit."

The Eucharistic Prayers for Masses for Various Needs and Occasions contains the petition: "Through the power of your Spirit of love include us now and for ever among the members of your Son, whose body and blood we share." These prayers then ask God for unity in the Church in one of four different ways: "Strengthen the bonds of unity between the faithful and their pastors, that together . . . your people may stand forth in a world torn by strife and discord as a sign of oneness and peace"; "Strengthen in unity those you have called to this table. Together with . . . all your holy people, may we follow your paths in faith and hope and radiate our joy and trust to all the world"; "Strengthen the bonds of our communion with . . . all your holy people"; and "Lord, perfect your Church in faith and love together with . . . all those your Son has gained for you."

Though there is no explicit epiclesis in Eucharistic Prayer I, the Roman Canon expresses this intention in three prayers: (1) "We offer [these gifts] for your holy catholic Church, watch over it, Lord, and guide it; grant it peace and unity throughout the world; (2) "In union with the whole Church we honor . . ."; and (3) "for ourselves, too, we ask some share in the fellowship of your apostles and martyrs . . ."

21. Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, 130.

22. Aidan Kavanagh, OSB, *Confirmation: Origins and Reform* (New York/Collegeville: Pueblo, 1988), especially chapter two.

23. Greek text, translated by F. Bland Tucker, *The Hymnal 1940*, adapted.

24. See my essay, "A Place for Everybody: Liturgy and Irreplaceability," *Liturgical Life*, the publication of the Office of Worship of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, March 1992. Also available at <http://www.pford.stjohnsem.edu/ford/courses/ecclsiology/docs/A%20Place%20for%20Everyone.pdf>.

25. Consilium, *The Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful*, April 17, 1966 (Vatican Polyglot Press, 1966). English translation in International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Documents on the Liturgy 1963–1975: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (hereafter DOL), ed. and trans. Thomas C. O'Brien (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1982), no. 239, section 4.

The place proper to the prayer of the faithful is at the end of every celebration of the word of God; as a rule it takes place even if the eucharistic sacrifice is not to follow . . .

The reason is that this prayer is the fruit, as it were, of the working of the word of God in the hearts of the faithful: instructed, stirred and renewed by the word, all stand together to offer prayer for the needs of the whole Church and the whole world.

Thus there is an analogy: sacramental communion is the conclusion and, in regard to the people's participation, the climax of the liturgy of the eucharist; the prayer of the faithful, according to the witness of antiquity, appears as the conclusion and, in regard to the people's participation, the climax of the entire liturgy of the word. . . .

But the prayer can also be seen in another way as a hinge between the two parts of the Mass: it terminates the liturgy of the word in which God's wonderful works and the Christian calling are brought to mind; it ushers in the liturgy of the eucharist by stating some of those general and particular intentions for which the sacrifice is to be offered.

26. See Paul Ford, "Let My People Pray: The Theology and Practice of the Universal Prayer (a.k.a. the General Intercessions or the Prayer of the Faithful)," *Liturgical Life*, the publication of the Office for Worship of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, May 1992. Available at <http://www.pford.stjohnsem.edu/ford/courses/ecclesiology/docs/Ford%20Let%20my%20people%20pray.pdf>.

27. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II^a-IIae q. 83 a. 1 ad 1:

Ad primum ergo dicendum quod desiderium pauperum dicitur dominus exaudire, vel quia desiderium est causa petendi, cum petitio sit quodammodo **desiderii interpres**. Vel hoc dicitur ad ostendendum exauditionis velocitatem, quia scilicet dum adhuc aliquid in desiderio pauperum est, Deus exaudit, antequam orationem proponant; secundum illud Isaiae LXV, *eritque, antequam clament, ego exaudiam*.

II^a-IIae q. 83 a. 1 ad 2:

Ad secundum dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, voluntas movet rationem ad suum finem. Unde nihil prohibet, movente voluntate, actum rationis tendere in finem caritatis, qui est Deo uniri. Tendit autem oratio in Deum quasi a voluntate caritatis mota, dupliciter. Uno quidem modo, ex parte eius quod petitur, quia hoc praecipue est in oratione petendum, ut Deo uniamur; secundum illud Psalm., *unam petii a domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo domini omnibus diebus vitae meae*. Alio modo, ex parte ipsius petentis, quem oportet accedere ad eum a quo petit, vel loco, sicut ad hominem; vel mente, sicut ad Deum. Unde dicit ibidem quod, *quando orationibus invocamus Deum, **revelata mente adsumus ipsi***. Et secundum hoc etiam Damascenus dicit quod *oratio est ascensus intellectus in Deum*. (Emphasis added in **bold**.)

28. CCC, no. 1400: "Ecclesial communities derived from the Reformation and separated from the Catholic Church, 'have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially because of the absence of the sacrament of Holy Orders.' It is for this reason that Eucharistic intercommunion with these communities is not possible for the Catholic Church. *However these ecclesial communities, 'when they commemorate the Lord's death and resurrection in the Holy Supper . . . profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and await his coming in glory.'*" (Emphasis added in *italic*.)

29. John Courtney Murray, sj, *The Problem of God* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale, 1960), 9–16.

30. Matthew 1:21 and 23 respectively.

31. John 14:16.

32. Ronald Knox, *The Window in the Wall and Other Sermons on the Holy Eucharist* (New York and London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1956).

33. See CCC, no. 1130.

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What is there to rescue us from this idolatry of self and clan? Except worship, except this biblical/liturgical assembly of faith to which we here and now commit our scattered selves again? . . . In our tradition, God trusts us to figure out what all this means, to use our own imaginations to interpret what all this means in our time, our place, our situation. We have no party line—no political, economic, cultural, legal agenda. These things we have to figure out along with everyone else on the planet. What we have in faith and in faith's liturgy is more important: the vision that all politics, economics, culture, and law must be made to serve love and love's reconciling and liberating deeds

Robert W. Hovda, Homily, 1992

Christian Initiation: Mission and Word

BY JAMES M. SCHELLMAN

SEVERAL YEARS AGO the North American Forum on the Catechuminate assisted the bishops of the United States and the bishops of Canada in separate studies of the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in the dioceses and parishes of the two countries. This produced very helpful and encouraging findings about the practice of adult initiation in the Roman Catholic communities of North America. A report of the U.S. study was published under the title *Journey to the Fullness of Life*.¹

One of the outstanding findings of those studies is that the renewed liturgy resulting from the Second Vatican Council is one of the principal means of drawing others to our faith community. In other words, our liturgical life is a primary way we evangelize. Potential inquirers who take part, for example, in a funeral liturgy or a wedding or who are visiting friends and come with them as guests to Sunday Mass evidently can find these experiences intriguing and inviting. Often enough their experience of Sunday Mass will include the presence of catechumens, our beloved newcomers to the faith. These visitors see them addressed, prayed over, and sent forth with special care and attention to their own special continuation of the liturgy of the Word with their catechists.

Pastoral musicians will want to consider this finding about our Roman Catholic liturgy with all seriousness. Like many with specific ministerial responsibilities for their parish liturgies, pastoral musicians see the many weaknesses of their parish liturgical practice up close. We become easily and, I hope, productively critical of how we do what we do. We know there is always room for improvement. At the same time, we need to acknowledge and embrace good news when it comes our way. The remarkably good news from these two national studies of the implementation of the *Rite of Christian*

Initiation of Adults is that, our flaws notwithstanding, we are apparently doing quite a bit that is right!

Our worship helps to speak to our visitors of a God who is present and in love with us in such a palpable way that a number want to come back for more. Ministers of initiation—including pastoral musicians—need to take courage from this news and build on it for the future.

How do we take this information to heart? How do we accept what it tells us that is good about our parish worship and at the same time turn this to an impetus to help our parishes do even better: worship more authentically, robustly, and joyfully? Let us look at this from the point of view of the vision of the Church behind these developments and then focus our reflections on a part of the Sunday liturgy where much could be gained with just a little more effort and conviction.

Church on Mission

As a Catholic people, we are on the cusp of a renewed vision of Church that is more deeply mission conscious. This vision, emanating from the recent and probably the most universal council the Church has known, invites us all into an abiding conviction that God is busy about the transformation of persons, relationships, and all things into what God wants them to be. Our tradition has many ways of describing this divine activity, but the most compelling way it expresses it today is in terms of evangelization. In Christ and through the Spirit God has established a kingdom that is slowly but inevitably transforming the world as we know it into the world as God wants it. At the heart of this transformation is the human person—we who got the story wrong in that first Garden and are the key to getting it right in the second. This second garden is that new world being birthed by God through those who in the waters of baptism have been given eyes to see God's work and hearts to remain steadfast in its completion.

Evangelization—God's great work of transformation—is the Church's mission as the Body of Christ. Together we are to be the agents of this great mission: God's hands and feet and heart in our all-too-broken world. If evangelization is the mission, then initiation is the job description. If we are faithful witnesses to this new world, then others will be drawn to it, and we will have work to do. That work is initiation, embracing those whom God has touched in whatever way and mentoring them in the way of life of this kingdom, this new world.

How do we envision and organize that work of transformation into this new way of life? That vision and structure in broad form are offered in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. This great gift of the Second Vatican Council continues to challenge us and offer us the means to embrace the Church's vision of parish communities of faith caught up in the work of evangelization leading to initiation and full discipleship in Christ. Through this process not only do we make new Christians but we ourselves are remade as communities of faith in love with God and God's people and newly impassioned about our mission. The kingdom vision is the key:

As an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a Kingdom, the Kingdom of God; and this is so important that, by comparison, everything else becomes "the

rest,” which is “given in addition.” Only the Kingdom therefore is absolute, and it makes everything else relative.²

Mission Enfleshed

There is nothing particularly mysterious about initiation as the “job description” for evangelization enfleshed in our communities of faith. Initiation is not something apart from what our parishes are already doing, something in addition, a new program. Rather, the process of initiation is nothing less than immersion in the parish community and its way of life in the Lord. The fact that our community is not a perfect example of that way of life makes no difference. This is the real Body of Christ in this place, and there is no more important work for the Body to do than to birth in mission those whom God is calling.

The elements of the job are described clearly in paragraph seventy-five of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (hereafter, the Rite). They are:

- Word,
- Liturgy,
- Community Life, and
- Apostolic Witness and Service.

Consider this brief list. Is there anything left out, anything that is part of our way of life that is not embraced by those four elements? I don't think so. In other words, what the community does, the newcomers to faith do. The only thing they cannot do until ready is participate fully in the Sunday Eucharist, that is, the liturgy of the Eucharist at Mass. (They can, of course, participate in the liturgy of the Word at Mass and in other rites and services.) All other aspects of our life make up the substance of their formation. This work of our parish communities is nothing less than mentoring our newcomers in who and how we are the Body of Christ in our families, surrounding community, nation, and the world at large. That is both a sinful and redeemed, exalted reality. This reality is made whole in the paschal dying and rising of Christ in which our newcomers are preparing to be immersed. They need to know it all, to know us and, through us, Christ.

Vatican Council II, in calling for the renewal of the catechumenate in our time, described this formation as an “apprenticeship.” Apprenticeship is a very concrete, active reality. It is on-the-job training, a hands-on reality that makes for the deepest kind of learning. Review just the verbs used to describe how this is done. The catechumens are:

- **Formed** in a way of life,
- **Participate** in the mystery of salvation,
- **Practice** love of neighbor, and
- **Learn to work actively** in service of the kingdom.³

Progressive Immersion in Mission

Because this apprenticeship is immersion in a whole way of living into and for God's kingdom, it takes time. The way in which we structure the process

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as a Catholic people is simply the way we structure our lives. That structure is the liturgical year: its seasons, liturgies, and many activities. This apprenticeship in Christian living is actually where the liturgical year came from. It was the progressive creation of our ancestors in faith as they learned to structure their lives in service of the kingdom, especially the central task of forming newcomers in that kingdom's ways. As the rhythms and prayer of the liturgical year form the Church's newcomers in the mission of evangelization, they re-form us in this mission and its irrevocable claim on us from the day of our baptism.

Think about the four periods of the process of adult initiation:

- Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate,
- Period of the Catechumenate,
- Period of Purification and Enlightenment, and
- Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis or Mystagogy.

The first two—the period of the precatechumenate and the period of the catechumenate—flow into and out of the liturgical year and rely upon its rich panoply of Scripture and prayer for deep formation. The second two are explicitly tied to two seasons of the liturgical year: The period of purification and enlightenment coincides with the season of Lent, and the period of mystagogy coincides with the season of Easter. This is progressive, careful, deep formation in the mission of Christ's disciples, and its meat and potatoes are nothing less than what we are already doing, all the time.

One Place to Focus Our Ritual Work— Liturgy of the Word

Across the four periods of the adult initiation process, there are a number of liturgical celebrations specific to the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Together these provide some of the deepest formation in the paschal mystery of Christ for our inquirers, catechumens, elect, and neophytes. The principal liturgies are:

- Celebration of the Rite of Acceptance into the Order of Catechumens,
- Celebration of the Rite of Election or Enrollment of Names, and
- Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist).

There are a number of other liturgies deserving close attention—among them: the minor exorcisms, blessings, and anointings of catechumens; sending of the catechumens for election; the three scrutinies (celebrated in the context of Sunday Eucharist on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent); and the presentations of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

Over the course of the liturgical year, all of these liturgies of the adult initiation process offer key opportunities for binding our newcomers more closely to Christ and Christ's Body. They deserve our greatest care in preparation, celebration, and during the time afterward, when our apprentice Christians will want to reflect with us on their experience of these celebrations.

Instead of focusing our attention on these liturgies at the moment, however, I would like to suggest that pastoral musicians as ministers of initiation look to the regular Sunday liturgy of the Word as the “place” where the community does its primary, weekly, and ongoing work of formation with the catechumens. The Sunday liturgy of the Word is, in fact, the central sacramental rite for those going through the initiation process. In this gathering each week, these apprentice Christians see and share the community’s experience of the Lord’s presence and action in the prayer of the Body. They gather with us each Sunday to hear the Word and prayer of the Church refracted through the cycle of seasons and prayers that form and direct our life of faith in the coming week.

This is a “liturgy” and not just a reading of Scripture. The Scriptures are organized in a three-year cycle of readings and surrounded by ritual movement, song, the sign of the cross, prayers of praise and petition, and—in the case of the catechumens—a prayer of blessing. Further, this cycle of Scripture is now held in common with the Sunday assemblies of other Christian traditions throughout the world. In effect, then, our catechumens are sharing with us an ecumenical sacrament in which Christians throughout the world and down the street already share communion. With us, they are being formed in the Church of the future for which we all long.

As the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* assumes, the catechumens are sent forth from this liturgy to be fed more deeply from the Word and prayer we have shared with them. This “dismissal” makes the liturgy of the Word that much more important as the central taste they have of who we are and who the God is that we worship and serve. Let us look a little more closely at the Church’s present understanding of the significance of the Word in our worship.

Sacramental Presence

A deep appreciation for the liturgy of the Word comes from a renewed understanding of the biblical Word in worship. In our present liturgy, for example, the Word has its distinct ministries—that of reader for the first and second readings, psalmist for the responsorial psalm, and deacon or priest for the Gospel reading. It also has its own ritual books—the Lectionary and the Gospel Book—distinct from the presider’s ritual book, the Sacramentary.

At the heart of this renewal of understanding is a deepened sacramental awareness of the Word as expressed, for example, by the Second Vatican Council in the constitution *Dei Verbum*: “The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since from the table of both the word of God and the body of Christ she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life, especially in the sacred liturgy.”⁴ As the Church insists, the two tables of Word and Eucharist are so closely connected that they form a single act of worship, and from each we are fed: From each, we receive the bread of life.

Underlying this view is the Church’s present teaching about the real presence of Christ: “For at the celebration of Mass, which perpetuates the sacrifice of the cross, Christ is really present in the assembly gathered in his name; he is present in the person of the minister, in his own word, and

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indeed substantially and permanently under the Eucharistic elements.”⁵

The intimate connection between the sacramental presence of the Lord at the two tables of Word and Eucharist is brought out further in the introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass*: “As a help toward celebrating the memorial of the Lord with eager devotion, the faithful should be keenly aware of the one presence of Christ in both the word of God—it is he himself who speaks when the sacred Scriptures are read in the Church—and above all under the eucharistic species.”⁶

Communion in the Word

Through the lens of this close theological linkage between the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist, we are able to detect parallel ritual elements in both. In both we experience proclamation and communion, and these are grounded in signs of reverence for the Lord’s real presence. We see these signs in the liturgy of the Eucharist: bows, genuflections, reverent extension of hands at Communion, etc. They are no less evident in the liturgy of the Word. There are the solemn announcement of each of the readings, careful proclamation and reverent listening, special responses—the one after the Gospel in particular in which we explicitly acknowledge the Lord’s presence by addressing him directly—signs of reverence in the movements and gestures surrounding the reading of the Gospel, the singing of the various elements—the psalm and Gospel acclamation especially. All bespeak the community’s belief that the Lord is among us, speaking and listening.

