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The CORD

A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW

ON LITURGICAL LIFE

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Standard Abbreviations used in **The CORD** for Early Franciscan Sources

I. Writings of Saint Francis

Adm: Admonitions	Fragm: Another Fragment, Rule of 1221
BenLeo: Blessing for Brother Leo	LaudDei: Praises of the Most High God
CantSol: Canticle of Brother Sun	LaudHor: Praises at all the Hours
EpAnt: Letter to St. Anthony	OffPass: Office of the Passion
EpCler: Letter to Clerics'	OrCruc: Prayer before the Crucifix
EpCust: Letter to Superiors'	RegB: Rule of 1223
EpFid: Letter to All the Faithful'	RegNB: Rule of 1221
EpLeo: Letter to Brother Leo	RegEr: Rule for Hermits
EpMin: Letter to a Minister	SalBMV: Salutation to our Lady
EpOrd: Letter to the Entire Order	SalVirt: Salutation to the Virtues
EpRect: Letter to the Rulers of the People	Test: Testament of St. Francis
ExhLD: Exhortation to the Praise of God	UltVol: Last Will Written for Clare
ExpPat: Exposition on the Our Father	VPLaet: Treatise on True and Perfect Joy
Form Viv: Form of Life for St. Clare	'1, II refer to First and Second Editions.

II. Other Early Franciscan Sources

1Cel: Celano, First Life of Francis	LM: Bonaventure, Major Life of Francis
2Cel: Celano, Second Life of Francis	LMin: Bonaventure Minor Life of Francis
3Cel: Celano, Treatise on Miracles	LP: Legend of Perugia
CL: Legend of Saint Clare	L3S: Legend of the Three Companions
CP: Process of Saint Clare	SC Sacrum Commercium
Fior: Little Flowers of St. Francis	SP: Mirror of Perfection
Omnibus: Marion A. Habig, ed., <i>St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis</i> (Chicago Franciscan Herald Press, 1973).	
W: Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., and Ignatius Brady, O.F.M., ed., <i>Francis and Clare: The Complete Works</i> (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).	

“ON LITURGICAL LIFE”: Introduction

This issue of *The CORD* presents and examines the pastoral letter *On Liturgical Life* issued on Holy Thursday 1992 by the Ministers General of the three branches of the First Order and the Third Order Regular. The editors wanted to make the text of the *Letter* more available to English-speaking Franciscans and to *unpack*, or at least to begin to unpack, its content and value for all Franciscans — to whom the *Letter* is addressed. Thus, we invited four Franciscans to reflect upon or to respond to the *Letter*, a member from each of the branches of the Franciscan family represented by the General Ministers who authored the *Letter*: Edward Foley, O.F.M. Cap.; Daniel P. Grigassy, O.F.M.; Peter Lyons, T.O.R.; and Brad Milunski, O.F.M. Conv.

The authors offer analysis, provide insights, raise questions, and present challenges. Their words invite readers to critical reflection: to examine the preunderstandings operative within the document, and within ourselves; to assess our liturgical theory and praxis; to rediscover the power of symbol; to consider the implications of an incarnational approach to worship; to remember the ecclesial and communal nature of liturgy; to critique our attitudes toward liturgy and the quality of our liturgical lives; to reflect upon the ways in which a liturgical spirituality feeds our ministerial spirituality; to be open to the transforming power of our liturgical symbols.

We hope that you, our readers, will find the text *On Liturgical Life* and these responses to the *Letter* to be helpful; we hope that this issue might act as a catalyst for reflection and discussion. We hope that these pages may encourage further reflections on liturgical life: implications for Franciscan pastoral ministers; challenges for Franciscan educators and formators; invitations to conversion for all Franciscans.

Robert M. Stewart, O.F.M.

LETTER OF THE MINISTERS GENERAL OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILIES: On Liturgical Life

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

[1]* We are sending you this fraternal letter on the sacred liturgy on the day when the church commemorates that Last Supper during which the Lord Jesus, on the night in which He was to be betrayed, loving unto the very end His own who were in the world, offered God His body and His blood under the form of bread and wine. He gave them to the apostles as food and commanded them and their successors in the priesthood to perpetuate this offering in His memory.

