

# Looking Again at the Liturgical Reform: Some General and Monastic Considerations.

English Benedictine Congregation Liturgy Commission  
Symposium on "Liturgical Renewal: A Reform of the Reform?"  
Downside Abbey, Bath, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2006

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## *Introduction*

It is an unexpected honour to address this liturgical symposium of the English Benedictine Congregation, and even more so on this auspicious day, the first anniversary of the election of our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI. This anniversary will revive many memories of that day last year when the seemingly impossible (from the view of various sides of the ecclesio-political spectrum) occurred and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger became the 264<sup>th</sup> successor of Saint Peter. My own delight on that day was fuelled not only because of the kindness Cardinal Ratzinger has shown to my own work, but more importantly, due to the fact that as Cardinal he demonstrated his awareness of the importance of what we may call "the question of the Liturgy" in our day, as well as that, although himself not an "expert on the Liturgy,"<sup>1</sup> he has involved himself in serious debate concerning it for the past two decades.<sup>2</sup>

The accession of Pope Benedict XVI has placed the question of the Liturgy at the centre of the Church's concerns, and rightly so, for as Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in 1997, "the true celebration of the Sacred Liturgy is the centre of any renewal of the Church whatever."<sup>3</sup>

In taking a new look at the liturgical reform that followed the Second Vatican Council, and in considering some of what is being said under the banner of a "reform of the reform," we would do well first to recall some of the liturgical thinking of our Holy Father. An attempt to look through his eyes, as it were, will assist us to consider possible implications for liturgical renewal and reform today and in the future, both generally and in a specifically monastic context.

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<sup>1</sup> This was asserted recently by Archbishop Piero Marini. As Robert Mickens points out, Joseph Ratzinger's training is in fact in dogmatic theology; cf. *The Tablet*, 25 March 2001, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. his books *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1986 and *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2000, as well as *The Ratzinger Report*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1985, pp. 119-134; A. Reid OSB, ed., *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*, St Michael's Abbey Press, Farnborough 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Roberto de Mattei, "Reflections on the Liturgical Reform" in: *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*, p. 141.

*Pope Benedict XVI and the Liturgy*

Singificantly, the boy Joseph Ratzinger was captivated and nurtured by the twentieth century Liturgical Movement. In a passage that reveals many strands of the liturgical sensibility and theology of our Holy Father, Cardinal Ratzinger's memoirs recall his discovery of the wealth of the Sacred Liturgy occasioned by the gifts of bi-lingual missals as he grew older:

Every new step into the Liturgy was a great event for me. Each new book I was given was something precious to me, and I could not dream of anything more beautiful. It was a riveting adventure to move by degrees into the mysterious world of the Liturgy which was being enacted before us and for us there on the altar. It was becoming more and more clear to me that here I was encountering a reality that no one had simply thought up, a reality that no official authority or great individual had created. This mysterious fabric of texts and actions had grown from the faith of the Church over the centuries. It bore the whole weight of history within itself, and yet, at the same time, it was much more than the product of human history. Every century had left its mark upon it... Not everything was logical. Things sometimes got complicated and it was not always easy to find one's way. But precisely this is what made the whole edifice wonderful, like one's own home. Naturally, the child I then was did not grasp every aspect of this, but I started down the road of the Liturgy, and this became a continuous process of growth into a grand reality transcending all particular individuals and generations, a reality that became an occasion for me of ever-new amazement and discovery. The inexhaustible reality of the Catholic Liturgy has accompanied me through all phases of life, and so I shall have to speak of it time and time again.<sup>4</sup>

Joseph Ratzinger describes himself as "a follower of the Liturgical Movement" on the eve of Vatican II. Indeed, as Cardinal Frings' conciliar *peritus*, he was a profound *theological* enthusiast for the liturgical reform the Council proposed:

Just as I learned to understand the New Testament as being the soul of all theology, so too I came to see the Liturgy as being its living element. This is why, at the beginning of the Council, I saw that the draft of the Constitution on the Liturgy, which incorporated all the essential principles of the Liturgical Movement, was a marvellous point of departure for this assembly of the whole Church, and I advised Cardinal Frings in this sense.<sup>5</sup>

Ratzinger's enthusiasm for the Council's discussion of liturgical reform and his appreciation of its ecclesiological implications were articulated in a lecture he gave in Bonn in January 1963. The lecture merits close study, but let it suffice here to recall his delight at the overwhelming vote of the Council Fathers in November 1962 (2,162 against 46) to adopt chapter 1 of the Schema on the Liturgy:

It was a decision that augured well for the future, and was at the same time a very encouraging sign that the strength of the movement for renewal was greater than anyone had ventured to hope.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1997, pp. 19-20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57. The citation continues: "I was not able to foresee that the negative sides of the Liturgical Movement would afterward reemerge with redoubled strength, almost to the point of pushing the Liturgy toward its own self-destruction."

<sup>6</sup> "The First Session" in *Worship* vol. XXXVII no. 8 (August-September 1963) p. 535. *Worship* edits the text of the lecture confining itself to items of specifically liturgical interest. The full text of the lecture appeared in the May 1963 issue of *The Furrow*.