Consider also the similarity in the ritual flow of the two parts of the Mass. The “center and summit” of the liturgy of the Eucharist is in the Eucharistic Prayer, the great proclamation of God’s saving deeds.⁷ Through the power of the Spirit in this proclamation the bread and wine become the Lord’s Body and Blood, and in this belief the community offers petitions for the Church and the world.⁸ There follow the breaking of the bread and Eucharistic Communion.

The liturgy of the Word culminates in the solemn proclamation of the Gospel,⁹ which is followed by the homily, a breaking open of the Word proclaimed for the assembly’s nourishment. This communion in the Lord who is present in the Word extends into a period of silence in which all present savor the word in their hearts.¹⁰ Strengthened by this food, all present then offer their priestly prayer, the general intercessions, interceding for the Church and the world and those in particular need.¹¹

Concluding Thoughts

The Church’s present understanding of the sacramental depth and significance of the Word in worship is good news for all who labor in pastoral ministry—pastoral musicians included. It is an invitation to each of us to be nourished at this table ourselves and to encourage even more effective celebration of the liturgy of the Word in our parish assemblies. This Word liturgy, to do its work, needs to be celebrated with well-sung invitation, acclamations, responsorial psalm, and, occasionally, other proclamations of the Word itself.¹²

This fullness of celebration of the Word helps convey in every recess of the human person God's presence and loving purpose. It achieves its purpose of deepening Christian mission among the community as a whole, its apprentice members especially. With us they are learning how lifelong communion at this table of God's Word nourishes them and draws them to hunger deeply for the intimately connected communion of the Eucharistic table for which they are preparing. This is where the community is formed and where it does its best work forming others to share fully Christ's mission of transforming the world. We are apparently doing this pretty well already, and that is the good news! We should take great encouragement from this and continue to build for the future. That future is nothing less than God's kingdom that is breaking forth, especially in our assemblies at worship.

Notes

1. *Journey to the Fullness of Life* is available through the Forum book service (visit www.naforum.org).

2. Pope Paul VI, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975), 8; see Matthew 6:33. The full text of this exhortation is available online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html.

3. See the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), 75.

4. Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum* (Constitution on Divine Revelation), 21.

5. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), 7.

6. Introduction to the *Lectionary for Mass*, 4.

7. See the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 78.

8. *Ibid.*, 79, esp. c and h.

9. *Ibid.*, 60.

10. See *ibid.*, 56.

11. By joining in this prayer, the people are "exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood." *Ibid.*, 69.

12. The psalm text is, of course, taken from Scripture, as are many of the texts used for the Gospel acclamation and other chants. In addition, "the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration; it is from the Scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 24).

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Sacraments are no longer things that the priest brings to the rest of us but rather symbolic actions that we all do together. We need offices of ministry for the doing of them, to be sure, but they are our common actions, with the different roles that a liturgical assembly requires.

Robert W. Hovda, NPM Regional Convention
Providence, Rhode Island, 1982

Confirmation: More Conformed to Christ, Further Strengthened for Mission

BY GORDON E. TRUITT

BISHOP JEROME D. SEBASTIAN (1898–1960), who had been ordained an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Baltimore in 1954, confirmed me two years later at St. Bernardine Church. I took the confirmation name “Joseph.” Of course, I accepted the explanation of the sacrament that I had received from the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who taught at the parish school, that confirmation is a strengthening sacrament that would prepare me to witness to my faith and, if necessary, to die a martyr’s death. (This part of the explanation had to do, in large part, with the symbolic slap that I would receive from the bishop that was part of the ritual at that time.) Confirmation would prepare me for such a future, the sisters said, because of the special gift of the Holy Spirit that I would receive in that sacrament.

In the years since my own confirmation, I have had several opportunities to study this sacrament and refine my understanding of it. That study has left me with a feeling about this sacrament not unlike the feeling that some friends of mine once had during a wedding. They are members of the Religious Society of Friends—Quakers—and, in the early 1970s, they were attending a Quaker wedding. As is the case in every Friends’ Meeting, the community went quickly into shared silence. Suddenly, moved by the Inner Light, one person stood up and began an impassioned speech against the war in Vietnam that was raging at the time. The teaching went on for half an hour, much to the discomfort of the other participants, especially the bride and groom. My friends said: “Clearly, the Spirit had a message for someone. Just as clearly, the Spirit could have chosen a better way to deliver it.”

My experience and study of confirmation¹ suggest to me that there are important things going on in this sacrament, and, indeed, the Spirit is active in this event as in the whole life of the Church. Just as clearly—at least to me—there’s probably a better and clearer way for the Spirit to speak or to accomplish the goal of the ritual. While I do not believe that the current practice of confirmation will change any time soon, I think there are some things that pastoral musicians, catechists, liturgists, and clergy can do to help people understand and experience in better ways the meaning of confirmation and its relationship to the broader work of the Holy Spirit in the church, and those things will help to improve our ritual practice a bit.

So what I want to do here is to discover what the Spirit may be saying to us in confirmation and how we may help to clarify the Spirit’s message in appropriate ways. This exploration will include four steps. First—and at some length—we’ll look at the actual *rituals* for confirmation in Latin Rite Roman Catholicism today, since I believe that liturgy is where you go to learn liturgical theology. There are effectively (or experientially) two rituals of confirmation, distinct from each other primarily by their context but certainly related. As part of this first step of ritual exploration, we will also look at the official liturgical and catechetical explanations of what the confirmation rituals are about. Second, we need to look at the reasons for an upward pressure on the age of confirmation. Third and very briefly, based on what we find in exploring confirmation, we need to see how to recover the ideal that Eucharist is the goal of all our initiation practice. Fourth and finally, we need to get practical: to take a look at some ways to move toward Eucharist as initiation’s clear goal through the way we deal with confirmation, including how music might best express the meaning of the sacrament of confirmation.

The good news is that I will not be delving too deeply into the complex history of this sacrament, which, while fascinating, is not the real point of this presentation, since my focus, for the most part, is on the current rites and their current official interpretation—the sacrament as it is celebrated now. We will need to dip our toes briefly into those swirling and muddy historical waters, but if you are interested in that history and its effects on current practice, I recommend that you read some of the books listed in the bibliography at the end of this paper.

Official Meaning and the Rituals for Confirmation

First, a word about interpreting the meaning of any ritual. Rituals certainly express meaning, but the meaning they express may not, in fact, be the meaning intended by the ritual makers. As Margaret Mary Kelleher points out, there are various kinds of meaning attached to and expressed by ritual. She identifies three: the *public* meaning (what people in general think the ritual means), the *personal* meaning expressed and appropriated by the participants (which is shaped as much by their own experiences as by the public meaning or by official explanations), and the *official* meaning assigned to rituals in official texts and commentaries on a rite.²

Here are two examples of non-Christian rituals to help clarify these meanings. Since I am from Baltimore, both have Baltimore connections. “The

Star-Spangled Banner” is the national anthem of the United States, officially adopted by Congress in 1931. This is its official meaning: It represents the United States in song. And, no matter what people may think of the United States, they recognize this official meaning as the anthem’s public meaning. But it was composed on a British warship in the waters just off Fort McHenry by the lawyer Francis Scott Key in 1814, while the fort was being bombarded as part of a coordinated attack on Baltimore. So to a Baltimorean, this anthem always carries a more immediate and personal meaning. (That is even more the case when it is sung before an Orioles game during a winning season!)

A second example: According to its official website, the modern Olympic movement began in 1894 with this goal: “to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination or any kind, in a spirit of friendship, solidarity, and fair play.”³ The public meaning of these games is usually somewhat more pedestrian, having to do with national honor or simply an interest in athletics. But the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens took on very personal meaning for Baltimoreans, as hometown boy Michael Phelps won medal after medal in swimming.

In similar ways, the *public* meaning of confirmation as it is enacted in a particular community in the first decade of the twenty-first century might well include the ideas and images associated with a rite of passage, completion of religious education, or a child’s final major religious event in fulfillment of parents’ wishes.⁴ *Personal* meaning for the young people being confirmed might include some or all of those as well as the notion that the benefits of this sacrament may include cash gifts or a new computer as well as less tangible results in the spiritual realm; while the personal meaning for the bishop, catechists, and musicians involved in the event may be altogether different from all of these meanings. And the *official* meaning of the rite may not have anything to do with any of that, or it may ground all the other forms of meaning.

Here I want to focus on the *official* meaning of confirmation as expressed in the rituals and in the commentaries intended to clarify the rituals for three reasons. First—and frankly—because the official meaning, while complex, given confirmation’s thorny history in the Western Church, is still more accessible than the other two forms of meaning. Second, because I think that an understanding of what confirmation is *supposed* to be about should ground any attempt at expressing the ritual in the public forum and might well affect some aspects of private meaning. Third, because I think that this intended official meaning as it is named and expressed in the ritual is in conflict with some of the public meanings identified even in some catechetical texts. This potential conflict of meanings is a problem because people, as they look either at the rite or at public (even official) statements about the rite, tend to presume that they know what the official meaning is, and sometimes they are mistaken, and sometimes such mistakes have fairly dramatic consequences in the way we enact the rituals of confirmation.

The Rites of Confirmation

The official meaning of the sacrament of confirmation appears first in what the rite itself says in its texts and actions, without any official commentary for

The sacrament of confirmation currently has two forms in Roman Rite practice, somewhat distinct by their context but certainly related to one another.

the moment. As I mentioned earlier, the sacrament of confirmation currently has two forms in Roman Rite practice, somewhat distinct by their context but certainly related to one another.⁵ Our examination of each form will use the usual journalistic questions: what, when, who, where, why, and how.

The “what” of the *first form of the rite* is that it is an event that is part of a unified rite of baptism-confirmation-Eucharist. There are three answers to the “when” question. Usually, this unified rite is celebrated at the Easter Vigil or at another major feast associated with sacramental initiation. The actual celebration, however, comes at the end of a long period of preparation. The rituals surrounding baptism and Eucharist are much more extensive than those surrounding confirmation, and the whole initiation process culminates in the Eucharist.

The “who” involves the sacrament’s minister as well as the candidates: Its ordinary minister is the bishop or priest who celebrates the unified event, and the candidates are adults, teens, or children old enough to be catechized.⁶ (If there is no bishop present, then the “ordinary” minister of confirmation is the priest who administered baptism and who will, more than likely, preside at the Eucharist as well.)⁷

The “where” for administering the sacrament also has two answers. The unified celebration often takes place at the parish church (sometimes at the diocesan cathedral or at another place for large gatherings), and within that sacred space, the place for administering confirmation is at the same place where the candidates have just been baptized (ideally, that is, at the font).

Why do we celebrate this ritual? The invitation to confirmation in this unified rite links baptism to union with Christ and membership in the priestly people, and then it links confirmation to the Holy Spirit and the apostolic faith. It describes what the candidates will receive as the “outpouring of the Holy Spirit” and the “promised strength of the Holy Spirit,” which will make the candidates “more like Christ” and help them to be “witnesses to his suffering, death, and resurrection.” It will “strengthen [them] to be active members of the Church and to build up the Body of Christ in faith and love.”⁸

Note that, in this unified rite, this mention of the Holy Spirit at the confirmation rite is, in fact, the fourth time that the Spirit has been invoked in the service of initiation, and after confirmation the Spirit will be invoked again in the Eucharistic Prayer to bless and consecrate the elements and those who share in the prayer and in Communion.⁹ This experience of the Spirit’s activity before and after this rite, I think, would tend to moderate any expectation that confirmation is the only point at which the Spirit is active in the initiation sacraments!

Finally, how does this rite take place? In this unified rite, the ordained minister extends hands over those to be confirmed and prays that God, who has freed them from sin and given them new life in baptism “by water and the Holy Spirit,” will send the Holy Spirit upon them “to be their helper and guide.”¹⁰ Then, as the godparents affirm what is to happen by placing their right hands on the candidate’s shoulders, the bishop or priest performs a very simple gesture. He “dips his right thumb into the chrism and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the one to be confirmed as he says: ‘N., be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.’” The candidate responds “Amen,” the ordained minister and the newly confirmed person exchange the sign of

peace, and this part of the initiation rite is over.

While it is very similar in many ways, the *second form of the confirmation rite* takes place in a very different context. What is it? Experientially at least, for candidates, ministers, catechumens, and other members of the worshipping assembly, it is a ritual that is celebrated apart from the other sacraments of initiation, unless there are people being received into the communion of the Church who will be confirmed and then share for the first time in Eucharistic Communion. That is to say, for many—if not most—candidates, the other rites of baptism and their first sharing in Eucharistic Communion are *evoked* in the second form of the rite, but they are at best memories that are recalled, not fresh experiences connected to confirmation for the first time in the same rite. Most of the candidates have been baptized at some other time, and many have been sharing in the Eucharist—including sacramental Communion—for at least several years.

When does this freestanding ritual take place? It happens during a special Mass or at a special time but not necessarily at one of the major festivals of the liturgical year. This Mass or rite—if there is no Mass¹¹—may be celebrated on any day that is not impeded by Church law. It is not associated directly with any other sacramental ritual.

Who is involved? The “original” minister of the sacrament is the bishop, though certain priests are also ministers of the sacrament by virtue of their office or in case of emergency.¹² The candidates for this form of confirmation are people who have spent some time in preparation (usually a year or less of special catechesis), but that preparation period is primarily catechetical and is focused solely on confirmation as a separate and special sacramental event. Unlike the catechumenate, which prepares people for all three sacraments of initiation, the special catechetical preparation for this form of confirmation includes no official intermediate rituals, though it may involve classroom study, community service, and other special activities.¹³

Where does this celebration happen? It may be celebrated in a parish church, which may or may not be the parish of baptism for the candidates, or at the diocesan cathedral. During the rite, the anointing takes place in the sanctuary or at least in front of the bishop and, if they are needed, in front of the priests assisting the bishop. There is no expectation that this rite will take place at the baptismal font or pool.

Why does the Church celebrate this form of the sacrament? The reasons are essentially those for confirmation celebrated as part of a unified initiation rite, but the “how” intended to express those reasons lacks some of the resonances of the first form of the rite. Once Mass begins, for example, no special preliminaries are required: “The liturgy of the word is celebrated in the ordinary way.” The Holy Spirit is invoked over the whole community in the opening collect and may be mentioned—but need not be—in the readings and the psalm.¹⁴ After the homily and the renewal of baptismal promises, the rite proceeds quite simply, as it does when confirmation is part of the unified initiation rite. The prayer of the faithful (general intercessions) is directed to the meaning of the rite just completed. The final blessing invokes the wider role of the Spirit in initiation and in the work of the Church.¹⁵

That’s the basic shape of the two rites of confirmation. One form clearly expresses the sacrament as part of a unity of initiation rites; the other does not necessarily do that. One form usually links the candidates to the minis-

The work of the Spirit is to invite us to Christ and to a share in Christ's mission.

try of the bishop; the other does not necessarily do that. One form usually takes place at the high point of the Church's year; the other may take place at almost any time and place.

Given this ritual disparity, the Church tacitly acknowledges that there may be some confusion about the meaning and role of confirmation and about the relationship between the gift of the Spirit in confirmation, as expressed in these rites, and the Holy Spirit's role in the rest of initiation and in the Spirit-guided work of the Church, so there are official introductions to the two forms of the rite and official catechetical commentaries on the meaning of the rites. We now turn briefly to these.

Interpretation in the Rituals Themselves: Introductions

There are currently three introductions to the rites of Christian initiation in general or to confirmation specifically that are attached to the ritual books. They describe initiation in similar ways, and they focus on the Spirit's role in the work of salvation, on the conformity of the individual believer to the paschal mystery of Christ's dying and rising, and on the participation of individuals and of the Church in the work of Christ. In other words, the introductions to the rituals identify the work of the Spirit as a continuing process into which believers are inserted, not primarily for their own salvation but for the salvation of the world. The work of the Spirit is to invite us to Christ and to a share in Christ's mission.