[2] Since then, today and every day we are able to render this act of thanksgiving, the paschal supper of Jesus, through which the church continually strengthens herself and witnesses the mystery of Christ to the world in the celebration of the sacred liturgy.

[3] By happy coincidence today we also remember another grace-filled event that occurred on April 16, 1209, when Pope Innocent III approved the original Franciscan form of life, thus placing the entire Seraphic Family at the service of Christ and His Gospel of salvation.

Introduction

[4] In his Apostolic Letter *Vigésimus quintus annus*, promulgated on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the conciliar constitution (December 4, 1988), the Holy Father stated that today "the most urgent duty is the biblical and liturgical formation of the People of God, pastors and faithful alike," adding that this is a work of long duration (*opus diuturnum*) which must begin in the seminaries and houses of formation and continue for the rest of one's priestly life (no. 15).

[5] If the liturgical reform has not always been received readily, and if it has not also produced in our lifetime those results that it was legitimate to expect, this is often due to the lack of understanding of the spirit and aims of the reform. It certainly wasn't easy to enter into the new liturgical spirit willed by the council, if we recall that for a long time the liturgy was essentially considered as the "perceptible, ceremonial and decorative part of Catholic worship."¹ Pope Pius XII himself admitted this when he stated: "We note with sadness that in some areas the meaning, the cognizance and the study of the liturgy are at times scarce or almost non-existent."² This truth must be recognized by many of us, too, who received a liturgical formation that was mostly rubrical and quite divorced from the liturgical theology delineated by the Second Vatican Council.

[6] As a result, some pastors still understand the liturgy as a set of ceremonies suitable for rendering worthy tribute to God, but without any connection to the spiritual life. Pope Paul VI had already stated that "working well in the area of liturgy means not merely having only its ritual value enter into the heart of priests and faithful, but also the theological, pastoral and ascetical meaning of the liturgical reform as well."³ It's true that the swiftness of the changes that happened unexpectedly with the conciliar liturgical reform sometimes prevented an appropriate

* Editor's Note: In order to facilitate reference to this text, the editors have included a numbering of paragraphs which parallels the division into paragraphs given in the original Italian text. However, neither the Italian text [in *Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum 111:2 (June-September 1992) 85-93*] nor the English translation of this letter [published in *Greyfriars Review 6/3 (1992): 267-278*] include paragraph numbers.

assimilation of its spirit and provoked unjustified resistance. This is another reason for beginning or promoting effective liturgical formation that permits us "to understand more fully what we are doing when we perform the sacred rites, to live the liturgical life and to share it with the faithful entrusted to our care" (SC 18). From the point of view of this need, and docile to the example offered us by our seraphic father, who hastened to know and put into practice the liturgical directions issued by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and the admonitions of Pope Honorius III in the letter *Sane cum olim*,⁴ we perceive the need to make the liturgy the indispensable source of nourishment for our life. Therefore, we want to offer for your consideration some brief reflections on the mystery of Christ, Who is made present and active in liturgical celebration (SC 7), so that it might really become not only the center of our life as Franciscans but also the source of that fraternal unity that we must achieve, of the sanctity toward which we aim, and of the Gospel and missionary commitment that characterizes us.

1. Rediscovering a Treasure

[7] In order to bring about an exemplary liturgical life in our fraternities, we must first of all examine our actual way of celebrating our mystery of worship, studying it closely in the light of the doctrinal principles and pastoral guidelines of the conciliar document and subsequent church pronouncements.

[8] We must affirm that, while it is celebrating, the community of believers is experiencing a privileged encounter with God and with Christ, Who intervenes with His presence in the power of the Holy Spirit and makes us share in the life of the Father.

[9] "It is through the liturgy, especially, that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true church.... The liturgy daily builds up those who are in the church, making of them a holy temple of the Lord, a dwelling-place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ. At the same time it marvelously increases their power to preach Christ" (SC 2).