But Joseph Ratzinger was amongst the first of those we might call the post-Vatican II realists. He knew the Council too intimately to reject it, but for precisely the same reason he found himself deeply disturbed by what was frequently being carried out in its name, especially in the field of the Sacred Liturgy. As early as 1966, at the Katholikentag in Bamberg, he complained that liturgical reform had become infected with “archaism”:

...which has for its purpose the restoration of the Roman liturgy in its classical form before it became overlaid by medieval and Carolingian accretions. This view would set up as the criterion of liturgical renewal not the question: How should it be? but rather the question: How was it at that time? To which we can only say that whereas to know how things were at that time is of invaluable help to us in coping with the problems of our own time, it cannot be simply the standard by which reform is measured. It is very important and helpful, for instance, to know how things were done under Gregory the Great, but that is no reason at all why they should be done in the very same way today. This archaism has often made us close our eyes to the good things which have been evolved in later developments and has caused us to set the taste of one period up on a pedestal; admittedly, it was a splendid period which rightly commands the greatest respect and affection, but its taste can no more be made a matter of absolute dogma than the taste of any other period.<sup>7</sup>

In the same paper he warned that “mere archaism does not help matters along but neither does mere modernisation.”<sup>8</sup>

His nuanced criticism of the liturgical reform continued. In 1975 he wrote:

We must be far more resolute than heretofore in opposing rationalistic relativism, confusing claptrap and pastoral infantilism. These things degrade the Liturgy to the level of a parish tea party and the intelligibility of a popular newspaper. With this in mind we shall also have to examine the reforms already carried out...<sup>9</sup>

Ten years later he commented: “since I wrote those lines, other aspects which should have been guarded have been neglected; many treasures that were still intact have been squandered away.”<sup>10</sup> And not two years ago he wrote:

The Liturgical Movement had in fact been attempting...to teach us to understand the Liturgy as a living network of tradition that had taken concrete form, that cannot be torn apart into little pieces, but that has to be seen and experienced as a living whole. Anyone who, like me, was moved by this perception in the time of the Liturgical Movement on the eve of the Second Vatican Council can only stand, deeply sorrowing, before the ruins of the very things they were concerned for.<sup>11</sup>

“Ruins” is a very strong word. It accurately conveys, though, the profound and consistently expressed conviction of our Holy Father that the liturgical reform has gone seriously astray both in its official and in its local implementation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “Catholicism after the Council” in *The Furrow* 18 (1967), p. 10. I am grateful to Fr Michael Lang of the London Oratory for drawing my attention to this article.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in *The Ratzinger Report*, p. 121.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Preface to A. Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2005, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> There are many other instances of his writing on this topic. As well as his works already cited see: *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today*, Crossroad, New York 1997 (especially chapter 7),

Because of this conviction he has called for nothing less than a new Liturgical Movement, “a movement toward the Liturgy and toward the right way of celebrating the Liturgy, inwardly and outwardly.”<sup>13</sup> This is not the place to discuss such a call in detail,<sup>14</sup> however we should note at least three significant elements that the Holy Father would see included in such a renewal.<sup>15</sup> Firstly he would insist on the celebration of the modern liturgical rites faithfully, in accordance with the prescriptions of the liturgical books: he was, of course, one of the driving forces behind the March 2004 Instruction *Redemptionis sacramentum*. Secondly, he wishes to see the free use of the pre-conciliar liturgical rites.<sup>16</sup> And thirdly, he has encouraged the prospect of reform of the liturgical reform whereby the modern liturgical books would be revised to recapture some of what they had previously discarded.

#### *A Rationale for Looking Again at the Liturgical Reform*

Is the assessment of Cardinal Ratzinger correct? What reason is there to even speak of a reform of the reform?

The editorial of the Spring 1970 *Ampleforth Journal*, reflecting on the various and significant events witnessed in the life of the Church in the 1960's, observed in respect of the liturgical reform that “what took centuries to congeal has taken just a decade to disperse and replace...”<sup>17</sup> Most monasteries have their own stories, and perhaps regrets – some even bitter – from those heady years of liturgical revolution when seemingly unchangeable practices that had formed and nourished generations of religious disappeared in rapid succession. Downside's infamous ‘Brother Choleric’ captured the distress this caused in many of his drawings; most appositely in his 1972 cartoon of the priest-monk painfully giving up his maniple whilst wailing, “I ask myself – where will it all end?”<sup>18</sup> In the Spring 1972 *Ampleforth Journal* Dom Patrick Barry asked rhetorically, “Who would have thought ten years ago that you would have to pick your church carefully on Sunday morning, if you wanted to retain your equanimity for the rest of the day?”<sup>19</sup>

Yes, things were not easy. And there is no doubt that in the ensuing years “experience [of the liturgical reform] has been mixed”.<sup>20</sup> But what went wrong? Was it purely the speed of

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and his July 1988 address to the bishops of Chile and Columbia (reprinted in C. Barthe, *Beyond Vatican II: The Church at a New Crossroads*, Roman Catholic Books, Fort Collins 2006, pp. 141-148).

<sup>13</sup> *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> See further my paper “Do we need a new Liturgical Movement?” from the CIEL UK Annual Conference, London, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2004, which is due to be published in the 2003 CIEL Proceedings.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. “Assessment and Future Prospects” in *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*, pp. 145-153.

<sup>16</sup> “The proscription against the form of liturgy in valid use until 1970 should be lifted;” *God and the World: Believing and Living in our time*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2002 p. 416. See also: *Milestones: Memoirs: 1927-1977*, pp. 146-149. Cardinal Ratzinger celebrated pontifical Mass in the traditional rite at the Seminary of the Fraternity of Saint Peter in Witgratzbad, Germany in April 1990, at the Benedictine Abbey of St. Madeleine, Le Barroux, France on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1995, in Weimar, Germany, on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1999 and at the Benedictine Abbey at Fontgombault, France, in July 2001.