The three introductions were published in just three years, from 1971 to 1973. The oldest is the very brief Introduction to the *Rite of Confirmation* published in 1971 at a time when there was a rush to revise all the rites in conformity with the principles of the Second Vatican Council and to put them into practice as quickly as possible. This Introduction is, at best, a sketch of the theology behind the rite of confirmation, and it offers the barest details for an appropriate celebration of the rite. It identifies a unique gift of the Spirit that comes to a candidate in this sacrament, but it does so in the wider context of living in conformity with Christ and giving witness to Christ. It says that, in this sacrament, those who have been baptized "continue on the path of Christian initiation" and "receive the Holy Spirit, who was sent upon the apostles by the Lord on Pentecost." Further:

This giving of the Holy Spirit conforms believers more perfectly to Christ and strengthens them so that they may bear witness to Christ for the building up of his body in faith and love. They are so marked with the character or seal of the Lord that the sacrament of confirmation may not be repeated.¹⁶

The next ritual text to appear that involves confirmation was the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, first published in 1972. It also puts confirmation in the context of Christ's paschal mystery and the individual's participation in that mystery, but it does so especially by focusing on the link between baptism and confirmation: "The conjunction of the two celebrations [of baptism and confirmation] signifies the unity of the paschal mystery, the close link between the mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the connection between the two sacraments through which the Son and the Holy Spirit come with the Father to those who are baptized."¹⁷

The final text appeared in 1973. The *General Introduction to Christian Initiation* gives an overview of initiation that was already in the process of revision and implementation when this document appeared as a way to clarify and unify the rites that had been published and implemented piecemeal. It offers the broad view, placing the Spirit's role in confirmation in the universal context of the work of salvation: "By signing us with the gifts of the Spirit, confirmation makes us more completely the image of the Lord and fills us with the Holy Spirit, so that we may bear witness to him before all the world and work to bring the Body of Christ to its fullness as soon as possible."¹⁸

In summary, then, the introductions to the rites place confirmation, generally, in the broad context of the Church's life and mission. Some of these introductory texts identify the gift of the Spirit as somehow unique, different from other manifestations of the Spirit, while other texts identify the continuity of the Spirit's work which is highlighted and strengthened in this sacrament. But take note that all the liturgical documents link the gift of the Spirit in confirmation—whether understood as special or as a continuation of the Spirit's manifestation through the Church—with other aspects of the Spirit's work to conform the Church and individual believers to Christ. It is a missionary sacrament.

Note also that these introductory texts always see the gift of the Spirit precisely as *gift*, that is, not as something that the candidate earns or has a right to but as a free offering given by God to individuals through the action of the Church for the upbuilding of the Church and the work of spreading the Gospel.

Interpretations in Catechetical Documents

In addition to ritual books and introductions to those books, the universal Church and the Church in the United States have also issued official documents to describe how confirmation is to be presented in catechesis. Here I want to look briefly at four of those documents: the 1971 *General Catechetical Directory*, issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy; the 1978 National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States, issued by the National (now the U.S.) Conference of Catholic Bishops and known as *Sharing the Light of Faith*; the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, prepared under the mandate of Pope John Paul II; and the new *National Directory for Catechesis*, issued in 2005 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

A basic official catechesis about confirmation is expressed fairly clearly in all four documents. As is generally the case with the liturgical texts and their introductory material, confirmation is presented catechetically as a *strengthening* sacrament, intimately related to the gift of divine life given in baptism, nourished in the Eucharist, and intended for the salvation of the world, and therefore not a sacrament that is complete in itself but always related to baptism and Eucharist and the whole mission of the Church. It neither brings the gift of life in the Spirit nor is it the final act of the Spirit in a person's life, because, like those other sacraments of initiation, confirmation points beyond the sacramental action to the unfolding of the sacrament's meaning in Christian witness. As described in the 1971 *General Catechetical Directory*, confirmation "binds the Christian more perfectly to the Church

and enriches him [or her] with a special strength of the Holy Spirit, that [the Christian] may live in the world as a witness of Christ."¹⁹

So far, so good. But there is an important statement in *Sharing the Light of Faith* that reflects, I believe, a prevailing and powerful attitude toward confirmation in the United States at that time—and now—that is at variance with the very nature of any sacrament and with the major direction of these catechetical texts in describing confirmation. In explaining that the “fullness” of the Spirit is given in confirmation, the 1978 document from the U.S. bishops says this:

Specifically in Confirmation/Chrismation [Christians] are signed with the gifts of the Spirit and become more perfect images of their Lord. Confirmation renews and strengthens the Christian’s baptismal call to bear witness to Christ before the world and work eagerly for the building up of His body.

Confirmation emphasizes the transformation of life by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in His fullness. Confirmed Christians *claim as fully their own* the new life into which they were first initiated at Baptism. The Church community expresses its continued support and concern for the spiritual growth of those confirmed, while the latter promise in turn to help others grow and mature in the Christian life.²⁰

Note a very important point in the second paragraph of this quote—the part highlighted in italics—because it is frequently a part of popular catechesis and the public understanding of confirmation. It marks a significant shift, however, from other catechetical and liturgical texts in expressing the meaning of confirmation and in describing the nature of a Christian sacrament. While the first part of this quotation focuses, like other catechetical and liturgical texts, on the action of the Church in the sacrament, the second part moves the very focus of the sacramental action from the agency of the Church on behalf of the candidates to an action taken by those being confirmed. We move seamlessly, in this description, from the signing with the Spirit, which makes Christians “more perfect images of their Lord” to a moment when confirmed Christians “claim as fully their own” the life into which the Church initiated them at baptism. We move, in other words, from an ecclesial description of divine grace sacramentally administered to a kind of self-actualizing claim on grace, which suggests that, in some sense, the claim made by the candidate is indeed the central action of the sacrament, replacing the action of the Church taken on behalf of this candidate.

That shift toward giving the candidates a central role in actualizing sacramental grace—a mistake in sacramental theology that is rooted in recent history, catechesis, and the science of human developmental psychology, as we shall see below—is extremely important, though fortunately it is not one echoed in most of the other official catechetical documents. This move toward a focus on the candidate’s own choice as key to understanding and celebrating the sacrament, affirmed by the U.S. bishops who relied on the advice of their catechetical experts and some liturgical advisors in crafting *Sharing the Light of Faith*, reflects a popular understanding of confirmation as a sacrament of commitment in which the adolescent candidate confirms by personal choice what was earlier done on that person’s behalf in baptism. Though affirmed by the bishops in their 1978 document, this is an *incorrect* understanding of confirmation which, not surprisingly, has added to exist-

ing upward pressure on the age of confirmation. As *Sharing the Light of Faith* already admitted in 1978, “emphasis upon Confirmation as the sacrament of Christian commitment has led to postponement until the recipients are 12, 14, or, in some dioceses, 17 or older.” Such emphasis has also led to some fairly stiff preparatory requirements for candidates: “performance standards for Church membership and community service; requiring a specific number of hours of service to qualify for Confirmation; a letter of request for Confirmation; formational programs of catechesis extending over two or three years; and the use of adult advisors.”²¹

Let me reflect for a moment on this focus on personal decision and the act of the candidate in light of the generally agreed official meaning of the confirmation rite as expressed in the ritual books and in all the catechetical documents. That official meaning is described as the graced action of the Church *on behalf of* the candidate. Note the usual understanding of how sacraments work: God acts through the Church in sacramental ritual to bestow grace (that is, a created share in God’s own being) on individuals who are the focus of a particular ritual, so that they may act in the name of the Church and in graced ways for the salvation of the whole world. In the case of confirmation, God acts through the sacrament to bestow some further aspect of the gift of the Spirit, which the candidates “receive.” The required action of the candidates at this point is receptive openness to the gift given by God through the Church. That gift “conforms” them “more fully to Christ and strengthens them.” Only after this sacramental act, in which the candidates are recipients, do the candidates take further action: They “bear witness to Christ for the building up of His body.”²²

As it currently exists, the 1971 rite actually requires very little of the candidates for confirmation: They must be baptized, in the state of grace, properly instructed, and capable of renewing their baptismal promises. If the candidates for confirmation are adults, they should conform to what is required of people being admitted to the catechumenate.²³ In other words, after a suitable instruction that helps them understand what is happening, candidates must express an informed openness to and acceptance of graced action. That’s it. No community service, no letters to the bishop.

Of course, the text of the rite appeared at a time when introductory material was sketchy at best. (The English translation of the *Rite of Marriage* still in use in the United States appeared in 1969; it has a similar woefully slim introduction.) If the rite were being revised now, after several decades of experience with the existing rite and with the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, its expectation of the candidates might appear more like the expectations for the initiation of children who have reached catechetical age and even like the expectations for baptized but uncatechized adults who are completing their initiation.²⁴ On the other hand, there is a longstanding practice of the Apostolic See that the demands made on candidates for any of the initiation sacraments are as minimal as possible in order to make the grace of sacramental initiation as widely available as possible. That practice, as we shall see, comes into sharp contrast with the findings and practices of contemporary developmental psychology and catechetics, and it is at that juncture that we find confirmation today.

To sum up: A review of the ritual texts, their introductory materials, and official catechesis offers us a view of confirmation that puts it in the context

of the initiation process that culminates in Eucharistic sharing and in a life of Gospel witness. That process is primarily an action of the Church to bring candidates into union with the life and mission of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Within that process, confirmation offers in some way a *strengthening* of the existing and continuing gift and work of the Holy Spirit in the candidate. That strengthening has a specific goal: a more complete union with the salvific mission of the Church. This review of the texts also suggests that the way candidates are currently prepared for confirmation—in many places—though grounded in available science and catechetical theory, may actually be excessive in the light of the Church’s longstanding practice regarding the initiation sacraments. At best, some current practices associated with confirmation are more appropriate for an initiation process that concludes in Eucharist.

In light of a growing popular awareness that the focus of all initiation is Eucharistic sharing and consequent mission, we should also note that the extensive requirements sometimes placed on candidates for confirmation, as described by the U.S. bishops as early as 1978, go far beyond what was at that time—and still is—required of those same candidates for admission to Eucharistic Communion. Yet the requirements for confirmation have continued to tighten, as upward pressure on the age of confirmation continues to increase, and, indeed, those very requirements have added to that pressure on the age of candidates. (At the same time, very little is required of young candidates for full sharing in the Eucharist—and that little is often treated casually.)

In addition to the upward pressure on the age for confirmation promoted by the notion that confirmation is a sacrament of Christian commitment, as it was described in 1978, there are three other sources for such pressure.

Upward Pressure on the Age for Confirmation: Readiness, Psychology, Catechetics

The upward pressure on the age of confirmation comes from three sources: a transfer of the upward pressure on the age of first Communion associated, for some centuries, with rigorous—indeed, rigorist—expectations of sacramental readiness in children, the development of modern catechetics, and advances in human psychology.

To understand how pressure on the age of confirmation is related to similar pressures on first Communion, we need a quick journey through “recent” legislation on Communion and confirmation—and here’s where I have to dip into history.

Historically, the first pressure on the upward movement of the age for confirmation was caused by a desire to be “more Catholic than the council or the pope,” as regards preparation of children for first Communion, by requiring more than the church’s own councils and the Roman Curia required. An overview of that history appears in the 1910 decree *Quam singulari*, from the Congregation for the Sacraments, which intended to restore the ancient practice of admitting children to sacramental Communion once they had reached the age of reason—that is, seven more or less. The Congregation noted that certain movements in the Church had been putting upward pres-

sure on the age for first Communion for some time. The official—and very gentle—rule for readiness for Communion, the document noted, had been in effect since the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, namely, that children be admitted to Communion *at least* by the time that they had reached the age of reason and, in terms of sacramental understanding, were able to distinguish the Eucharistic bread from ordinary bread. This rule was reconfirmed by the Council of Trent, which *required* believers to begin receiving Communion by the age of reason.

However, *Quam singulari* noted, some movements down the centuries had been pushing the age upward, demanding that “a full knowledge of matters of faith and a better preparation of the soul” be required for Communion. “As a consequence,” the document continued, “the age determined for the reception of First Communion was placed at ten years or twelve, and in places fourteen years or even more were required.”²⁵ This pressure for a more complete and provable readiness for the sacraments was especially part of rigorist movements like French Jansenism,²⁶ and its effect, the Sacred Congregation noted, was to make sacramental Communion “a reward rather than a remedy for human frailty.”

Remember that phrase—“reward rather than remedy”—because it marks the dividing line between two interpretations of the initiation process and its rituals. On the one hand is the Vatican’s longstanding lenient approach to requirements for initiation, on the grounds that it is a remedy for sin and so should be widely accessible. On the other hand is an approach that treats ritual initiation something like a reward for completing a process. Such an approach, especially influenced by the kind of rigorist practices critiqued in the Congregation’s statement, makes reception of the sacrament more dependent on the action of the candidate than on the action of the Church—a reward for personal commitment and personal readiness.

Now, how has this pressure on the age and preparation for Communion influenced confirmation? As is the case with Communion, and for similar reasons, the traditional official expectation of readiness for the sacrament of confirmation has long been minimal. From its second edition, for example, the *Baltimore Catechism* described the requirements for candidates for confirmation as being in the state of grace and, if the candidate is old enough to learn about them, knowing the “chief mysteries of the faith and the duties of a Christian, and [being] instructed in the nature and effects of this Sacrament.”²⁷ At least from the time of the Council of Trent until the 1971 revision of the confirmation ritual, there was a presumption that children would be confirmed before they were seven years old, unless there was a very good reason to delay the sacrament.

But as with first Communion, various forces began to put pressure on the age and requirements for confirmation. While Rome tried to hold the line, legislative documents increasingly reflected pressure from sources outside Rome to delay confirmation and to increase the requirements. Let me list just a few examples, beginning just before Great Britain’s troubles with those feisty American colonies in the eighteenth century. In 1774, missionary priests with permission to confirm were *allowed to delay* confirmation until a child was seven, but they were told by the Vatican that they should confirm earlier, if that were possible. In 1917, the *Code of Canon Law* stated that confirmation *should be delayed* until the seventh year, though it could be

Historically, the first pressure on the upward movement of the age for confirmation was caused by a desire to be “more Catholic than the council or the pope.”

done earlier. This would mean that there was still a possibility that children could be confirmed before first Communion, as was the common practice in the post-Tridentine Church. In 1932, to make that connection—and the order of the sacraments—clear, the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments affirmed that children should not come to Communion until they had been confirmed. In 1952, the Commission for Interpreting the Code of Canon Law denied permission for bishops to delay confirmation to age ten. (Most bishops, by the way, ignored this decision.²⁸) In 1971, the revised *Rite of Confirmation* said this: “With regard to children, in the Latin Church the administration of confirmation is generally *postponed* until about the seventh year. For pastoral reasons, however, especially to strengthen the faithful in complete obedience to Christ the Lord and in loyal testimony to him, episcopal conferences may choose an age which seems more appropriate, so that the sacrament is given at a more mature age after appropriate formation.”²⁹

It seems, from these attempts to hold confirmation at age seven or even earlier, that there was constant pressure put on the Roman congregations charged with liturgical law by bishops before the twentieth century to apply a more rigorous set of demands to candidates for confirmation as well as Communion. In the twentieth century, when Pope Pius X, acting through the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1910, officially took pressure off first Communion by returning the age of candidacy to seven, somehow the pressure remained on confirmation. The result, as I said before, is a more demanding preparation for confirmation today than for participation in the Eucharist, which is officially the goal and crown of the initiation process.³⁰

In summary, a more rigorous approach to confirmation was inherited from earlier and persistent attempts by bishops to increase the requirements for Communion. Those pressures certainly developed out of good faith, in pastoral response to the European Reformation in the sixteenth century and in rigorist attempts to tighten up fidelity to the Church through movements like Jansenism. And when *Quam singulari* banned such rigorist approaches to candidacy for first Communion, those wishing to tighten up Catholic identity turned naturally to confirmation as the next logical sacramental peg on which to hang their efforts.

In the twentieth century, while the pressure from bishops on the age and requirements for confirmation continued, primarily as a way to defend the faith from various assaults (real and imagined), confirmation became attached to some very positive developments of the modern catechetical revival. That revival began in the late nineteenth century with an interest in finding better ways to provide religious education for children, especially those who did not attend Catholic schools. It led to the publication of textbooks geared to various levels of human development, the careful training of catechists, and an approach to doctrine that spelled out its implications for other aspects of Christian living.³¹ Combined with the work of the liturgical renewal in the early decades of the twentieth century, this new approach to religious education led to recognition, long before the Second Vatican Council, of liturgy’s central place in Christian life and of liturgy as a source for understanding that life. And this religious education movement increasingly promoted some measurable form of readiness for sacramental involvement, either on the part of the parents in the case of infant baptism, for example, or on the part of the candidate in the case of Communion, penance, and confirmation.

After the Second World War, the focus on religious education as a key component of Christian life fused with insights from developmental psychology, which was rapidly becoming an accepted way to describe and understand how humans grow and know and feel at different stages.³² Developmental psychology applied to catechesis fused current sacramental practice with theories about the stages of development, insisting, for example, that young children could best understand and celebrate first Communion (and the theology of transubstantiation), while they should wait until they were more highly developed to participate in confirmation (and understand pneumatology — the theology of the Holy Spirit). And then modern culture “discovered” adolescence, which has been, by and large, a twentieth century phenomenon tied to the move from home into the workforce after high school rather than after grade school or childhood. With the psychological affirmation of adolescence as the final stage of development before adulthood came a desire to ritualize in some way the transition from pre-adulthood to adulthood.