[10] The liturgy is the sacrament that reveals the mystery of Christ and the church. It is the revelation and communication of what Christ is for man and what the church is called to become: "a holy temple of the Lord, a dwelling-place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ." The qualities attributed to the church and deduced from the New Testament genuinely pertain to worship. This confirms that the liturgy is not incidental to the nature of the church but rather represents its full and central expression. Indeed, the liturgy assumes the very same qualities of Christ and the church of which it is the manifestation and realization; it is at one and the same time human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities, linked with activity and inclined toward contemplation, present in the world and yet directed to that future city toward which we are headed (SC 2; LG 8).

[11] In the celebration of worship, Christ is not alone; He joins to Himself the church, the community of believers, and prepares her to be one single being with Himself, one heart, one voice. Jesus and the church renew their marriage through worship. Thus the biblical figure of bride is fulfilled, purified and made resplendent by the Spirit of her Lord and bridegroom, in expectation of the eternal nuptials (Eph 5:26-27).

[12] "To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass... in the sacraments... in His word... [and] when the church prays and sings.... From this it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His body, which is the church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree" (SC 7).

[13] It follows, therefore, that a high point of our life in fraternity is the celebration of the liturgy realized as the living experience of the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the church. It's the

celebration of the liturgy that makes us grow in unity and fraternal love (*Acts* 2:42; 4:32), developing within us the desire to live for God and for our brothers and sisters. In this way the liturgy is really the source and summit of our entire life (SC 10). Celebrating in charity a fraternity will discover therein not only the center of its very life but also its ability to witness to the mystery of Christ with the gift of its life. The Second Vatican Council states this truth clearly: "However, no Christian community is built up which does not grow from and hinge on the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist. From this all education for community spirit must begin" (PO 6).

[14] These reflections, the result of a bountiful and providential journey by the church for its deeper self-awareness and understanding, would have made the spirit of Francis of Assisi jump for joy; for him the Eucharist was the mirror of his life. In fact, when he came to the end of his days on earth he looked back on his spiritual journey and reflected on his experience in Christ when he had progressively understood the presence and action of the Spirit of the Lord. He found no other way to describe it than to say simply: "I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God in this world except His most holy Body and Blood.... And these most holy mysteries I wish to have honored above all things and to be revered and to have them reserved in precious places."³

2. An Education into the Ecclesial Meaning of the Liturgy

[15] The theological reflection of Vatican II also reminds us that the liturgical celebration "is never a private function" but that of the entire people of God, that is, the church, which is the sacrament of unity (SC 26). It's a church that is not ethereal or indeterminate, but real and made present by the sign of the liturgical assembly that is gathered here and now to celebrate the mystery of Christ in listening to His word, in the sacramental rite and in praise. But it is also an epiphany, a revelation of the one church spread throughout the world and a sign of that communion which makes of all believers one being in Christ. This idea is marvelously expressed by St. Francis in the last chapter of the *Earlier Rule*, considered by some the most inspired eucharistic anaphora in the western ecclesiastical tradition. "Perhaps no one has identified himself so deeply and simply in his prayer with the life of the entire church."⁴

[16] Education into the ecclesial meaning of liturgy involves, therefore, at least two attitudes: respect for the texts and signs that the universal church has handed down in her liturgical books, and attention to the celebrating community. Knowledge and respect for texts, which imparts to us the praying tradition of the church, will save us from that barbarous creativity that contradicts not only the norms but also the profound nature of the liturgy itself.

[17] "The one who presides is not the proprietor of the Eucharist, but its faithful servant, in communion with the entire universal church. The assembly expects that he will respect the rules of the celebration, especially the eucharistic prayers, handed over to the whole church as authentic expressions of the faith and a visible sign of its unity and universality. Bishops and priests together must raise objections against abuses wherever they are introduced."⁵