<sup>17</sup> “The 1960's, the Church's Richest Decade” vol. LXXV (I) p. 3. The quotation continues: “the years being telescoped by the pressing need that four centuries of rubricism had dammed up.”

<sup>18</sup> *Cracks in the Curia or Brother Choleric Rides Again*, Sheed and Ward, London and New York 1972. The book has no page numbers,

<sup>19</sup> “What is Happening to the Catholic Church?” vol. LXXVII (I) p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> O. McBride OSB, “The Eucharist – Origins, Development & Reform” *Ampleforth Journal* vol. 106 (Autumn 2001) p. 46.

change? Certainly this was a factor. But there are others. The Autumn 1967 *Ampleforth Journal* contains an editorial "On Change." It points out:

There is a just distinction between that change which implies removal (dissolution), that which implies replacement (revolution), and that which implies growth (evolution): all three may be good, but the last is inclined to be good more constantly than the first two, because it involves the organic modification ("improvement") of what has proved functionally viable, not the abolition of what has proved wanting.<sup>21</sup>

"Not all change is for the better..." the editorial continues, "Not all change is good..." "The value of change," it states, "must be weighed against its sapping effect upon consent and consequent obedience: it must be serious enough not to be lightly undertaken, and it must be rare enough not to destroy tradition and the beneficial power of habit – essentially a power for good (indeed for Aquinas one of the highest tests of goodness)."<sup>22</sup>

A detailed and scholarly examination of the extent of the changes made to the Roman Missal following the Council was published in the Summer 1971 *Ampleforth Journal*. It seeks to demonstrate that the missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI effected a "liturgical revolution" of "unprecedented proportions."<sup>23</sup> The study observes that "we are now cut off from our own liturgical past, not only from the post-Tridentine Roman rite and the Roman rite back to the time of St Gregory, but also from our own English uses..."<sup>24</sup> It states, "The latest revision of the missal cannot but destroy a great part of [the] abiding awareness of the historical continuity of the worshipping Church, so valuable an aid to faith in this era of declining credibility. We are also cut off from all spiritual literature with liturgical allusion..."<sup>25</sup> And in respect of liturgical music, the study observes: "we are obviously placed in an anomalous situation when the immense output of liturgical music of the highest quality no longer fits the Liturgy for which it was composed."<sup>26</sup> The author states frankly: "It seems quite impossible to harmonise the immense number of changes in the new *Missale Romanum* with the conciliar directive [of *Sacrosanctum concilium* art. 23] against any innovations 'unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them.'"<sup>27</sup> And he concludes:

It seems reasonable...in welcoming with some reservations the new liturgical books, to examine their contents with close attention, so that, as our liturgical life continues to develop, whatever defects become apparent...can be corrected for the greater good of the Church when the time for further revision comes upon us.<sup>28</sup>

This very early call for a critical review of the liturgical reform may be said to one of the first calls for a 'reform of the reform.' To that we shall return. What is of more importance, historically, is the assertion of a disparity between the reform called for by the Council and the missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI. Let us recall *Sacrosanctum concilium* article 23:

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<sup>21</sup> Vol. LXXII (III) p. 297.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297 & 298.

<sup>23</sup> R.H. Richens, "The Close of the Gregorian Era" *The Ampleforth Journal*, vol. LXXVI (II) p. 55. Reprinted in C. Francis and M. Lynch, eds., *A Voice For All Time: Essays on the Liturgy of the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council*, Association for Latin Liturgy, 1994, pp. 109-127.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

That sound tradition may be retained, and yet the way remain open to legitimate progress, careful investigation is always to be made into each part of the liturgy which is to be revised. This investigation should be theological, historical, and pastoral. Also the general laws governing the structure and meaning of the liturgy must be studied in conjunction with the experience derived from recent liturgical reforms and from the indulgences conceded to various places. Finally, there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.

A comprehensive exegesis of this crucial paragraph of *Sacrosanctum concilium* is beyond our scope here.<sup>29</sup> However we should observe that before and during the Council this text attracted no controversy.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the only emendation suggested by one Council Father was to tighten it up with the addition words “et certa” (and certainly).<sup>31</sup> Thus it formed part of the text of chapter one voted on and approved in December 1962. We should note that chapter one provided guiding principles for the liturgical reform and that the rest of *Sacrosanctum concilium* was to be read in the light of these. An authoritative commentary published in 1964 confirms the essentially conservative intention of this article:

Reforms should correspond to the traditional laws of the structure and mind of the Liturgy. They should flow organically from the forms or rites which already exist, lest they be so different from present forms that they resemble new creations...

Innovations should be such as required by a true and certain usefulness for the Church lest, from mere love of novelty, sacred rites venerated and used for centuries by our forefathers be needlessly rejected or the Sacred Liturgy be treated as if it were merely a field for experimentation.<sup>32</sup>

The interpretation of *Sacrosanctum concilium* should also be guided by a “hermeneutic of continuity” as opposed to a “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture” as elucidated by Pope Benedict in his address to the Roman Curia on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2005.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the Council did not set out to depart from existing liturgical tradition, it sought to develop it organically.