Confirmation and Communion had, in fact, served that purpose at other points in history, when the transition from childhood to adulthood effectively took place after the age of seven or ten or twelve. But now, in post-World War II Catholicism, confirmation, floating free of its place in the initiation process and detached from Communion, seemed to stand on its own as a likely ritual vehicle to mark this transition. Under pressure from its own history, from catechetical expectations of sacramental readiness, and from developmental psychology to move into the teen years and out of childhood, confirmation began to be thought of as a kind of graduation ceremony from basic religious education to be celebrated in the eighth grade or even in high school.

In fact, however, such pressure on age and readiness for the sacrament does confirmation and the whole complex of initiation rituals a great disservice, as such pressure has done since the Council of Trent when applied to confirmation and, until the intervention of Pope Pius X, to first Communion. It makes these sacraments, as the Congregation for the Sacraments said, a reward to be earned rather than a gift to be bestowed — an achievement to be celebrated rather than a grace to be welcomed. Does this mean that I think there shouldn't be any preparation or expectation of readiness of candidates for this sacrament? Certainly not. But such preparation should be appropriate to confirmation's place in the initiation process. If one were to make serious demands about preparation and readiness for any initiation sacrament, that sacrament would be Eucharist, the culmination of the initiation process.

A quick look at initiation viewed from the perspective of grace rather than achievement, with Eucharist as the ritual culmination of the process, will help us, I think, move forward in finding appropriate pastoral ways to celebrate confirmation.

The Initiation Ideal: Eucharist Is the Goal

The place to begin to make sense of our current initiation practice and to put things in their proper perspective is with three questions borrowed from our journalist friends: what, who, and how. First, what is any sacrament and, therefore, what is specific to the sacraments of initiation? Then, in general terms and in terms of initiation: Who acts in the sacrament? Finally, how

Who acts in the sacraments? God-in-Christ acts in the Spirit through the Church. Sacraments are therefore actions of the Church and not of any individual.

does the one who acts accomplish the purpose of any sacrament and especially of initiation?

The answer to the first question—the what of any sacrament—is this: Sacraments are ritual actions, with set words and texts and circumstances and ministers and recipients that have been handed down within a particular tradition and are believed, in the Catholic tradition, to have meaning and to communicate what they signify. The primary actor in any sacrament—the who—is the Holy Spirit, continuing the mission of the incarnate Son for the glory of the Father and acting through the Church. The purpose of all the sacraments is twofold: to proclaim the glory of God and to accomplish human salvation by transforming us into the Body of Christ.³³ The Holy Spirit is central to this goal, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: “As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to [the Spirit’s] power.”³⁴ “In the Church’s liturgy,” according to the *Catechism*, the divine blessing which has been God’s plan since the dawn of creation “is fully revealed and communicated. The Father is acknowledged and adored as the source and the end of all the blessings of creation and salvation. In his Word who became incarnate, died, and rose for us, he fills us with his blessings. Through his Word, he pours into our hearts the Gift that contains all gifts, the Holy Spirit.”³⁵

Who acts in the sacraments? God-in-Christ acts in the Spirit through the Church. Sacraments are therefore actions of the Church and not of any individual.³⁶ They are, as the *Catechism* says, “of the Church” in two ways: “They are ‘by the Church,’ for she is the sacrament of Christ’s action at work in her through the mission of the Holy Spirit. They are ‘for the Church’ in the sense that ‘the sacraments make the Church,’ since they manifest and communicate . . . the mystery of communion with the God who is love, One in three persons.”³⁷ No one “earns” a sacrament; sacraments are not graduation exercises; they are acts of the Church, often celebrated *on behalf of* or focused on particular individuals, but always for the glory of God, the good of the whole Church, and the salvation of the world.

How is all of this specified when it comes to the initiation sacraments? Like all sacraments, they are ritual actions but with particular words and actions and gestures that engage people in beginning something new or belonging to something in a new way. Who acts? The Spirit, acting through the Church, is represented particularly by the bishop or the bishop’s representatives, the already-initiated members of the ecclesial assembly, and those who are being initiated. The answer to the third question—the purpose or “how” of the initiation sacraments—should, I think, be eminently clear: Initiation makes people members of the risen Christ, whose tasks are worship and salvation (see Hebrews 5). To quote the *Catechism* again: “Through Baptism and Confirmation, the priestly people is enabled to celebrate the liturgy.”³⁸ The goal or apex of the initiation process is participation in the priestly people as it celebrates the Eucharist, that is, participation especially in praying the Eucharistic Prayer, in which we are joined to Christ and to Christ’s mission in the world, and in sacramental Communion, the sign and reality of our union with Christ’s dying and rising.³⁹ Everything in the initiation process pushes toward this familiar goal: “conscious, active, and full participation [in the Eucharist] both in body and in mind, a participation burning with faith, hope, and charity.”⁴⁰ Why is such total participation in the Eucharist

the goal of initiation? For reasons that we all know so well:

The celebration of Mass, as the action of Christ and the People of God arrayed hierarchically, is the center of the whole Christian life for the Church both universal and local, as well as for each of the faithful individually. In it is found the high point both of the action by which God sanctifies the world in Christ and of the worship that the human race offers to the Father, adoring him through Christ, the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit. . . . Furthermore, the other sacred actions and all the activities of the Christian life are bound up with it, flow from it, and are ordered to it.⁴¹

Our celebration of confirmation, like our celebration of baptism, has to be directed toward the goal of full participation in the Eucharist and full involvement in the activities that flow from it. Our current practice of confirmation, especially for those baptized in infancy who receive Communion when they are about seven years old but who are not confirmed until much later, seems to go against that goal. If we should demand intense preparation for any sacrament, it should be for participation in the Eucharist, but the measure of any preparation process, it seems to me, is the one identified in *Quam singulari*: The sacrament must be presented as a “remedy” and not a “reward,” a gift and not a graduation present.

Moving toward the Ideal

So where does all this leave us? Let me summarize. We have two ways of celebrating confirmation, one of which expresses better than the other the special—but not unique—way that the Spirit is at work in this sacrament. When confirmation is celebrated apart from the other two sacraments of initiation, we have greater difficulty making clear just what the gift of the Spirit is in this sacrament and how it relates to the transformative work of the Spirit in all of initiation and especially in the Eucharist, the center of the Church’s life and action. Because of that problem, and under influences both positive and negative, we have tended to treat confirmation in ways that belie its strengthening role, and we have made more of it, perhaps, than we should, because undue focus on confirmation dis-orders initiation and our vision of Christian life centered on the Eucharist.

What do we do about this? Well, we can’t change the rites on our own, certainly, but the practical actions available to us may have some effect on ritual practice locally and, slowly, perhaps, even throughout the Church. There are four things that we can do immediately that will bring better understanding and practice of the confirmation ritual.

1. Begin with ourselves. Develop for ourselves a clearer understanding of confirmation and its place in sacramental initiation.

2. Share what we learn with others. We’re not in this alone; we need to work in appropriate ways with our parishes, dioceses, or other communities, especially with clergy, catechists, and liturgists in our parishes or dioceses. They need to know our concern about the way confirmation is perceived, prepared for, and celebrated today as well as what we can do to help improve that understanding and practice.

3. Encourage bishops, if we are in a position to do that, to consider returning to an age for confirmation that will place it before first Communion in

the normal order of sacraments and treat it as gift rather than reward.

4. In choosing music for celebrations of confirmation, make selections based on the strengthening aspects of confirmation, on its orientation toward Eucharist, and on the broader goal of all initiation: living the mission of Christ through the power of the Spirit. I have appended some suggestions to this presentation.

Finally, the goal of confirmation is the goal of all Christian life centered on the sacraments: to give oneself fully, within the Body of Christ, to the mission of the Church—the glorification of God and the sanctification of believers—so that the whole of creation may be transformed into a song of praise to the Creator. At the beginning of creation, all the morning stars sang in chorus and the children of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7). At creation's final close, all will sing the song of the Bride and of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6–8). May our work help those who are confirmed in the power of the Spirit to join fully in the song and, indeed, to become the song.

Notes

1. The variations in capitalization for the sacraments and the word “church” in this article reflect the spelling used in various official documents. My own preference, following for the most part the practice adopted until recently by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, is to lower-case the names of the sacraments and other rites, except for Eucharist, and to lower-case “church” unless it refers to a specific ecclesial community such as the Roman Catholic Church.

2. See Margaret Mary Kelleher, “Liturgical Theology: A Task and a Method,” *Worship* 62:1 (1988).

3. Website: http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/movement/index_uk.asp. The first games of the modern Olympics took place in Athens in 1896.

4. The *National Directory for Catechesis* (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005) acknowledges the strength of just these public meanings by encouraging catechists to teach against them. See *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2005), 200.

5. On the development of the revised rite of confirmation, see Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 613–625.

6. There is a special form of the rite for such children: See the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), U.S. edition (1988), nos. 252–330. In general, however, this form of confirmation is experienced as part of a unified rite, as it is with unbaptized adults.

7. See RCIA, nos. 231–232.

8. *Ibid.*, no. 233.

9. In the rites of initiation, the Spirit is invoked to bless the waters of baptism and to give the candidates new life through that sacrament (RCIA, no. 220, 222). Faith in the Spirit is affirmed (225) before baptism in the name of the Trinity (226). The Spirit would have already been mentioned and even invoked explicitly more often than this when initiation is celebrated at the Easter Vigil. In the liturgy of the Word, for example, the refrain for Psalm 104, following the reading from Genesis 1:1–2:2, is “Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.”

10. RCIA, no. 234.

11. The Rite of Confirmation outside Mass is the second chapter of the 1971 *Rite of Confirmation* (RC), nos. 34–49.

12. Introduction to RC, no. 7.

13. See the National (now U.S.) Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory* (1978), no. 119. The text is available in Martin Connell, ed., *The Catechetical Documents: A Parish Resource* (Chicago, Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996).

14. Since the readings may be taken “in whole or in part from the Mass of the day” (RC, no. 20), it is possible that the Spirit would not be mentioned again after the opening collect until the homily.

15. RC, no. 33.

16. Introduction to RC, nos. 1–2.

17. RCIA, no. 215.
18. General Introduction to Christian Initiation (found in RCIA and other places), no. 2.
19. Sacred Congregation for Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory* (1971), no. 57. See also *Sharing the Light of Faith*, no. 118, and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1302–1303. The English text of the *General Catechetical Directory* and *Sharing the Light of Faith* are available in Martin Connell, ed., *The Catechetical Documents* (Chicago, Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 1996). The 1994 English translation of *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America was published by the United States Catholic Conference (now the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops), Washington, DC.
20. *Sharing the Light of Faith*, no. 118, emphasis added. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also prefers “fullness” to “strengthening” in describing the gift given in confirmation. See no. 1302.
21. *Sharing the Light of Faith*, no. 119.
22. Introduction to RC, nos. 1–2.
23. RC, no. 12.
24. See RCIA, nos. 252–259 and 400–410.
25. An English translation of *Quam singulari* (August 8, 1910) is available online at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius10/p10quam.htm>.
26. Though Jansenism arose in France in the seventeenth century, its rigorous approach to Christianity had effects that still continue in some places. I heard a story about a bishop in Louisiana who, as a child, was preparing for first confession and Communion in the early decades of the twentieth century. His pastor was a Jansenist, and the pastor required that children delay first Communion until the age of twelve or later, depending on the fervor that they showed when they made their first confession.
27. The *Baltimore Catechism*, online edition, questions 691–692. <http://www.catholic.net/RCC/Catechism/3/115.html>. In 1884 the bishops of the United States, gathered in their Third Plenary Council in Baltimore, Maryland, decided to publish a version of *Butler’s Catechism*, an Irish text based on the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, for use by American schoolchildren. The first *Baltimore Catechism*, published in 1891, contained 100 questions; subsequent editions expanded the size of the catechism. The online edition replicates the fourth printed edition, with 2,342 questions.
28. See Gerard Austin, op, *Anointing with the Spirit: The Rite of Confirmation, the Use of Oil and Chrism* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1985), 51–52.
29. RC, no. 11, emphasis added. The same principle is repeated in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, canon 891.
30. Participation in the Eucharist is “the culminating point in . . . Christian initiation” (RCIA, no. 217). See also the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, canon 897.
31. These developments were heralded by Pope St. Pius X in the encyclical *Acerbo nimis* (April 15, 1905).
32. The *Handbook of Child Psychology*, a compendium of the field, has been published in successive editions at nine- to sixteen-year intervals since the 1930s. Dr. Benjamin Spock (1903–1998) first published his views on baby and child care in 1946, in *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, which initially sold for twenty-five cents. And the influential work of Erik H. Erikson began with the publication of *Childhood and Society* in 1950 (New York: Norton).
33. See the Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)*, 5–7.
34. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), no. 1127; see also no. 1116.
35. *Ibid.*, no. 1082.
36. See GIRM, 91.
37. *Ibid.*, no. 1118.
38. *Ibid.*, no. 1119.
39. See the *General Introduction to Christian Initiation*, no. 2; RCIA, no. 217; *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 58; *Code of Canon Law*, canon 897.
40. GIRM, no. 18.
41. *Ibid.*, no. 16.

For Further Reading: History and Theology

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Singing Confirmation: Some Suggestions

. . . in addition to one hymn or song about the Holy Spirit

Commitment, Mission, Service

As Those Who Serve	CH 444
Be Not Afraid	GP 602/LMGM 123/PMB 446/RS 734/WC 823
Center of My Life	GP 593
City of God	GP 548/WC 757
Come with Me into the Fields	GP 553
Eye Has Not Seen	WC 830
Faith of Our Fathers	CH 634/GP 592/PMB 421/WC 791/WOR 571
Go	LMGM 66
Go, Be Justice	PMB 476/WC 867
Go Make of All Disciples	CH 635/PMB 479/RS 798/WC 869/WOR 628
Go to the World!	RS 608/WC 870
God Has Chosen Me	GC 699/GP 546
Here I Am, Lord	GP 542/PMB 406/RS 802/WC 775
How Firm a Foundation	CH 452/LMGM 102/PMB 438/RS 731/WC 819/WOR 585
I Bind unto Myself Today	CH 305
Id y Enseñad/Go and Teach	FYC 703
Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace	CH 612/RS 751/WC 750/WOR 602
Lord of Light	CH 638
Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service	CH 606/GP 557/PMB 508/RS 793/WC 915
Make Us True Servants	PMB 501/WC 920
May the Mind of Christ My Savior	CH 528
On Eagle's Wings	GP 598/PMB 453/RS 740/WC 836
Only This I Want	GP 575
Pescador de Hombres/ Lord When You Came	FYC 709/GP 580/RS 817/WC 759
Piedras Vivas	FYC 515
Prayer of St. Francis	CH 608/GP 650/PMB 459/RS 830/WC 847
Rise Up, O Saints of God	PMB 405/WC 773
Send Us as Your Blessing, Lord	GP 554
Song of Good News	CH 656/WC 746
Take Christ to the World	GP 549
Take Up Your Cross	CH 651/GP 586/PMB 238/RS 808/WC 765/WOR 634
The Church of Christ in Every Age	CH 613/RS 803/WC 910/WOR 626
The Servant Song	PMB 413/RS 788/WC 787

The Summons	GC 687/RS 811/WC 776
They'll Know We Are Christians	GP 568/PMB 390/WC 753
Voices That Challenge	GC 702
We Are Called	GC 710/RS 820/WC 772
We Are Many Parts	RS 840/WC 752
We Will Serve the Lord	GC 652
You Walk along Our Shoreline	PMB 394/RS 807/WC 758

Journey

Anthem	GP 578
Close to Thee	LMGM 114
Companions on the Journey	GP 566
Do Not Fear to Hope	GP 597
Iglesia Peregrina	FYC 722
Jerusalem, My Destiny	GC 399
Juntos como Hermanos	FYC 575
Journeysong	GP 581
Lift Every Voice and Sing	GP 561/LMGM 291/PMB 487/WC 893/WOR 641
We Are Marching	GC 516/PMB 398/RS 648/WC 777
Where He Leads Me	LMGM 120

Kingdom

Bring Forth the Kingdom	GC 640/RS 772
City of God, Jerusalem	WOR 362
Father, We Thank Thee	CH 374/GC 547/PMB 316/RS 705/WC 607/WOR 558
God Is Working His Purpose Out	WOR 507
Grita, Profeta	FYC 701
I Will Not Die	GP 716/RS 771
Keep in Mind	GP 492/PMB 36/WC 793
Para un Tiempo Nuevo	FYC 662
Rejoice, the Lord Is King	CH 515/GC 493/LMGM 93/PMB 355/RS 627/WC 716/WOR 493
Seek Ye First	GC 600/GP 608/PMB 433/RS 728/WC 811/WOR 580
The Kingdom of God	CH 550/PMB 511/RS 775/WC 926/WOR 615
With Jesus for Hero	CH 615/WOR 645

Songs Based on Psalms

Settings of the suggested psalms for confirmation—with the proper antiphon and in the approved translation—should be used in the ritual Mass. Here are some songs based on those psalms or texts that paraphrase the official text. They should not be used in place of the official texts, nor should they simply echo the chosen responsorial psalm. But these songs might be used at other points in the Mass to reflect the understanding of confirmation presented in the Lectionary for Mass. So, for example, if the responsorial psalm is Psalm 96:1–2a, 2b–3, 9–10a, 11–12, you might choose one of the songs suggested for the other psalms, but not those that echo Psalm 96 directly.

Psalm 23

Shepherd Me, O God (Haugen)	GC 23/WC 371
The King of Love My Shepherd Is	CH 460/WC 798
The Lord Is My Shepherd (Cooney)	GP 179
The Lord Is My Shepherd (Vermulst)	PMB 141

Psalm 96

Proclaim to All the Nations (Haas)	GC 54/RS 132
Sing a Song to the Lord's Holy Name (Lawton)	GC 53
Sing a New Song	CH 586
The Song of the Trees	CH 590

Psalm 104

Envía Tu Espíritu, Señor (Rubalcava)	GP 255
Lord, Send Out Your Spirit (Blunt)	PMB 164/WC 412
Lord, Send Out Your Spirit (Lisicky)	RS 146
Send Forth Your Spirit, O Lord (Walker)	GP 254
Send Forth Your Spirit, O Lord (Warner)	PMB 165/WC 411

Send Out Your Spirit, Lord (Jabusch, Lvov)	CH 585
<i>Psalm 117</i>	
Go Out and Tell the Good News (Ash)	GP 260
Go Out to All the World (Hruby)	WC 416
<i>Psalm 145</i>	
I Will Praise Your Name (Haas)	GC 76/RS 193/WC 429

Codes

CH	<i>The Collegeville Hymnal</i> (The Liturgical Press, 1990)
FYC	<i>Flor y Canto</i> , segunda edición (Oregon Catholic Press [OCP], 2001)
GC	<i>Gather Comprehensive</i> , second edition (GIA Publications, 2004)
GP	<i>Glory & Praise</i> , second edition (OCP, 1997)
LMGM	<i>Lead Me, Guide Me</i> (GIA, 1987)
PMB	<i>Peoples Mass Book</i> (World Library Publications [WLP], 2003)
RS	<i>Ritual Song</i> (GIA, 1996)
WC	<i>We Celebrate Worship Resource: Hymnal</i> (WLP, 2004)
WOR	<i>Worship</i> , third edition (GIA, 1986)

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Marriage: Know the Sacrament, Know the Rite

BY PAUL COVINO

I FIRST HEARD BOB HOVDA when I was an undergraduate student at Georgetown University, and Larry Madden, SJ, brought Bob to the University's newly renovated chapel for a talk on liturgy. When Bob first started speaking in that famous gravelly voice, I exchanged glances with the student next to me, each of us suggesting by the look on our face that we couldn't possibly bear to listen to such a disconcerting voice for an hour. It was one of many such times that I'd discover I had a lot to learn as a college student! In this talk, as in so many other talks that I heard Bob give and in the articles and books by Bob that I read in subsequent years, the rich potential of liturgy came to life. He was one of those rare people who simply "got it": He understood what the liturgy was capable of, and he could express it to others in terms both simple and poetic. He had a real love of ritual and festival, a lesson that was echoed many years later when I had the privilege of hosting Bob in Boston for a workshop in late October. He accepted the invitation on the strict condition that he would be able to return to New York City that evening for the annual Greenwich Village Halloween festival!

One of the opening paragraphs from Bob's classic book on presiding, *Strong, Loving and Wise*, is as an apt introduction to this article: A "guidebook on presiding in liturgy cannot commence with the 'practical' details of techniques and mechanics. Important as these latter are, they are not at the heart of the matter. These pages are concerned, first of all, with a spirit, a consciousness, an awareness. With that spirit, techniques are indispensable and highly useful. Without that spirit, techniques are dangerous."¹ With marriage, as with every other liturgical celebration in which they are involved, pastoral musicians—and any other pastoral ministers for that matter—need to be concerned with more than just the techniques. There is more to being

All symbolism conveys meaning. Whether that meaning is relevant to those involved or consistent with what we believe is a different story.

a pastoral musician for the sacrament of marriage than programming a processional that will get the wedding party from the door to the altar and avoiding, at any cost, the ire of the bride's mother! There is, first of all, that spirit of which Bob Hovda wrote: that consciousness and awareness of what we are doing and why we are doing it when we celebrate marriage in the Roman Catholic Church. With that spirit, pastoral musicians can skillfully employ techniques and thus serve the couple, the assembly at the wedding, and the larger church community very well. Without that spirit, well, you've probably heard enough wedding horror stories to complete the thought!

As we explore "what every pastoral musician needs to know about the sacrament of marriage," I'd like to invite you to recall the last wedding at which you ministered. Picture the couple, the wedding party, the fateful decision to allow the couple to write their own vows!—all the elements of the wedding liturgy. Recall your conversation with the couple in advance of the wedding. What understanding about marriage came through in what they said and in what you said? After this wedding, what would someone who didn't know anything about Catholicism think about marriage in our Church? What assumptions about marriage did this wedding liturgy affirm or challenge?

Symbols Convey Meaning

In a wonderful illustration in the *New Yorker* by Jack Ziegler, a just-married groom, upon leaving the church, turns to his new bride and says, "Not bad for a ceremony steeped in meaningless symbolism." Some of us might nod knowingly, recalling couples and assemblies who seemed to have no idea of what the wedding liturgy was all about. If we were honest, we'd have to admit the same could be said about some church musicians! But, the reality is that all symbolism conveys meaning. Whether that meaning is relevant to those involved or consistent with what we believe is a different story. Some theologians suggest that, in a sacramental church such as ours, liturgical celebrations, including their texts and actions, are, in fact our "primary" theology on which "secondary" theological reflection can be based.

In the words of the Second Vatican Council, sacraments "not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it."² In the fifth century, the theologian Prosper of Aquitaine coined the statement "*Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*," which was later shortened to the catch-phrase "*lex orandi, lex credendi*." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that statement this way: "The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays. Liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition."³ Catechisms, church documents, and theological writings certainly contribute to the understanding of marriage in our Catholic tradition. For most people, though, the most frequent encounter with the Catholic faith concerning marriage is in the celebration of the wedding liturgy and, ideally, in the marriage covenants lived out by Catholic couples.

So, the first thing every pastoral musician needs to know about the sacrament of marriage is that people encounter the Church's faith concerning marriage most frequently not in catechisms but at wedding liturgies. Wed-

dings reflect, express, celebrate, nourish, and shape people's understanding about marriage. What you do—the ritual and musical choices that you make—shapes the understanding of marriage among those who participate in the wedding liturgy. How aware are you of this enormous responsibility, and how are you, as a pastoral musician, helping to shape a full and positive understanding of marriage through your ministry at weddings?

A second thing every pastoral musician needs to know about this sacrament is its rich theology. Catholic theology of marriage has come a long way since Saint Paul's rather bleak view of marriage as the antidote to unbridled passion (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:9). We don't have space in this article, nor is it our focus, to review the history of Catholic theology on marriage from biblical times to today. One point about history is pertinent, though: If you want the fullest picture of what Catholics have believed about marriage during the centuries, you have to look at the weddings they celebrated as well as canonical and doctrinal sources. Mark Searle, one of the foremost liturgical scholars of our time, made this point after extensive research into documents of Christian marriage liturgies from the various eras of Christianity, and I strongly recommend Mark's brief essay "Marriage Rites as Documents of Faith: Notes for a Theology of Marriage" which has recently been reprinted in the book *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*.⁴

Like its historical predecessors, our current marriage liturgy — *The Rite of Marriage*⁵ — reflects and expresses mainstream Catholic theology of its time. Promulgated in 1969, this ritual book builds on the tremendous advances that the Second Vatican Council made in our theology of marriage and expressed in several documents.

- In 1963, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* called for a revision of the marriage rite that would more clearly signify the grace of the sacrament, remind both spouses of their equal obligation of mutual fidelity, and provide a proper liturgical framework for marriages celebrated outside of Mass, such as when a Catholic marries someone from a different religious tradition. Theologically, this represented an increased emphasis on marriage as a source of grace, a shift from an almost exclusive focus on the bride, and a recognition that marriages outside of Mass were liturgical celebrations of the church.
- In 1964, the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* moved away from looking at married people as ecclesiastical second-class citizens when it proclaimed that, "in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony by which they signify and share (cf. Eph. 5:32) the mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church, Christian married couples help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in the rearing of their children. Hence by reason of their state in life and of their position, they have their own gifts in the People of God (cf. 1 Cor. 7:7)."⁶
- In 1965, the *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* spoke of a unique apostolate of married persons and of families and called Christian couples "cooperators of grace and witnesses of the faith."⁷
- Later in 1965, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* affirmed that, while marriage is ordered to the procreation and education of children, "marriage is not merely for the procreation of children"⁸ but

is an “intimate partnership of life and . . . love” which “Christ our Lord has abundantly blessed.”⁹

Theological inquiry and changing societal attitudes toward marriage certainly prepared many Catholics for statements like this, but we shouldn’t underestimate how radical they were when they were promulgated forty years ago, after centuries in which, as Mark Searle said, “the amount written on marriage . . . is miniscule compared with the amount written in praise of virginity.”¹⁰ Today, these theological points are standard fare, and they should be familiar to everyone who ministers with engaged couples—including pastoral musicians. This theology of marriage is the foundation for our current *Rite of Marriage*—and even more so for the *Order for Celebrating Marriage*, the revised marriage liturgy that was published by the Vatican in 1990 and, with the exception of four new readings in the wedding lectionary, still has not been officially promulgated for use in the United States or most other English speaking countries.¹¹

The introductory paragraphs of these rites—numbers one through four in the *Rite of Marriage* (RM) and numbers one through eleven in the *Order for Celebrating Marriage* (OCM)—summarize the Church’s doctrine on the sacrament of marriage and provide the framework for understanding the wedding liturgy. The first four points are common to both rites, while the last three appear only in the newer *Order for Celebrating Marriage*.

1. The marriage of Christians is a symbol of the unity and love between Christ and the Church (RM, 1–2; OCM, 5–9, 11).
2. Christian marriage is established by the covenant that the partners freely give to and receive from each other (RM, 2; OCM, 2, 6–7).
3. Christian married couples cooperate with their Creator in the procreation and education of children (RM, 4; OCM, 2–3, 8, 10).
4. There are several purposes of marriage: an intimacy of life and community and love; helping each other toward sanctity; nurturing and fostering equal dignity, mutual dedication, and an undivided affection; public witness before everyone (RM, 3–4; OCM, 8–11).
5. Marriage is part of the order of creation taken up and renewed in Christ (OCM, 1, 4–6).
6. The sacramental nature of marriage is rooted in baptism (OCM, 7–9).
7. The sacrament of marriage unfolds over time (OCM, 11).

Conflicting Assumptions

To put it mildly, the theology behind our rites of marriage challenges many prevailing assumptions about marriage in our culture. For example, Catholic theology sees marriage as arising out of love, as does our contemporary culture, but the Catholic view understands love not as a feeling that may or may not last but as a covenantal relationship grounded in faith that reveals itself in commitment. Since the wedding liturgy incarnates Catholic theology rather than any prevailing cultural assumptions about marriage, it’s little wonder that there is often disagreement about what should happen at a wedding. Pastoral ministers approach the wedding with one set of ex-

pectations, while some couples come with very different family and societal expectations—not to mention the photographer and wedding consultant, who come with their own expectations! As often happens, the liturgy becomes the lightning rod for disagreements based on these different expectations, and we sometimes end up arguing about liturgical issues and techniques when what’s really involved are very different assumptions about what the wedding liturgy is supposed to express, reflect, and celebrate. Remember what Bob Hovda said: “Without the spirit, techniques are dangerous.”

These differing expectations reveal something that every pastoral musician needs to do: Pastoral ministers, including musicians, need to spend time talking with couples about what we Catholics believe about marriage and how this is expressed in the wedding liturgy. Yes, it’s more challenging and time consuming than just mailing out a list of approved and unapproved musical selections, but it’s much better pastoral practice. The mailing is merely technique, the discussion gets at the spirit: It’s ministry.

Pastoral musicians need to know that they are part of a team of pastoral ministers who work with engaged couples as they prepare for marriage. We can all be grateful that this cooperation is already happening in many communities, but we all have to move beyond the lone ranger approach in which different people from the parish deal with couples for specific aspects of their marriage preparation with no apparent communication among these people. I’m not suggesting that the musician has to run the parish marriage preparation program, but I am saying that a musician who is serious about being pastoral will take the time to find out what couples are hearing in their marriage preparation sessions.

There have been tremendous advances made in family life ministry over the past few decades, and we in liturgy and music can learn from our family life colleagues, just as they can learn from us. My own work in marriage, for example, has been enriched by learning about how “family of origin” issues affect various aspects of marriage including the wedding liturgy. Many of the contentious issues that arise when we are preparing couples for wedding liturgies are not liturgical or musical issues at all but are instead the surfacing of unresolved family issues, and we make a mistake when we try to resolve them with liturgical and musical techniques, when what is really needed is some pastoral attention to the underlying family issues.

Know the Rite

One of the most important things that pastoral musicians need to know about the sacrament of marriage is the marriage rite itself. That may sound very obvious, but many of us who are involved in a lot of weddings tend to overestimate our real knowledge of what’s in the ritual. We begin to do the same things over and over again, much like the priest or deacon who inevitably turns to the same pages in the *Rite of Marriage* whenever he presides at a wedding.

The problem is that we tend to overlook some things that are in the rite and we assume some things that are not in the rite. For example, much time is often devoted at weddings to customs such as seating the bride’s mother and unrolling an aisle runner which, many assume, are part of the ritual,

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but they are not. Meanwhile, many pastoral ministers seem ignorant of the fact that the only form of the entrance procession mentioned in the *Rite of Marriage* is one that involves the bride, the groom, and both sets of parents. There are things that the *Rite of Marriage* presents as more or less essential to a Catholic wedding, whereas many things we assume are essential are never, in fact, mentioned. It doesn't mean there isn't some give and take between the two, but every pastoral musician should know which is which, and that comes from knowing the *Rite of Marriage*. (If you've never read this thirty-six-year-old rite, now's the time!)

Pastoral musicians should also know what's coming concerning revisions to the marriage rite. The *Order for Celebrating Marriage* cannot be used in place of the *Rite of Marriage* because this translation and adaptation to the United States has not yet been approved, but it does help to have a sense of where the larger Church sees our sacramental understanding and liturgical practice moving. The *Order*, for example, includes a new fourth option in the choice of rites: the order for celebrating marriage in the presence of a lay assistant. Without an understanding of the Catholic theology of marriage, this might appear to be just an unhappy alternative for so-called "priestless parishes." However, our Roman Catholic theological tradition teaches that the couple is the minister of the sacrament of marriage¹², so the sacramentality of marriage is not dependent on the presence of an ordained presider at the wedding liturgy. Just as lay ministers lead various blessings in the process of adult initiation and in the liturgy of the Word with children in some places, so the Vatican has provided a rite for those occasions when lay ministers may one day preside at Catholic weddings in our country. Couples whose marriages are celebrated with a lay presider need to understand their role as ministers of the sacrament, so that they don't think they are having a "second class" wedding.

Finally, pastoral musicians need to know that basic sacramental and liturgical principles apply to weddings as much as they do to every other liturgy of our Church. For example, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* makes it clear that liturgies are communal or corporate events, so a wedding liturgy needs to be understood as an event of the Church, not just an event of the couple or their families. "Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the 'sacrament of unity,' namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops. Therefore liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church; they manifest it and have effects upon it Whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, it is to be stressed that this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, as far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and, so to speak, private."¹³ How does this principle translate into practice when it comes to weddings? Not easily in many places. How do you foster this corporate dimension in the celebration of marriage in your communities?