Can we say, then, that the fundamental principle of liturgical reform, the principle of organic development,<sup>34</sup> was respected in this sense in what followed the Council, both in what was officially promulgated and at the local level? At the local level, anyone with long enough a memory must honestly answer “not always” or even “frequently not.” For why else would the reigning pope lament in 2003 that “dark clouds of unacceptable doctrine and practice” have eclipsed the liturgical reform initiated by the Second Vatican Council?<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> It is my hope to begin this task in a paper “*Sacrosanctum concilium* and the Organic Development of the Liturgy” at the 2006 CIEL Colloquium at Merton College, Oxford, in September 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Francisco Gil Hellín, *Concilii Vaticani II Synopsis: Constituto de Sacra Liturgia Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2003, pp. 76-77.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> *Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia Cum Commentario*, editio secunda, Edizioni Liturgiche, Rome 1964, pp. 254-255. The English is taken from A. Bugnini & C. Braga, eds., *The Commentary on the Constitution and on the Instruction on the Sacred Liturgy*, Benzinger Brothers, New York 1965, pp. 87-88.

<sup>33</sup> Reprinted in C. Barthe, *Beyond Vatican II: The Church at a New Crossroads*, pp. 123-140.

<sup>34</sup> For a detailed study of this principle see my work *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2005.

<sup>35</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2003, no. 10.

The official reform, however, poses a larger question. For if the Council's principles of reform were not faithfully respected by the *Consilium* established to implement them, or indeed by the liturgical books subsequently promulgated, we do not need simply to correct abuses of the modern rites, we also need to look again at the reform that yielded those rites. In 1978 Dame Felicitas Corrigan observed:

The new Missal is not so satisfactory. It has an artificial ring about it, as if scholars had first mapped it out in the abstract, and then gone to work with scissors and paste in a Roman parlour to produce a live organism. But do living organisms ever follow a neat scientific pattern?<sup>36</sup>

More recently, in 2001, Dom Oswald McBride wrote:

If the changes and developments up to [Trent] can be described as organic...then Vatican II is very different. The approach taken...<sup>37</sup> was a radical and rather brave one – to review the entire sweep of liturgical history as it was understood, and then to build a new rite out of the main fabric of the old, one which would reflect the sacramental content of the old, but which might communicate holiness more directly to the people of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Vatican II therefore represents both a break with and reconsideration (or perhaps better – *recognitio*, re-thinking) of the traditional celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>38</sup>

There are many authors who have asserted that the post-conciliar reform is not an organic development as called for by the Council and who have analysed the problem further.<sup>39</sup> I have quoted from two respected English Benedictines simply to illustrate that both those who have welcomed the reform and those prepared to be critical of it agree on this crucial point.

And it is precisely here that we find the justification for the rather audacious desire to look again at the liturgical reform. It is here that we see that the concerns of Cardinal Ratzinger and of others are not based on nostalgia, but on a profound love for and knowledge of the Church, her Sacred Liturgy and indeed of the Second Vatican Council.

In monastic communities the virtue of obedience is highly prized, “non trepide, non tarde, non tepide” as chapter five of the Rule of St Benedict teaches. Indeed, until recent decades, ready obedience to all ecclesiastical authority was a distinctive feature of Catholic life. Very many monks and nuns, and indeed secular clergy and lay faithful, accepted the liturgical reforms following the Council in this spirit of obedience in spite of misgivings or even grave

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<sup>36</sup> “Holding the Bridge: Maintenance and Repairs” in *A Voice For All Time*, p. 240.

<sup>37</sup> Dom McBride adds here “by the Council Fathers.” However a distinction must be made between what the Council Fathers mandated in *Sacrosanctum concilium* and the approach subsequently taken by the *Consilium*. It is to the latter, I would submit, that Dom McBride’s observation applies.

<sup>38</sup> “The Eucharist – Origins, Development & Reform” p. 45.

<sup>39</sup> The most prominent critique is undoubtedly Klaus Gamber’s *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background*, Foundation for Catholic Reform & Una Voce Press, Harrison & San Juan Capistrano, 1993. It was in a testimonial to Msgr Gamber published in the French edition of this book that Cardinal Ratzinger stated: “What happened after the Council was something else entirely: in the place of Liturgy as the fruit of development came fabricated Liturgy. We abandoned the organic, living process of growth and development over centuries, and replaced it – as in a manufacturing process – with a fabrication, a banal on-the-spot product.” Cf. *La Réforme Liturgique en Question*, Éditions Sainte-Madeleine, Le Barroux 1992, p. 8. See also: A. Nichols OP, *Looking at the Liturgy: A Critical View of its Contemporary Form*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1996; László Dobszay, *The Bugnini Liturgy and the Reform of the Reform*, Catholic Church Music Associates, Front Royal 2003; J. Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity: Walking to Heaven Backward*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2005.

concerns. Whilst it is most probably true that such fearless, prompt and passionate obedience was motivated by virtue, it may also be true that the strength of this habit deafened our ears to the equivalent of the cry of the Lord God heard by Abraham when he was about to sacrifice his beloved son: "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him" (Genesis 22:12). Yet, even if this is true, in looking again at the liturgical reform I submit that we must be most sensitive, for exercising obedience in important matters so often involves profound suffering, and whether or not those who commanded such obedience were right to do so, and whether or not it should have been opposed, those who gave it did so in good faith, and their fidelity must be respected.