Is there a prevailing sense in what we do and say with engaged couples and with the larger parish community that it is not about "your wedding" but about "the parish's celebration of your marriage"? Is there a common understanding that parishioners are always welcome at wedding liturgies in the parish, and are these liturgies listed in the parish calendar? Do we

see the parish's celebration of Sunday Eucharist as the model and norm for its celebration of weddings, as Austin Fleming proposed so well in his book *Parish Weddings*?¹⁴ Can we see why the revised *Order for Celebrating Marriage* would make the following statement: "Marriage is meant to increase and sanctify the people of God and therefore its celebration has a communal character that calls for the participation even of the parish community, at least in the person of some of its members. With due regard for local custom and as occasion suggests, several marriages may be celebrated at the same time or the celebration of the sacrament may take place during the Sunday assembly."¹⁵

Perhaps some of you have participated in a wedding within Sunday Mass or a celebration of several marriages at the same time. It remains to be seen whether these options will find much acceptance among American couples and parishes, but their inclusion in the revised marriage rite does underscore the Catholic understanding of the wedding liturgy as an action of the whole body of the Church. To those who see marriage primarily or exclusively as "the couple's special day," these options will seem preposterous.

Ritual Choices

So what impact might all of this have on the musical and ritual choices available in the wedding liturgy and on our approach to working with engaged couples? Here are nine possibilities.

(1) Make preparation for the wedding liturgy part of marriage preparation. This is easier if marriage preparation takes place in the parish, but it can also work with a regional or diocesan marriage preparation process such as Engaged Encounter. Talk with your family life colleagues about the connection between the catechesis that goes on in marriage preparation and the celebration of marriage in the wedding liturgy. This is nothing new; this same dynamic is evident in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Let engaged couples see that the wedding liturgy has everything to do with the other issues discussed in marriage preparation sessions.

(2) Provide engaged couples with resources that move beyond multiple-choice text and music selections and, instead, help them to capture the "spirit" of the wedding liturgy. For example, give them Austin Fleming's *Prayerbook for Engaged Couples*¹⁶ several months before the wedding so that they can pray with the texts of the *Rite of Marriage* and discuss what these prayers and Scriptures suggest about the covenant they are about to undertake. When it comes to preparing the wedding liturgy, give them a resource that offers appropriate suggestions and commentary about the church's vision for a liturgy that celebrates the Christian faith concerning marriage. I humbly suggest two resources in which I had a part: the videotape *Our Catholic Wedding*¹⁷ and the workbook *Celebrating Marriage*.¹⁸

(3) Participation is primary. Even when weddings are not celebrated within Sunday Mass or are celebrated with people other than the couple's family and friends present, the wedding liturgy is still a corporate act of the Body of Christ. Full, conscious, and active participation by the assembly has the same primacy in a wedding as it does in any other liturgy of the Church. The goal of participation should guide every decision, with priority given

to options that encourage participation rather than those that render the assembly mere spectators. The couple and their parents, for example, could greet people as they arrive at the church doors. Ushers and bridesmaids could seat people toward the front of the church and close together, filling one row before seating people in the next row. The cantor or leader of song could lead a brief rehearsal of the music before the procession and then invite people to turn and greet the people around them, especially those they may not know. Preference should be given to music that is familiar, and people should be encouraged to sing through the use of a simple and attractive worship aid that contains the music and with the leadership of a cantor or leader of song.

(4) Pay attention to the entrance procession as outlined in the *Rite of Marriage*: “The ministers go first, followed by the priest, and then the bride and the bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses.”¹⁹ I’m not naïve about the challenge that this represents. However, even if ninety percent of engaged couples opt not to follow the Church’s norm for the entrance procession, it is still important to present it to couples and explain why it is the Church’s norm. With this entrance procession, the Catholic Church is doing something that the feminist movement has been largely unable to do, and that is to challenge the prevailing American wedding entrance procession with its ritual implication that, in marriage, a woman is given away by one man to another man. The Catholic Church, by placing both bride and groom in the same procession, says that these two people enter the covenant of marriage as equal and complementary partners. By placing the mothers and fathers of the bride and the groom in this same procession, the Church honors the role that all the parents—not just the father of the bride—played in bringing their daughter or son to this moment in their life, and it honors the families of origin by ritually expressing the creation of a new family from two existing families.

(5) Let the ministers of the sacrament appear as the ministers of the sacrament. It is almost unheard of that the minister in any other sacramental liturgy would have his or her back to the rest of the assembly during the entire liturgy, yet that practice is still common at weddings. Even when it comes to the exchange of consent that establishes the marital covenant, it is not unusual for the couple to kneel with their backs toward the assembly or for the priest or deacon to obscure the view of the couple by standing directly in front of them. A few simple changes in the positioning of the couple and the presiding priest or deacon give more faithful bodily expression to the sacramental reality than do many current practices. If the couple is going to be seated in the sanctuary, their seats could be turned to face the rest of the assembly but at a slight diagonal so that they can easily see the lectern and the altar as well. For the exchange of consent, they could remain at these places or come to the front of the altar. The couple may just as easily be seated in the first row with the rest of the assembly and come to the front of the altar after the homily for the marriage rite (i.e., for the introduction, questions, consent, and the blessing and exchange of rings). During the marriage rite, the couple faces the rest of the assembly so that all may see and hear. The priest or deacon’s role as presider and chief witness for the Church may be best served by standing forward and to the side of the couple or even at the head of the aisle. This suggestion is consistent with the notes on the wedding

liturgy in the Pontifical Council for the Family's 1996 statement "Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage": "It will be the duty of whoever presides to make use of the possibilities which the ritual itself offers . . . so as to highlight the role of the ministers of the sacrament who for Christians of the Latin Rite are the spouses themselves."²⁰

(6) Make sure the Scripture readings are proclaimed well at weddings. The introduction to the *Rite of Marriage* states that, among the elements to be emphasized in the celebration of marriage, "the first is the liturgy of the Word, which brings out the importance of Christian marriage in the history of salvation and the duties and responsibilities it involves in the sanctification of the couple and their children."²¹ Encourage couples to select readers who have some experience, for example, guests who may be lectors at their home parish, involved in Bible study, or accustomed to public speaking because of their profession. Send the text of the reading to the selected readers well in advance, and ask the readers to attend the rehearsal so that they will have a chance to locate the reading in the Lectionary and rehearse the reading using the microphone. The person running the rehearsal should offer the readers feedback to improve the proclamation at the wedding liturgy.

(7) Encourage an offering for the poor. In the nuptial blessing, married couples are called to be "living examples of Christian life" and God's "witnesses in the world," while in the solemn blessing we pray that they may "be ready and willing to help and comfort all who come to [them] in need," that "the desire for earthly possessions [may never] dominate [their] lives," and that they may "always bear witness to the love of God in this world so that the afflicted and the needy will find in [them] generous friends."²² How can the wedding liturgy reflect the concern for others that is evident in these texts? In some places, a custom has developed in which the couple provides a substantial basket of food which is brought forward at the preparation of gifts and is then delivered to the local food pantry after the wedding. Some couples have included a line on their wedding invitation asking guests to bring canned goods for the poor to the wedding. Such couples, Paul Turner notes, have "it figured out. Marriage implies service to others. Eucharist, even a wedding Eucharist, implies gifts for the poor."²³

(8) Develop an understanding and appreciation of cultural customs surrounding marriage. It is often said that the wedding liturgy has borne the imprint of inculturation more than any other rite of the Catholic Church. The introductions to the *Rite of Marriage* and the *Order for Celebrating Marriage* each contain several paragraphs outlining principles for incorporating local customs into the wedding liturgy. As pastoral ministers serve an increasingly diverse Catholic population, it becomes more important to be familiar with wedding customs of different cultures and to know how to incorporate appropriate customs into the wedding liturgy. Helpful resources are beginning to appear, such as *Gift and Promise: Customs and Traditions in Hispanic Rites of Marriage*²⁴ and the videotape on weddings from the "Un Pueblo Sacramental/A Sacramental People" series.²⁵ An important insight from these resources is that some of these cultural customs are evolving to reflect the contemporary reality of married life. For example, the Hispanic custom of the *arras*, which was traditionally a gift of several coins from the groom to the bride to symbolize the husband's promise to provide for the family's material needs, is being adapted in some places to include a mutual

It is often said that the wedding liturgy has borne the imprint of inculturation more than any other rite of the Catholic Church.

exchange of coins between bride and groom to symbolize the equal sharing in this responsibility by many husbands and wives today.

(9) Finally, while I am not a musician, I think I can safely mention a few implications for music at wedding liturgies.

- First, choose music that is familiar. A wedding is not the occasion to feature the local musician's newest composition, which may be quite nice but is relatively unknown. Some excellent marriage texts have been set to very familiar tunes, such as "God, Who Created Hearts to Love" (LASST UNS ERFREUEN), "Hear Us Now, Our God and Father" (HYFRYDOL), and "When Love Is Found" (O WALY WALY).
- Provide a cantor or leader of song at weddings, even if this is not the practice at the parish's weekend Masses. People at weddings—even practicing Catholics—need as much encouragement as possible to join in the singing at weddings. The cantor or leader of song could lead a brief rehearsal before the entrance procession and could also sing any solo pieces of music (e.g., during the preparation of gifts).
- Suggest musical texts that speak not just of love but also of other Christian marital virtues that appear in the Scripture and prayer texts of the marriage rite, such as covenant, commitment, selflessness, sacrifice, and service.
- Use a single hymn or instrumental piece of music to accompany the entire entrance procession. The focus at this time is on all the people in the procession (ministers, parents, witnesses, bride, groom), not just the bride, so the music should not change when the bride enters the church.
- Consider a "gathering song" after the priest or deacon's greeting in the opening rites if the music for the entrance procession is instrumental. This is a good opportunity for the assembly's participation early on in the liturgy, when they are not torn between wanting to watch the entrance procession and trying to follow a hymn text.
- Pay attention to ritual music in the wedding liturgy. Let the prelude music be appropriate for the action of gathering the assembly before the liturgy. Consider the possibility of an acclamation by the entire assembly after the exchange of consent and/or the exchange of rings, as suggested in the *Order for Celebrating Marriage*.²⁶

Notes

1. Robert W. Hovda, *Strong, Loving and Wise* (Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference, 1976), 1.

2. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)*, 59.

3. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States (Washington, DC: USCCB Publications, 1994), 1124.

4. Anne Y. Koester and Barbara Searle, eds., *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2004), 231–253. The essay originally appeared in Mark Searle and Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 252–271.

5. *The Rite of Marriage* (Washington, DC: International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc., 1969).

6. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)*, 11. English translation in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents* (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Co., 1975), 362.

7. Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People)*, 11. Translation in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 778.

8. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern*

- World), 50. Translation in Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 954.
9. *Ibid.*, 48 (Flannery, 950).
 10. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 256–257.
 11. *Order for Celebrating Marriage* (Washington DC: International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc., 1996).
 12. “In the Latin Church, it is ordinarily understood that the spouses, as ministers of Christ’s grace, mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1623.
 13. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 26–27 (Flannery, 10–11).
 14. Austin Fleming, *Parish Weddings* (Chicago, Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 1987), 14–15.
 15. *Order for Celebrating Marriage*, 28.
 16. Austin Fleming, *Prayerbook for Engaged Couples* (Chicago, Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004).
 17. *Our Catholic Wedding* (Chicago, Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001).
 18. Paul Covino, ed., *Celebrating Marriage: Preparing the Wedding Liturgy. A Workbook for Engaged Couples* (Portland, Oregon: The Pastoral Press, 1994).
 19. *Rite of Marriage*, 20.
 20. Pontifical Council for the Family, “Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage,” 63 [*Origins*, 26:7 (July 4, 1996), 97–109].
 21. *Rite of Marriage*, 6.
 22. *Ibid.*, 33, 121, 37, 125.
 23. Paul Turner, “Gifts for the Poor,” *Assembly* (September 1998), 34.
 24. Instituto de Liturgia Hispana, *Gift and Promise: Customs and Traditions in Hispanic Rites of Marriage/Don y Promesa: Costumbres y Tradiciones en los Ritos Matrimoniales Hispanos* (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Catholic Press, 1997).
 25. *Un Pueblo Sacramental/A Sacramental People: La Boda/Wedding, Pésame/Mourning the Dead* (Chicago, Illinois: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999).
 26. *Order for Celebrating Marriage*, 61, 64.

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Where else in our society are food and drink broken and poured out so that everybody shares and shares alike, and all are thereby divinized alike? Where else do economic czars and beggars get the same treatment? Where else are we all addressed with the proclamation of a world we believe to be God's, not ours, and before which we all stand equal? Where else are we sprinkled and bowed to and incensed and touched and kissed and treated like somebody—and in the same way? This is an alternative in contradiction, in sharp distinction, to our status quo. This classless society is the way things ought to be.

Robert W. Hovda, Address to the Catholic Worker, 1983

Embodied Compassion: Pastoral Care of the Sick

BY JOHN K. LEONARD

AS A PASTORAL MUSICIAN and a member of the parish team, how would you respond to the following “fyi” e-mail message from the pastor: “Our parish will celebrate the communal anointing of the sick each year on October 18, February 11, and the Wednesday after Pentecost. The anointing will be celebrated at a 4:00 Mass with a potluck supper for all following the liturgy. Please prepare accordingly.”¹

At the very least, you would need to know what music is called for and where it fits in the structure of the liturgy. In order to choose appropriate music, you probably should know which Scripture readings will be used and perhaps which of the many prayer texts the pastor plans to use (especially if you are the staff member charged with preparing the large-print order of worship that will be made available for the participants). You might also want to know approximately how many people will be present and/or anointed, and you would at least be curious about other practical considerations associated with any liturgical celebration (such as those listed at the end of this article).

Of course, as a faithful member of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, your selection of music for the communal anointing liturgy will be informed by the musical, liturgical, and pastoral judgment described in *Music in Catholic Worship* (especially in numbers 26–41). Just as you can’t make a sound musical judgment without having studied music theory, history, and practice or an informed pastoral judgment without knowing the faith, culture, and capabilities of the persons who are actually present, you cannot make the liturgical judgment in this case without understanding more about the Sacrament of Anointing and Pastoral Care of the Sick than where the rite calls for “an appropriate song.”

Liturgy of Anointing of the Sick in Context

Following the directives of the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (SC), 73–75, the Latin *Ordo unctionis infirmorum eorumque pastoralis curae* of 1972 situated the sacraments of anointing and viaticum in the context of a larger vision of pastoral care of the sick which includes both theological reflection on the experience of sickness and pastoral directives for the medical care and community support of the sick. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy published a provisional translation in 1973 and, after several years of pastoral consultation throughout the English-speaking world, published the definitive text in 1982 under the title *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*.² More than simply a re-translation of the 1972 Latin text, this 1982 *Pastoral Care of the Sick* (Spanish: *Cuidado Pastoral de los Enfermos: Rito de Unción y Viático*) provides new pastoral notes, a theological reflection on Communion for the sick, new texts for particular circumstances, and new rites for visiting and praying with both sick adults and sick children. It also includes relevant portions of the rite of Christian initiation, penance, and the Order of Christian Funerals that a minister may need in caring for the sick.

In your role as pastoral musicians, you may never see more than a few sections of this collection or be asked to prepare music for more than a few of the services that are included in the book. However, in the celebrations of anointing and even of viaticum, your music ministry and personal participation in these rites along with your own prayer and concern for the sick are essential to the Christian community's pastoral care of the sick, as the Introduction to *Pastoral Care* makes clear:

32. If one member suffers in the Body of Christ, which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member (1 Corinthians 12:26). For this reason, kindness shown toward the sick and works of charity and mutual help for the relief of every kind of human want are held in special honor. Every scientific effort to prolong life and every act of care for the sick, on the part of any person, may be considered a preparation for the Gospel and a sharing in Christ's healing ministry.

33. It is thus especially fitting that all baptized Christians share in this ministry of mutual charity within the Body of Christ by doing all that they can to help the sick return to health, by showing love for the sick, and by celebrating the sacraments with them. Like the other sacraments, these too have a community aspect, which should be brought out as much as possible when they are celebrated.

These two short paragraphs situate not only the liturgical rites but everything that is done with and on behalf of the sick within the context of the Church's vocation to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus. Your ministry as a liturgical musician—in the pastoral care of the sick in particular—is rooted in your baptismal commitment to share in that same ongoing ministry for the life, healing, and salvation of the world.

Embodied Compassion: The Mission and Ministry of Jesus

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus takes from the Book of Isaiah a text that serves as his own "mission statement":

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for God anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Rolling up the scroll, he gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all were fixed on him. He said to them. "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!

Jesus had experienced the "anointing of God," the outpouring of God's self-emptying, other-serving, all-including, wholeness-making compassionate love. But to receive this gift—to be filled with God's Spirit—is to be transformed ever more completely into the very image of the Giver who is self-emptying, other-serving, all-including, wholeness-making compassionate love. This is really "good news" for the *anawim*—those referred to in the Gospels as the poor, the blind, the lame, the crippled, lepers, the hungry, the miserable, sinners, tax collectors, demoniacs, the persecuted, the downtrodden, the captives, "all who labor and are overburdened," the "rabble who know nothing of the law," the little ones, the least, the last, and the "lost sheep of the house of Israel"—in short, all those who were excluded from full membership in the community and from sharing the wealth, honor, prestige, power, and control of those who "belonged."