### *General Considerations for Liturgical Renewal and Reform*

In considering some general elements of future renewal and reform, I would like to use Cardinal Ratzinger's three areas of possible activity: the correct celebration of the current rites, the free use of the pre-conciliar rites and the desirability of a reform of the post-conciliar rites. These certainly cover the main areas of any such discussion.

The first and most immediate area is the correct celebration of the current rites. The Holy See has placed a renewed emphasis on this in recent years from John Paul II's encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2003), *Redemptionis sacramentum* (2004) and the 2005 Synod of Bishops on "The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church." There is no doubt that in the Apostolic Exhortation due to follow from that Synod Pope Benedict will continue the call for the liturgical rites promulgated by Pope Paul VI to be celebrated with more dignity – in a more classical spirit if you will – in strict accordance with the prescriptions of the liturgical books. Certainly this is the line being taken rather starkly by the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, as evidenced in his address at Westminster Cathedral on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006.<sup>40</sup>

Some may see this policy as a reversal of the liturgical 'creativity' that was supposedly part of the Council's legitimate heritage in the field of liturgical reform. But in truth, beyond the options – rather permissive options in some places – the modern Roman Liturgy has never been a 'DIY' kit for liturgical planners and committees, regardless of what many, many professional liturgists have proliferated in recent decades. Rubrics still exist and they are still to be followed, for they guard the Church's most sacred mysteries which we celebrate in the Sacred Liturgy and they protect each of us from the exigencies and frailties of our clergy and of liturgy planners whose initiatives should not eclipse Him whom we worship.

This 'tightening of the reigns' for the modern Liturgy is predicated on a classical understanding of the nature of the Liturgy. It is part of looking again at the Council with that "hermeneutic of continuity" about which our Holy Father has spoken. The somewhat unknown new Secretary for the Congregation for Divine Worship – only our Holy Father's second, and not insignificant, curial appointment – the Sri Lankan Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith – published an article in 2004 (which seemingly has earned him the task of assisting in the work to hand) and which argues for this renewed, classical approach to the modern rites. I recommend its study to you.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> As yet only published on-line: <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/arinze123.html>

<sup>41</sup> "The Eucharistic Spirituality of the Church: Formation, catechesis – and assessment of results – are essential for true liturgical reform," *L'Osservatore Romano* 21 July 2004; republished in *Adoremus Bulletin* vol. XII no. 2 (April 2006).

In that article Archbishop Ranjith mentions the need for liturgical formation. This, I submit, is one of the most crucial elements of any future liturgical renewal, for without formation in the classical understanding of the nature of the Sacred Liturgy our clergy and our people have little or no chance of participating in the rites as the Church intends. As Dom Oswald McBride has written, failure to attend to this need “will simply doom any ‘reform of the reform’ to the same short-comings as can be recognised in present practice.”<sup>42</sup>

Monastics have a better liturgical formation than most and this is why the modern Liturgy as celebrated in monasteries and in parishes served by monastic communities has frequently escaped the worst “dark clouds of unacceptable doctrine and practice” of which Pope John Paul II spoke. This too, is why so many of the faithful will regularly travel some distance to participate in the Liturgy at monasteries.

Perhaps this also gives monasteries and monastics a particular task in the years to come – of serving the Church in the area of liturgical formation, of reviving the classical liturgical spirit as so beautifully expounded by the pioneers of the Liturgical Movement of the twentieth century; Lambert Beauduin, Romano Guardini, Odo Casel, Pius Parsch, et al? The works of these pioneers are not simply “important historical documents showing us where we were fifty or eighty years ago” as has been asserted recently.<sup>43</sup> They retain – indeed they contain – a modernity, an up-to-date-ness, a sense of where we should be today in respect of our *approach* to the Sacred Liturgy of whatever rite. I would challenge any sceptic to meditate upon the writings of these authors – starting even with the smallest, Guardini’s little book *Sacred Signs*<sup>44</sup> – and to maintain that they cannot guide liturgical life and renewal today.

One crucial aspect of that renewal is the recovery of the true nature of active participation in the Sacred Liturgy. Here again contemplatives have something to offer, for active – or more accurately, actual – participation in the Liturgy is essentially contemplative. Romano Guardini discovered its meaning during the Paschal Vigil in the Basilica at Monreale in 1929:

The sacred ceremony lasted for more than four hours, but the participation was always lively. There are different means of prayerful participation. One is realized by listening, speaking, gesturing. But the other takes place through watching. The first way is a good one, and we northern Europeans know no other. But we have lost something that was still there at Monreale: the capacity for living-in-the-gaze, for resting in the act of seeing, for welcoming the sacred in the form and event, by contemplating them.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> “The Eucharist – Origins, Development & Reform” p. 46.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Tom Elich, Editorial “Claiming our History” in *Liturgy News*, vol. 36 no. 1 (March 2006). Fr Elich continues: “This dovetails with the philosophy of what is sometimes called ‘the reform of the reform’, that is, the desire to have another run at the liturgical reform and produce a different (and more conservative) result. The presumption is that the reform of the liturgy undertaken by the Second Vatican Council has gone off the rails and itself is in need of a reform. To my way of thinking this betrays a lack of trust in the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the Council and an indictment of the direction in which the Holy Spirit has led the Church these last few decades.” The editorial goes on to criticise the present author’s edition of Beauduin’s *Liturgy the Life of the Church* (St Michael’s Abbey Press, Farnborough 2002).

<sup>44</sup> Sheed & Ward, London 1930.

<sup>45</sup> The German original is in Romano Guardini, *Spiegel und Gleichnis. Bilder und Gedanken*, Grünewald-Schöningh, Mainz-Paderbon, 1990, pp. 158-161. Translation: www.chiesa.

If this contemplative aspect of participating in the Liturgy can be revived we shall have done very much indeed by way of liturgical formation and of effecting the correct celebration of the modern Liturgy.

The second, and at times somewhat controversial,<sup>46</sup> area of future renewal and reform that has been suggested by Cardinal Ratzinger is the proposal for the free celebration of the pre-conciliar rites. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen Westerfield Tucker have observed in the new *Oxford History of Christian Worship* that:

The willingness to adopt idioms and technological forms from popular culture [in the Liturgy] may come at a price; and some have returned to more “traditional” forms in order to reclaim the sense of mystery lost in an instant-messaging age.<sup>47</sup>

Without doubt many of the growing number of Catholics, especially the young, who regularly worship according to the pre-conciliar Liturgy do so due to the frustration of their desire for a numinous, God-centred Liturgy which bespeaks transcendence. To some extent, then, it can be argued that a correct and more classical celebration of the modern rites would meet this need.

However there are other, weighty, reasons for allowing the free celebration of the old rites. Following the theological principle *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, objective liturgical tradition (in its rites and prayers and even in its disposition and attitudes – all of which comprise an organic whole) as it is received, is paramount for the orthodoxy and sound pastoral practice of the Church. Of course, this objectivity in no way excludes proportionate development of the Sacred Liturgy as has happened throughout history and as asked for by the Second Vatican Council.

Yet, the liturgical rites produced by the post-conciliar *Consilium* cannot be described as proportionate, organic developments of the received objective liturgical tradition “in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy” of which paragraph 1125 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks. Archbishop Bugnini’s own book<sup>48</sup> gives ample evidence of the production of the new rites by liturgists committed to ideological principles. The work of other scholars evidences, for example, the ideologies operative in the reform of the collects, prayers over the gifts and the postcommunion prayers of the Missal of Paul VI.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Pope John Paul II’s 1984 Indult permitting its use was branded “the worst betrayal since Judas;” cf. Brian W. Harrison OS, “The Postconciliar Eucharistic Liturgy: Planning a ‘Reform of the Reform’” in T. Kocik, *The Reform of the Reform?* p. 154. More recently see the remarks of the Master of Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff, Archbishop Piero Marini, in an interview given to the Affaritaliani.it web site on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006: “The Tridentine rite or that of Saint Pius V, which in reality is the *Missale Romanum* brought up to date according to the last dispositions of 1962 by the work of John XXIII, was left in place under certain conditions to avoid a traumatic passage from the old rite to the new for the older faithful. Afterwards, pope Wojtyla allowed that, in certain churches, the rite of Saint Pius V could be celebrated. But to walk beyond this is to walk beyond the Church, and that cannot be done. If the liturgy is a sign of unity for the Church, I cannot establish groups of faithful who at a certain day and at a certain time pray in one way, then another group who in another time pray otherwise.” English translation: rorate-caeli.blogspot.com

<sup>47</sup> “Retrospect and Prospect” in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, Oxford University Press 2006, p. 864.

<sup>48</sup> *The Reform of the Liturgy*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1990.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Anthony Cekada, *The Problems with the Prayers of the Modern Mass*, Tan, Rockford 1991, and especially the recent work of: Professor Lauren Pristas “The Theological Principles That Guided the Redaction of the Roman Missal (1970)” in *The Thomist*, vol. 67 (2003), pp. 157-195, “The Orations of the Vatican II Missal: Policies for Revision” in *Communio*, vol. 30 (Winter 2003), pp. 621-653, “The Collects at

Thus, the liturgical rites in use in 1962 – whilst they certainly are capable of improvement, as the Council saw – are, in respect of objective liturgical – and theological – tradition, integral. They afford the faithful unedited access to this tradition and their use safeguards against the liturgical and theological subjectivity and ideologies which can be identified in the new rites.

There are some who do not accept this argument – perhaps due to the obedience they have given to the reforms following the Council. However Pope John Paul II permitted the reintroduction of these rites and his successor is on record as desiring their unrestricted celebration. At this very time there is much speculation that a *Motu proprio* from the hand of Pope Benedict XVI will soon effect just that. Whatever our own position, it seems that the Church, in her wisdom, is once again to permit a plurality of uses within the Roman rite. This was certainly the case for many years in her history and – polemics aside – there seems to be no reason why it should not be so again in the future. After all ought we in the twenty-first century actually to expend energy *forbidding* people to worship Almighty God in a manner that served the Church well for centuries?

Soon after the Council the noted German liturgist Klaus Gamber wrote:

It would certainly be enriching for the Church, if the forms of Liturgy hitherto in use could – on account of their beauty and their antiquity – continue to be cultivated in the future, without change, at least in certain centres, perhaps in cathedrals and in certain monasteries, thus, besides other places, amongst the Benedictines.<sup>50</sup>

A number of Benedictine communities of men and women in France and even in the United States have in fact done this, with notable success especially in the number of vocations they attract. As yet, although many English monasteries have generously welcomed the occasional and even regular public celebration of the traditional Liturgy, no monastery in the British Isles has had the courage to try this possibility – yet there seems to be a real desire for it. This may be another way in which monastics can contribute to liturgical – and ecclesial – renewal in the future.