Jesus' experience of God's compassionate love impelled him to proclaim in word and deed the "year acceptable to the LORD," during which all those who have been excluded, oppressed, imprisoned, deprived, persecuted for any reason whatsoever are ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, liberated, reconciled, included, honored, raised up, made whole—in short, "saved."³

From the perspective of the prophets and psalmists, it was God's *raham/rahamim* (womb-love compassion⁴) that explained why God liberates from slavery, establishes covenants, provides good things to all creatures, and forgives when judgment is deserved. This never-ending compassion became the basis of an eschatological hope: The "year of the LORD's favor," the "messianic age" (= "age of the anointed")—which later Jewish writings called "the Kingdom of the Heavens"—is to be an experience of God's *rahamim* without end (cf. Isaiah 14:1; 49:13; 54:7; Jeremiah 12:15; 33:26; Ezekiel 34:25; Micah 7:19; Zechariah 1:16).

From the perspective of the evangelists, it is Jesus' embodiment of God's compassion⁵ that explains why he had such concern for the sick, the lame, the blind, the lepers, the possessed, and the rest of the *anawim*. His compassion and concern—expressed in attitude, word, and gesture—awakened in them the same faith that he had in God's power and the promises of God's reign where "all may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). This encounter with one who embodied God's compassion was experienced by the sick as "healing." Yet Jesus insisted that it was not *he* but their newly awakened faith that was responsible for the healing. Jesus' faith and conviction in the all-inclusive compassion of God that makes us whole and frees us to be the

Jesus' experience of God's compassionate love impelled him to proclaim in word and deed the "year acceptable to the LORD."

image of God is the opposite of the fatalism, hopelessness, and isolation that gripped the sick, the sinner, and the poor of his day and our own.

The Experience of Sickness

What is it like to be really sick? Sickness and healing are terms defined by human experience interpreted through the double lens of personality and culture.⁶ What may be considered a natural part of ordinary life in one culture may be labeled and treated as sickness in another (compare the connotations of “nursing home” with “assisted living center”). But in most cultures, to use the word “sickness” of an experience or event is usually to identify the experience as undesirable, as something that cries out for cure.

At the time of Jesus, sickness was universally understood as punishment for sin—one’s own sin or the sin of someone in one’s household or the sins of one’s ancestors. (“Who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?” [John 9:2; cf. Luke 13:2, 4].) Some physical conditions were attributed to possession by a demon of weakness, lameness, deafness, or, as in the case of Peter’s mother-in-law, a demon-like fever which Jesus “rebuked and it left her” (Luke 4:39). With less than primitive medical options, those who became sick had little choice but to accept themselves as punished by God, possessed by a demon, and—short of a miraculous exorcism or healing—permanently ostracized and/or excluded from the community, especially from its prayer. Conditioned by the medical sophistication of our culture, we may find both the image and response amusingly naïve, but we would be unwise to assume that our own root metaphors of sickness and healing are not problematic.

Genevieve Glen, OSB, has noted that until recently our cultural imagination regarding sickness and healing was dominated by medical institutions formed under the influence first of industrial and then of technological society. The tendency in these societal worldviews is to perceive human beings as isolated, even interchangeable functional mechanisms within the complex system of productivity. Sickness or injury is viewed as a malfunction in which the mechanism breaks down and slows or stops production. Because this is caused by an invasion of a hostile force such as a virus or because of corrosion from within, as in cardiovascular disease, the corresponding treatment is a “combat” in which more powerful counteragents repel the foreign invader, or we call in the skilled technicians to roto-root, by-pass, cauterize, duct tape, repair, or replace the damaged “parts.” People are sent “down the assembly line” from one specialist to the next.⁷

While we can shake our heads in disbelief and wag our fingers in judgment at the medical technocrats, many involved in church work and even liturgical ministry have been shaped by the same mentality, and the result is cold, distanced, mechanical rituals that herd people rather impersonally from womb to tomb. (Consider just the practice of herding second graders as a group to first confession, third graders to first Communion, and high school students to confirmation.) Truth be told, society at large—which produces doctor and patient, pastor and parishioner—is still quite comfortable with the common root metaphors on which the technological model of sickness and healing are constructed.

Holistic Approaches

However, alternative perceptions of sickness and healing have begun to offer a serious challenge to the prevailing technological imagery. These various “holistic” approaches tend to perceive the person not as a mechanism but as a delicately balanced ecology of mind, body, spirit, and—in some schools of thought—cosmos. In this view, Glen tells us, “sickness is interpreted as a sign that the balance has been disturbed, either with the personal ecology of the individual organism or in the interaction between organism and environment. . . . Treatment is directed not only toward the eradication of the physical pathology but also toward the restoration of equilibrium. Its root metaphor is neither combat nor repair but reconciliation.”⁸

In holistic approaches, sickness has come to be understood as a process. It may indeed first make a physical appearance, but it soon progresses to encompass the whole being in all its individual and social dimensions. Healing, then, must also be understood as a process directed toward the reconciliation or *transformation* of all the individual and social dimensions affected by the illness. Specialists still exist in holistic health care systems, but they include those who specialize not only in the medical and physical but also in the social, psychological, spiritual, and religious dimensions of sickness, and these specialists work together toward the common goal of “wholeness.”

It may be helpful to consider the spiritual dimension of the experience of sickness a little more closely. Genevieve Glen notes that to some extent in every illness we confront our own mortality in the limits imposed by our bodiliness on the human spirit’s infinite desire for life, meaning, and love. Faith may be understood as the conviction that life is ultimately meaningful. Hope is an act of the imagination whereby we project the future as both possible and desirable. But sickness—when it deprives us of the future we had imagined, the goals we had made, and our sense of purpose in life—may provoke a crisis of faith and of hope. Sickness also disrupts the ordinary relationships of which our lives are made: our relationship with ourselves as integrated body-persons perceived to be free and responsible, our relationships with other people, and our relationship with God. When our survival is threatened, we tend to concentrate our energies on our own needs and ourselves. In this sense, sickness provokes a crisis of love. Potentially, then, sickness as a confrontation with mortality, whether hidden or overt, creates for the sick a threefold crisis of faith, hope, and love.⁹

Because each human life is interconnected with the lives of others, this crisis of faith, hope, and love may extend to any whose lives are touched and affected by the sickness of a family member, friend, co-worker, or fellow parishioner. Some conditions, such as AIDS and mental illness, still bear a stigma that leads to severe isolation of the afflicted and those closest to them. Sickness calls into question or threatens the hopes, the goals, and the relationships of the whole community in which it occurs: The faith, hope, and love of the entire community are affected. When Paul notes that, “if one member suffers in the Body of Christ, which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member” (1 Corinthians 12:26; see *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, 32), he is not simply making a theological statement about belonging to Christ—he

To some extent in every illness we confront our own mortality in the limits imposed by our bodiliness on the human spirit’s infinite desire for life, meaning, and love.

The self-emptying, life-giving, wholeness-making compassion of God that was in Christ has been breathed on all.

is stating a fact that is sociologically, psychologically, and economically true as well.

Ministerial Response

In actual experience, the crisis of hope, faith, and love for the sick and their loved ones is not all that different from the experience of sickness in the time of Jesus. His practical-pastoral responses of genuine care and concern embodied (incarnated, “sacramentalized”) God’s self-emptying, life-giving, all-including, wholeness-making, sin-forgiving, compassionate loving. What does this God-love look like and feel like for the isolated and excluded sick and unclean? Mark paints this image: “Moved with compassion he reached out his hand and, touching the leper, he said, ‘I do want to do so: Be cleansed!’” (Mark 1:42). And in John’s story of the man born blind, the man tells the authorities: “The man they call Jesus made mud with his saliva and anointed my eyes and told me, ‘Go wash in the Pool of Siloam.’ So I went there and washed and was able to see” (John 9:11).

Apart from the miraculous cure, what these people experienced was the miracle of someone who was perfectly whole and ritually clean taking time for and giving his full attention to them as individual persons, breaking all protocol, risking contamination, speaking the most appropriate word of comfort, sometimes using the religio-cultural treatments of the day, but most of all reaching out and physically touching them to put a definitive end to their untouchable isolation and sharing his own faith that God’s will for humanity and creation is wholeness and fullness of life. The subsequent physical cure was only one part of the whole-person healing that happens when God’s self-giving compassionate love is experienced.

The self-emptying, life-giving, wholeness-making compassion of God that was in Christ has been breathed on all. The pastoral care and concern of the entire Christian community is the present tangible, touchable, tasteable, audible, smellable embodiment of that love. It needs to be expressed by each “specialist” consciously employing the diversity of medical and pastoral gifts, talents, training, and skills which the Spirit gives “to build up the Body of Christ” and the bodies of each of its members; it needs to be the present embodiment of God’s healing compassion.

The mission and ministry of Jesus and of the Church is always directed to the whole person, inviting that individual to “conversion,” which is the grateful acceptance of God’s self-emptying, other-serving, all-including, wholeness-making, compassionate loving. Sister Genevieve writes:

In this context, whatever physical cure may take place is a bodily expression of the deeper healing which embraces every dimension of the human person affected by sickness. While a total cure is always desirable, it is not always possible. Moreover it is always temporary: Cured of one ailment we will eventually succumb to another and/or ultimately to death. True healing consists less in cure than in conversion and transformation of whatever aspects of the crisis of faith, hope, and love stand in the way of their wholehearted acceptance and commitment to the life of the Reign of God.¹⁰

Rites for the Sick: Weaving a Pattern of Access to the Healing Compassion of God

It should be clear that in the holistic approach to sickness and healing the physical, spiritual, emotional, sociological, and religious are interrelated and affect each other. But this does not mean that the Church's rites for the sick are a form of pastoral "medicine" administered by professionals with an eye to curing the sick. (Though we may believe in and hope for the curative power of prayer, the rites of the Church are different from the practices of faith-healing or Christian Science, whose practitioners are wonderful people and worthy of respect.) These and all the rites of the Church are primarily acts of public worship. It is in the context of our corporate surrender to the abiding-yet-transcendent mystery of God's self-giving, compassionate love in a characteristically Eucharistic action of remembrance and thanksgiving that we invoke God's saving intervention for those caught up in the experience of sickness. In other words, the liturgical act of remembering with thanksgiving rehearses the sick and their community in the very act of entrusting themselves to God in faith, hope, and love and thereby of opening themselves to experience the healing and transformation of the crisis of faith, hope, and love that sickness often provokes.¹¹

In other words, I and many affected by my sickness may be filled with doubt, despair, anger, and isolation, but these rites put words and stories of faith into our mouths and prayers and longings of hope into our hearts, and they enact attitudes and gestures of inclusion and care, healing and concern, patience and dignity and respect for my broken, fragile, aching body. After the ceremony we may still feel angry, isolated, hopeless, and full of doubt, but we have rehearsed, practiced, experienced — if only externally and for the moment — a different way of being in the world besides "sick" or "dying."

Gertrud Mueller Nelson tells the story of her daughter, Anika, who as a rather small child got into her mother's sewing scraps and attached long "ribbons" to a pole, which she then carried as she marched around. When Gertrud asked her, "Anika, what are you doing?" Anika replied, "We are going to make a precesion [sic] so that God will come down and dance with us."¹² In the liturgy of anointing, the community "makes a precesion" by setting aside time and space and then placing in that time and space a bit of silence and a few songs, some words and stories, and a few prayers and gestures with hands and oil — all with the hopeful expectation that in and through these ritual elements we might experience the reality of God "coming down to dance with us" as life-giving, wholeness-making love.

Every element of the rites — every reading, prayer, song, word, sound, gesture, object, participant, minister, and attitude, as well as the way these elements and people are treated and used — makes them either an obstacle or a vehicle with which the rite weaves a pattern of access to the healing Presence in our midst.¹³ As musicians, you have undoubtedly experienced the power of music to move you deeply to an awareness of Mystery as beauty, goodness, and delight. As liturgical ministers, part of our task is to get out of the way, to open a time and space for all the ritual elements to become vehicles — parts of the warp and woof, the rhythm and dance — in and through which all the participants (including ourselves!) are ushered into an encounter

with the Mystery present and giving Self to us in and through everything. When the ritual elements or the participants are neglected or used poorly; when the laying on of hands feels like “Duck, Duck, Duck, Goose”; when there is no eye contact or human connection between the ministers and the sick; when the psalm is sung so quietly that the hard of hearing are left out, then the healing, loving Presence must struggle through the inadequacy of

the ritual to make its reality felt.

Notes

1. These three dates are associated with healing: October 18 is the Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist, who is supposed to have been a doctor; February 11 is the Optional Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes and the miraculous opening of the healing spring in the cave at Massabielle; and the Wednesday after Pentecost is one of the traditional ember days on which to fast, abstain, give thanks to God for the gifts of nature, and care for the poor.

2. On November 27, 1983, this became the approved translation for use in the United States. It is available from The Liturgical Press and Catholic Book Publishing Company and in a bilingual edition from Liturgy Training Publications.

3. Recall that the Latin word “*salus*” (= health, prosperity, good wish, greeting, salvation, safety) is the root not only of “save” and “salvation” but also of “salve.”

4. In biblical Hebrew the verb *raham* (to love deeply, have mercy, be compassionate), the related noun *rahamim* (compassion, tender mercy), and the adjective *raham* (compassionate) are clearly related to the word for womb: *rehem/raham*. This means that in Semitic experience, compassion is rooted in the natural bond of deep, tender, unconditional love between a mother and the child in/of her womb. Together with unconditional love (*hesed*) and gracious kindness (*hanen*), this *rahamim* is what binds Creator to creature, as parent to child.

5. The Greek *splanchnizomai* (rooted in *splanchna*, = literally “inward parts, guts, entrails” and later “womb” or “loins,” and by derivation “one’s child”) was used in Hellenistic Judaism to translate *rahamim*, but it was used in the New Testament only for Jesus:

- ❖ He was *moved with compassion* because they were distressed and dejected like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36; parallel Mark 6:34);
- ❖ He was *moved with compassion* for the crowds, and he healed the sick (Matthew 14:14);
- ❖ *Moved with compassion* he reached out his hand and, touching [the leper], said ‘I do want to do so: Be cleansed!’ (Mark 1:42);
- ❖ I am *moved with compassion* for these people for they have been with me for three days and do not have anything to eat . . . (Matthew 15:32//Mark 8:2).

In his parables, Jesus himself uses the same verb to describe the response of the master to the servant unable to pay his debts (Matthew 18:27), of the Samaritan to the man in the ditch (Luke 10:33), and of the father to his prodigal son (Luke 15:20).

6. See Orlo Strunk, Jr., “The Human Sciences and the Experiences of Diminishment and Dissolution,” in Peter E. Fink, ed., *Alternative Futures for Worship: Anointing of the Sick* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 17–31.

7. Jennifer Glen, ccvi [now Genevieve Glen, osv], “Rites of Healing: A Reflection in Pastoral Theology,” in Fink, *Alternative Futures*, 35.

8. *Ibid.*, 36.

9. Jennifer Glen, ccvi [now Genevieve Glen, osv], “Sick, Pastoral Care of the” in Peter E. Fink, sj, ed., *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 1167–1182, here 1168–1169.

10. *Ibid.*, 1169.

11. *Ibid.*, 1170.

12. Gertrud reports this incident in the introduction of *To Dance with God* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1986).

13. See Xavier John Seubert, “Ritual Embodiment: Embellishment or Epiphany,” *Worship*

Appendixes

Appendix I. Anointing of the Sick: Pastoral Notes

Sensitive to this aspect of rites and symbols, the introductory notes and instructions for *Pastoral Care of the Sick* include not only what is to be done but also indicate time and again the manner in which the rites are to be performed. Although most of the rubrics are directed to the priest, I have added a few comments (*in italics*, longer comments indented) and **high-lighted** points that apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to musicians and other liturgical ministers as all work together in ushering those present into the encounter with God's self-giving love and compassion. (English translation, original texts, arrangement, and design of *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* © 1982, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. [ICEL]. All rights reserved.)

99. . . . Because of its very nature as a sign, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick should be celebrated with members of the family and other representatives of the Christian community whenever this is possible. Then the sacrament is seen for what it is—a part of the prayer of the Church and an encounter with the Lord. **The sign of the sacrament will be further enhanced by avoiding undue haste in prayer and action.**

This last sentence should be emblazoned on walls of every sacristy, music practice room, and church entrance! It should be obvious, after all we have said, that "haste makes waste" of ritual celebrations.