The third area for principle area of discussion for liturgical renewal today is the proposal – or should I say “are the proposals” for a reform of the post-conciliar reform. These are based on two convictions. Firstly, that the rites promulgated by Pope Paul VI are not the organic developments called for by the Council and, secondly, that the reform as actually called for by the Council should be implemented, thus ‘correcting’ the modern rites accordingly.

I used the word “proposals” above because, whilst a number of liturgists and scholars agree on the desirability of a reform of the reform, there are different specific proposals as to what this might entail. Since 1995 *Adoremus*, a “Society for the Renewal of the Sacred Liturgy,” founded amongst others by Father Joseph Fessio SJ, has promoted discussion of these.<sup>51</sup> In 2003 Father Thomas Kocic published a book, *The Reform of the Reform? A Liturgical Debate: Reform or*

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Sunday Mass: An Examination of the Revisions of Vatican II” in *Nova et Vetera* vol. 3 no. 1 (2005) pp. 5-38, “The Pre- and Post-Vatican II Collects of the Dominican Doctors of the Church” in *New Blackfriars* vol. 86 issue 1006 (November 2005).

<sup>50</sup> *The Modern Rite: Collected Essays on Liturgical Reform*, St Michael’s Abbey Press, Farnborough 2002, p. 86 (German original: 1972).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. [www.adoremus.org](http://www.adoremus.org)

*Return*,<sup>52</sup> which contains a detailed study of the *status quaestionis* including contributions from Father Adian Nichols OP, Monsignor Peter Elliott, Father Brian Harrison and others. I recommend it to you.

Proposals include the wide use of Latin, that the Roman Canon once again becomes the (sole) Canon of the Mass of the Roman rite, the replacement of the current offertory prayers with ones having a clear sacrificial theology, the restoration of the proper prayers of each Mass to their unedited form, the promotion of silence in the Liturgy, the return of many of the ritual gestures abolished in the Mass, and the return to the ancient Christian practice of priest and people facing east for what we now call the Liturgy of the Eucharist.<sup>53</sup> Each proposal could engender much discussion and ultimately our present Holy Father or one of his successors must decide whether they are to be implemented. Certainly each of them would contribute to a renewal of a distinctively Catholic liturgical spirit in our worship.

One in particular, I submit, would do this quite effectively: namely, returning the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist at Mass *ad orientem*. This practice – which instantly destroys the horizontal idiom of entertainment that has crept into our psychology of worship and which re-asserts the essential God-centered and contemplative aspects of Catholic worship – is permitted by the modern liturgical books and requires no permission or further official reform to adopt. It can be and is successfully used with the modern vernacular rites. I challenge you seriously to consider it as a real possibility for liturgical renewal and reform in the twenty first century. To that end I highly recommend Father Michael Lang's recent study of the question – which carries a foreword by Cardinal Ratzinger – *Turning Towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer*.<sup>54</sup>

#### *Specifically Monastic Considerations*

Beyond these more general topics, I would like to look at two specifically monastic considerations. The first is the celebration of the Work of God in monasteries. Following the Council monasteries did many and varied things with their office. It is interesting to read in the "Community Notes" of the Summer 1968 *Ampleforth Journal* that:

The better to conform to modern needs and the present cycle of life now lived in the twentieth century...more or less unconsciously we have moved away from St Benedict's tradition to a much older tradition rooted in the Old Testament and the Early Church...

So, while we are deserting a Benedictine custom revered since the sixth century, we are in fact not forsaking custom altogether, but returning to a more venerable and a much more widespread custom of the Early Church. In reverting from Latin to our mother tongue in parts of the Office, we are again doing the same: these changes are in a sense reversionary.<sup>55</sup>

It is not for us to pass judgement on the good Abbot and monks of Ampleforth at that time, and the English Benedictine Congregation had received a rescript from the Holy See in 1967 permitting such experimentation,<sup>56</sup> but a question does arise: Is this, perhaps, an example of that archaism about which the young Joseph Ratzinger spoke in 1966?

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<sup>52</sup> Ignatius Press, San Francisco.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Brian W. Harrison OS, "The Postconciliar Eucharistic Liturgy: Planning a 'Reform of the Reform'" in T. Kocik, *The Reform of the Reform?* pp. 188-193.

<sup>54</sup> Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2003.

<sup>55</sup> Vol. LXXIII (II) pp. 274-275.

<sup>56</sup> Dated 17<sup>th</sup> October 1976, Prot. N. 2919/67; in *Documents on the Liturgy 1963-1979: Conciliar, Papal and Curial Texts*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville 1982, p. 1148.

If we are to speak of a reform of a reform we might do well to consider where, perhaps, the office as it is prayed in monasteries today is in need of reform and renewal in order to recapture elements that have been discarded but which perhaps ought not to have been. Perhaps it is time to look again at the 1977 *Thesaurus Liturgiae Horarum Monasticae*<sup>57</sup> and its various progeny? In doing so we would do well to employ the “hermeneutic of continuity.” In respect of the monastic office, this hermeneutic was articulated by Pope Paul VI in his address to the 1966 Abbots’ Congress where he stated that his Letter *Sacrificium Laudis* of 15<sup>th</sup> August 1966 was an attempt to “safeguard your own ancient tradition and to protect your own treasury of culture and spirituality.”<sup>58</sup> *Sacrificium Laudis* warned:

Take away the language that transcends national boundaries and possesses a marvellous spiritual power and the music that rises from the depths of the soul where faith resides and charity burns – we mean Gregorian chant – and the choral office will be like a snuffed candle; it will no longer shed light, no longer draw the eyes and minds of people.<sup>59</sup>

*Sacrificium Laudis* also stated:

The Church has introduced the vernacular into the Liturgy for pastoral advantage, that is, in favour of those who do not know Latin. The same Church gives you the mandate to safeguard the traditional dignity, beauty and gravity of the choral office in both its language and its chant.<sup>60</sup>

Paul VI’s provocative words ought to be revisited. Yes, many communities have adapted the office to correspond with different apostolic works and for them a full choir obligation would be impossible. However perhaps those offices that are prayed in choir should reflect the values which Paul VI sought to protect? These certainly serve that “union of each one of us with God” which is the purpose of coming to choir.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps it is time to reinvigorate the ancient tradition of the Benedictine office,<sup>62</sup> once again to sing those magnificent *Laudate* psalms each morning – a paradigm of the monastic vocation in any of its forms? Perhaps it is time once again to read and discover the value of St Benedict’s arrangement of the hours as set out in the Holy Rule?

The second monastic consideration upon which I would like briefly to comment is Conventual Mass. The five articles discussing Conventual Mass and the related issue of concelebration in *The Downside Review* published between 1966 and 1972 underline their importance to monastics in the years of reform following the Council.<sup>63</sup> Dom Gregory Murray

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<sup>57</sup> Published by the Secretariat of the Abbot Primate, Rome.

<sup>58</sup> *Documents on the Liturgy*, p. 1037.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1081.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* See also Dame Felicitas Corrigan’s appreciation of this letter in *A Voice for All Time*, pp. 236-238.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. “Editorial Note” following Dom Cyprian Stockford’s “Monastic Renewal and the Work of God” in *The Downside Review*, vol. LXXXII no. 269 (October 1964) pp. 312-326.

<sup>62</sup> And to resist the tendency apparent in the monastic liturgical books produced by Solesmes (*Psalterium Monasticum* 1981, *Antiphonale Monasticum I* 2005) to conform the monastic office to the modern Roman office.

<sup>63</sup> Dom Laurence Kelly, “Concelebration” *The Downside Review* vol. 84 no. 275 (April 1966) pp. 193-195; Dom Adalbert de Vogue “Problems of the Monastic Conventual Mass” *The Downside Review* vol. 87 no. 289 (October 1969) pp. 327-338; Dom Benedict Sankey “Conventual Mass and Monastic Life” *The Downside Review* vol. 88 no. 292 pp. 280-287; Dom Gregory Murray “Why Concelebration?” *The Downside Review* vol. 90 no. 299 (April 1972) pp. 105-109; Fr Eoin de Bhaldraithe O.Cist., “Problems of the Monastic Conventual Mass” *The Downside Review* vol. 90 no. 300 (July 1972) pp. 169-182.

outlined the renewed vision of Conventual Mass – a vision which by which we might well measure current practice:

There could hardly be a more perfect manifestation of that spiritual unity which binds the community together: full participation by all in the sacrificial offering, culminating in the sharing of the Lord's Supper. Could anything be more inspiring for a community than to unite at their daily Conventual Mass in a general communion?<sup>64</sup>

To this I would add another consideration. Conventual Mass – with the diversity of liturgical ministries it employs, its natural solemnity and beauty, the singing of the chant and especially in its contemplative unhurriedness – has much to offer the Church of today as a paradigm of liturgical celebration (whatever rite is employed). For at a Conventual Mass one can reach out and touch that liturgical spirit for which one must all too often search very hard in many perfunctory celebrations of Mass. In keeping that spirit alive monasteries are doing a good deal to aid future liturgical reform and renewal.

### *Conclusion*

In July 2001 a liturgical conference was held at the French Abbey at Fontgombault at the instigation of Cardinal Ratzinger in order to further discussion of the question of the Liturgy. Its papers cover the three areas of possible reform and renewal that we have considered and make clear that all have merit.<sup>65</sup> Recently, a French traditionalist (in communion with the Holy See) published a book *Beyond Vatican II? The Church at a New Crossroads* which claims that:

Forty years after the end of the Second Vatican Council, the succession of Benedict XVI to the Throne of Peter inaugurates, *nolens volens*, a phase of *transition* for the Church, that is to say a process of exiting from the atypical state in which this Council had placed Her.<sup>66</sup>

Barthe is referring to more than the Liturgy here – though he certainly includes it – and he is no fan of the Council.<sup>67</sup> Whether or not we agree with his analysis, I think that it is true to say – especially in respect of the Liturgy – that today the Church is at a new crossroads and that in many ways liturgical reform and renewal is moving beyond simply that which followed Vatican II.

It may be that this transition will lead us down paths – seemingly new, possibly also old – which we may not prefer or have envisaged. Yet, if we do so in faith, preserving charity, and out of love and fidelity to the great tradition of the Church's Sacred Liturgy, we ourselves may make a contribution – howsoever modest – to that “true celebration of the Sacred Liturgy” that “is the centre of any renewal of the Church whatever.”

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<sup>64</sup> “Why Concelebration?” p. 109.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. A. Reid (ed.) *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger*.

<sup>66</sup> p. 111.

<sup>67</sup> He regards it as having ushered in “an unprecedented pastoral failure;” p. 112.