100. The priest (*and other ministers!*) should inquire about the physical and spiritual condition of the sick person, and he should become acquainted with the family, friends, and others who may be present. The sick person and others may help to plan the celebration, for example, by choosing the readings and prayers. It will be especially helpful if the sick person, the priest, and the family become accustomed to praying together.

If we are not genuinely concerned about people—moved with compassion as Jesus was—we will have a difficult time becoming "vehicles" for God's compassionate love.

In the choice of readings (*and music!*) the condition of the sick person should be kept in mind. **The readings and the homily (*and, in so far as it is possible, the music*) should help those present to reach a deeper understanding of the mystery of human suffering in relation to the paschal mystery of Christ.**

Look at the texts of the hymns and songs. Note that no. 108 states: "The full participation of those present must be fostered by every means, especially through the use of appropriate songs, so that the celebration manifests the Easter joy which is proper to this sacrament." This doesn't mean that we should get out the trumpets for "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today!" The "joy" of Easter needs to be expressed in ways appropriate to the condition of those present. It is a "hope-in-the-midst-of-real-suffering" joy rather than a triumphant joy. No. 109 notes: "The celebration may conclude with an appropriate song."

The sick person who is not confined to bed may take part in the sacrament of anointing in a church, chapel, or other appropriate place. **He or she should be made comfortable**, and there should be room for relatives and friends. In hospitals and other institutions the priest should **consider all who will be present for the celebration: whether they are able to take part; whether they are very weak; and, if they are not Catholic, whether they might be offended.**

The comfort of the sick may have implications for the volume of music or the instrumentation used, but you won't know if you don't inquire about the condition of the persons who will be present. If you know most of the family is Lutheran, will an appropriate hymn from their tradition be more inclusive and conducive to "weaving a pattern of access"?

104. There are three distinct and integral aspects to the celebration of this sacrament: the prayer of faith, the laying on of hands, and the anointing with oil.

105. Prayer of faith: The community, asking God's help for the sick, makes its prayer of faith in response to God's word and in a spirit of trust (see James 5:14–15). In the rites for the sick, it is the people of God who pray in faith. The entire Church is made present in this community—represented by at least the priest, family, friends, and others—assembled to pray for those to be anointed. If they are able, the sick persons should also join in this prayer.

As is the case with the penitential rite, general intercessions, and Litany of the Saints, singing a litany with an easily repeated refrain enhances the communal experience and helps to highlight the importance of this “prayer of faith” which, in the Letter of James and the theology of the sacrament, is more important than the actual anointing with oil.

106. Laying on of hands: The gospels contain a number of instances in which Jesus healed the sick by the laying on of hands or even by the simple gesture of touch. The ritual has restored to major significance the gesture of the laying on of hands with its several meanings. With this gesture the priest indicates that this particular person is the object of the Church's prayer of faith. The laying on of hands is clearly a sign of blessing, as we pray that by the power of God's healing grace the sick person may be restored to health or at least strengthened in time of illness. The laying on of hands is also an invocation: the Church prays for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the sick person. Above all, it is the biblical gesture of healing and indeed Jesus' own usual manner of healing: “They brought the sick with various diseases to him; and he laid hands on every one of them and healed them” (Luke 4:40).

The rite itself directs (nos. 122 and 139): “In silence, the priest lays his hands on the head of the (each) sick person.” I believe that the laying on of hands is always supposed to be done in silence—a directive that is too often ignored to the detriment of the experience of touching and being touched. Try this exercise among a group of ministers in preparation for celebrating the anointing of the sick: After an appropriate introduction, reflecting on the importance of touch as a sacramental sign, ask each participant to turn to a person sitting nearby and, after determining whether or not this person will be comfortable being touched, take turns first taking a moment to center yourself and then laying hands gently on the head of the other while you genuinely pray that he/she be filled with a lively sense of God's merciful, healing compassion. Reflect on the experience. That should make the point.

107. Anointing with oil: The practice of anointing the sick with oil signifies healing, strengthening, and the presence of the Spirit.

In the gospel of Mark the disciples were sent out by the Lord to continue his healing ministry: “They anointed many sick people with oil and cured them” (Mark 6:13). And Saint James witnesses to the fact that the Church continued to anoint the sick with oil as both a means and sign of healing (James 5:14).

The history of anointing the sick, while interesting and important for understanding why so many still regard this as the “last sacrament” or “extreme unction” would take us too far afield in this article. Most of the resources listed in the bibliography include useful summaries of this history.

The Church's use of oil for healing is closely related to its remedial use in soothing and comforting the sick and in restoring the tired and the weak. Thus the sick person is strengthened to fight against the physically and spiritually debilitating effects of illness. The prayer for blessing the oil of the sick reminds us, furthermore, that the oil of anointing is the sacramental sign of the presence, power, and grace of the Holy Spirit.

If the anointing is to be an effective sacramental symbol, there should be a generous use of oil so that it will be seen and felt by the sick person as a sign of the Spirit's healing and strengthening presence. For the same reason, it is not desirable to wipe off the oil after the anointing.

If the oil used for this anointing has already been blessed, the prayer over the oil is one of “thanksgiving” which includes the refrain: “Blessed be God who heals us in Christ” repeated three times. A cantor could sing this to a simple melody repeated by all before the Thanksgiving and then lead the assembly in singing it after each section of the prayer. If the priest can sing, you can prepare a simple tone for the thanksgiving or for the blessing. Keep in mind, however, that singing raises the sense of importance of a ritual element. The litany as the actual “prayer of faith” should take musical precedence over this prayer over the oil.

Note that no. 110 states: “After the sacramental form has been heard at least once by those present, suitable songs may be sung while the rest of the sick are being anointed.” This

certainly makes sense when a great number are to be anointed. However, until ordinary people have participated in the liturgy of anointing several times, it would be good to give the anointing with its “form” enough time and space to sink in to the senses and hearts of the faithful.

The sacramental use of oil is not based on some supposed magical property but on the ordinary experience of oil in the ancient world and in our own. Oil then as now was used for healing (as well as for cooking and, when mixed with perfume, for anointing.) To help liturgical ministers understand and experience this, prepare small vessels of olive oil for use at an appropriate gathering. Pass them out, and invite the participants to anoint a partner’s forehead and then rub the oil that remains on your thumb into the back of your own hands or wherever seems appropriate. As you do so, let the following words—the words of the anointing ritual as well as a poetic reflection on oil—jump-start your imaginative and contemplative entry into the mystery of healing embodied in this gesture of love.

Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. *Amen.*

(*Pastoral Care of the Sick, Rite of Anointing, 124*)

Oil applied ahead of time seals the skin against its enemies

—sun and water, wind and cold.

Oil applied remedially repairs the wounds of war and work,

—chapped, cracked, broken skin salved and soothed,

unguent for bruise and burn, for wound and rash, for scrage and scrofula

(“eczema, seborrhea, and the heartbreak of psoriasis”)

poured, smeared, daubed, rubbed in:

liniment of the spirit,

healing balm.

(“Liturgical Objects,” *Assembly 9:1*)

Appendix II. Preparing the Liturgy of Anointing: Choosing Among the Options

Although the 1983 *Pastoral Care of the Sick* was compiled to make everything the priest/presider might need available in one small book, those who prepare actual communal celebrations will need to get a master’s degree in ribbons and post-it notes or be prepared to copy, scan, and compile their own order of worship, if the text is to be user-friendly and the liturgical book is not to become an obstacle to a fruitful celebration of the sacraments.

If you are preparing for “Anointing within Mass” (nos. 131–148), *Pastoral Care of the Sick* presumes you will know enough to supply what is missing in that section from “Anointing outside Mass” (nos. 111–130) as well as from the Order of Mass found in the *Roman Missal (Sacramentary)* and the *Lectionary for Mass*. In the outline provided below, I have indicated what is actually in the ritual book itself and supplied whatever else is normally included in the celebration of the Mass. For the convenience of the musician, I have used a different bold-face type to indicate that this particular element should or could be sung or enhanced with music in some way.

As pastoral musicians, your task is to choose and arrange music and prepare the music ministers for the anointing of the sick so that all who participate may be raised up by the experience of God’s self-emptying, life-giving, all-including, wholeness-making, sin-forgiving, compassionate love.

OUTSIDE OF MASS

INTRODUCTORY RITES

(Gathering Song)

115. **Greeting** (*four options*)

116. **[Sprinkling with Holy Water]** (*with one of three verses*)

117. **Instruction** (*Scriptural warrant = James 5:13–16*)

118. **Penitential Rite** (*four options for the introduction, three options for Penitential Rite Form C; conclusion*)

WITHIN MASS

INTRODUCTORY RITES

(Gathering Song)

Greeting

135. **Reception of the Sick** (*two options*)

Penitential Rite

136. **Opening Prayer** (*two options*)

Outside of Mass

LITURGY OF THE WORD

119. Reading (one reading proclaimed by priest or another person. Three Gospel passages are provided in the ritual at that point but Part III includes nine readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, four from the New Testament during Eastertide, nineteen from the New Testament for other seasons, and twenty other Gospel pericopes.)

120. Response: "A brief period of silence may be observed after the reading of the word of God. The priest may then give a brief explanation of the reading, applying it to the needs of the sick person and those who are looking after him or her."

LITURGY OF ANOINTING

121. Litany: "The priest may adapt or shorten the litany according to the condition of the sick." (Invitation to prayer followed by six intercessions with "Lord, have mercy.")

122. Laying on of Hands: "In silence, the priest lays his hands on the head of the sick person."

123. Prayer over the Oil: (Prayer of Thanksgiving—with acclamations—over oil already blessed by the bishop or the priest blesses the oil using a *Blessing of Oil* [three options available].)

124. Anointing: "The priest anoints the sick person with the blessed oil. First he anoints the forehead, saying: (Pr.) Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. (All) Amen. Then he anoints the hands, saying: (Pr.) May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. (All) Amen." (Additional parts of the body may be anointed—especially the location of injury or pain, but this is done without words). [110. After the sacramental form has been heard at least once by those present, suitable songs may be sung while the rest of the sick are being anointed.]

125. Prayer after Anointing (seven options).

126. The Lord's Prayer (two optional introductions; all pray the Lord's Prayer together).

[Liturgy of Holy Communion] ("If the sick person does not receive Communion, the rite concludes with the Blessing.")

[127. Communion (both consecrated bread and

Within Mass

LITURGY OF THE WORD

137. "The liturgy of the word is celebrated in the usual way according to the instructions in no. 134. (The Lectionary for Mass #790–795 or from Part III, which also includes fourteen responsorial psalms and seven verses for the Gospel Acclamation.) The general intercessions are omitted since they are included in the litany. In the homily the celebrant should show how the sacred text speaks of the meaning of illness in the history of salvation and of the grace given by the sacrament of anointing. A brief period of silence may follow the homily."

LITURGY OF ANOINTING

138. Litany: "The priest may adapt or shorten the litany according to the condition of the sick." (Invitation to prayer followed by six intercessions with "Lord, have mercy.")

139. Laying on of Hands: "In silence, the priest lays his hands on the head of each sick person."

140. Prayer over the Oil: (Prayer of Thanksgiving—with acclamations—over oil already blessed by the bishop or the priest blesses the oil using a *Blessing of Oil* [four options available].)

141. Anointing: "The priest anoints the sick person with the blessed oil. First he anoints the forehead, saying: (Pr.) Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. (All) Amen. Then he anoints the hands, saying: (Pr.) May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. (All) Amen." (Additional parts of the body may be anointed—especially the location of injury or pain, but this is done without words). [110. After the sacramental form has been heard at least once by those present, suitable songs may be sung while the rest of the sick are being anointed.]

142. Prayer after Anointing (four options).

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

143. "The Order of Mass then continues with the liturgy of the eucharist."

(Preparation of the Gifts with appropriate music?)

144. Prayer Over the Gifts (two options)

145. Eucharistic Prayer (special Preface for the Sick; Holy, Holy; special intercessions in Eucharistic Prayers I, II, and III; memorial acclamation; Amen.)

(Lord's Prayer & Embolism)

(Sign of Peace)

(Breaking of Bread w/ Lamb of God)

(Communion: Distribution of Communion to the

wine are distributed to the sick and all present who are permitted to receive) Communion Song?]
[128. Silent Prayer]
[129. Prayer after Communion (three options)]

CONCLUDING RITE

130. Blessing (four optional blessings provided; however, "if any of the Blessed Sacrament remains, the priest may instead bless the sick person by making the sign of the cross with the Blessed Sacrament in silence.")
[109. "... The celebration may conclude with an appropriate song."]

sick and all present who are permitted to receive. Communion Song)
(Silent prayer and/or psalm or hymn of thanksgiving)
146. Prayer after Communion (two options)

CONCLUDING RITES

147. Blessing (three options)
148. Dismissal: "The deacon (or the priest) then dismisses the people and commends the sick to their care."
[109. "The celebration may conclude with an appropriate song."]

Appendix III. Bibliography

RITUALS

The Catholic Communion of Churches

Roman Catholic

International Commission on English in the Liturgy/United States Catholic Conference. *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press or New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1983). This is the official translation, expansion, and adaptation of the *Ordo unctionis infirmorum eorumque pastoralis curae* of the *Rituale Romanum* promulgated by Paul VI on December 7, 1972.

Byzantine

"Unction of the Sick" or the "Order of the Sacrament of the Holy Oil" is a public ritual that, in its most elaborate form, involves several priests (seven, if they are available) and includes three (or four) parts: the "office of comfort" modeled on the morning office; the blessing of oil with troparia sung in tribute to the compassionate Christ; and the seven anointings of the senses (each set, if possible, performed by a different priest), which are followed by an imposition of the Book of the Gospels on the head of the sick person and prayer for the forgiveness of sins. (The imposition of the Book and prayer for forgiveness are sometimes considered a fourth part of the rite, separate from the anointings.) In many parishes, a simpler form of the rite is often celebrated on Holy Wednesday evening (the Wednesday of Holy Week) and three other times during the year. For a description of that form of the rite, see: <http://www.byzantines.net/liturgy/anooint.htm>.

Other Churches

Orthodox

"The Office of Holy Unction," in *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church*, trans. Isabel Florence Hapgood (Englewood, New Jersey: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of New York and All North America, 1975). This is one example of the ritual practiced with variations in the Orthodox Communion of Churches. See: <http://www.eastern-orthodoxy.com/unction.htm>. This *mysterion* is celebrated on Holy Wednesday of each year at which time everyone in the parish may be anointed with the Holy Oil for the healing of spiritual and bodily ills. This *mysterion* may be celebrated any time of the year in case of serious illness by calling the priest. See: http://www.greekchurchmobile.org/about_our_church.htm#Holy%20Unction.

Anglican/Episcopal

"Ministration to the Sick" in *The Book of Common Prayer* (San Francisco: Seabury Press, 1979). See: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/19625_14788_ENG_HTML.htm. In its basic form, this "pastoral office of the Church" is an abbreviated Eucharist that includes a rite for laying on of hands and anointing. The priest may suggest the making of a special confession, if the sick person's conscience is troubled. In that case, the form for the Reconciliation of a Penitent is used. *The Book of Common Prayer* also includes various "Prayers for the Sick" (pages 458-460) and "Prayers for use by a Sick Person" (page 461) after the form for Ministration to the Sick. If

one or more of the "Prayers for the Sick" are used in the service, they may follow the reading and precede the confession (page 454).

The service emphasizes the healing power of Christ and the connection between the worshipping community and the sick person. Communion may be administered from the reserved Sacrament, using the form beginning on page 398. In many places, lay Eucharistic ministers bring Communion directly from the Sunday service to the sick or shut-in.

Lutheran

"Service of the Word for Healing," in *Occasional Services* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982). See: <http://members.aol.com/LiturgybyTLW1/Churches/Healing.html>.

SECONDARY SOURCES

This bibliography includes the online list at <http://liturgy.nd.edu/bibliography/pastoralcare-ofsick.shtml>.

Ahlstrom, Michael. *A Companion to the Pastoral Care of the Sick* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1990). A guide especially for those who are not accustomed to using the ritual books of the church and for those ministers of care who want to uncover the great wealth of material contained in them.

Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane. *The Sacred Play of Children* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983). Articles encouraging preparation and celebration of worship with children. See "The Rite of Anointing and the Pastoral Care of Sick Children," on establishing a relationship with the child in preparation for the anointing.

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Fink, Peter E., SJ, ed. *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Theology*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1990. See the following entries:

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- Charles W. Gusmer, "Sick, Communion to the," 1164-1165;
- James M. Schellman, "Sick, Ministry of the," 1165-1167;
- Jennifer Glen, ccvi "Sick, Pastoral Care of the," 1167-1182;
- James M. Schellman, "Sick, Sacrament of, Ministers in," 1182-1186;
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the Sacrament of the Sick (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002). Includes the following:

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Michael Drumm, "The Practice of Anointing and the Development of Doctrine," 37–58;
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