[18] It's well to remember in the area of liturgy, more than in other sectors of ecclesial life, that "the church is conscious of the fact that she is not the master and arbiter of Christ's salvific actions. On the contrary, as His bride, she must put them into effect just as the Lord desired."⁶ The liturgy is the celebration of the faith of the community. It is inadmissible that this faith be depreciated or that the community be estranged. Incorrect applications or personal whims "deface the liturgy and deprive the Christian people of the authentic riches of the liturgy of the church."⁷ This happens either when the celebration is reduced to a mere cold and ritualistic performance, or when innovations are introduced that do not issue from an experience of faith and do not represent a service to the community. "In fact, just as one shouldn't confuse real creativity with the search for innovation at all costs, neither is the literal and scrupulous observance of the norms, excluding

the possibility of making choices and adaptations provided by the norms themselves, always a sign of praiseworthy fidelity; it is, rather, the result of laziness. In the difficult balance between faithfulness to the written norm and attention to the real and historical person in our assemblies, there lies a fine boundary for legitimate and even responsible creativity."⁸

[19] For this reason we must intensify our liturgical formation. This will help us nourish the meaning of our responsibilities in this particular sector of pastoral activity and constantly to examine the art of liturgical presiding, by which the priests will help the Christian people to become a real celebrating assembly, actively participating in and conscious of the mystery that is present in the rite.

[20] In addition, a serious and complete liturgical formation will allow us to understand and interpret ecclesiastical discipline better and the related practical norms that regulate the ecclesial celebration of the mystery of Christ. It will help us build up the ecclesial community in joy and communion, and not hinder the progress of fraternal communion, which is a priority requirement of our Franciscan life. Tempted neither by archaic recollections nor flights of fancy, but rather comporting ourselves with respect, devotion and filial obedience to the church, we shall reveal the true nature of our existence - as our seraphic father teaches us - "subject and submissive to holy mother church."

3. A New Commitment to the Church's Liturgy

[21] "It seems the time has come to rediscover the great inspiration that impelled the church at the moment in which the constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was prepared, discussed, voted upon, promulgated and was first put into practice."⁹

[22] At a distance of some twenty-five years, the liturgical constitution, and with it the vast movement of reform that followed in its wake and that has rightly been called "the most visible result of all the council's work,"¹⁰ cannot be underrated. It is, rather, a treasure to be safeguarded and developed.

[23] We Franciscans must rediscover the enthusiasm of the beginning of the liturgical reform and become reconverted to the liturgy itself. This means, first of all, re-examining our attitude toward the liturgy, gaining a deeper understanding of the liturgical reform and heading decisively toward a new style of celebration.

[24] Convinced that we are, above all, servants of the liturgy, we will be able through intelligent and patient catechesis to bring about a flowering of that new spiritual season that the conciliar renewal had foretold and promoted.

[25] Among our primary duties, particular care should be taken for the common celebration of the pivotal hours of the Divine Office with the people - Morning Praise and Vespers especially on Sunday and holy days, convinced that when all the People of God are gathered to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours, then it is truly the entire church as a bride who speaks to Christ her bridegroom and renders to the Father the song of praise of all humanity with him.

[26] It's a demanding work to carry out. The love of the church and service to it that characterized our origins ought to inspire and sustain this contribution of ours, too.¹¹

4. Goals to be Reached

[27] In the light of what has been said above, and without pretending to deal with all the arguments that would merit our deeper reflection, we should like to propose some goals to you so that our commitment to the liturgy might prove real and effective.

The Liturgical Formation of Our Candidates

[28] For one thing, we are thinking about our dear young men in formation. In the area of liturgy, too, they must follow a more demanding course and be nourished on more solid food.¹²

Insofar as it is a moment of celebration, the liturgy, with its euchological texts and rites, its signs and symbols, must be accepted within the sphere of formation as an indispensable element for a complete Franciscan education.¹⁵

Beauty in Celebrations

[29]Our liturgies should glow for their order, their sensitivity, their depth and their beauty, full of pastoral effectiveness and able to become models for all celebrations.¹⁶

So That the Voice May Blend with the Mind

[30]If you really want the liturgical experience to be a fruitful moment of communion with God, you must consider the sense of the sacred in the celebration, making the most of silence, the ability to listen, the intimate joy of contemplation and of the encounter with the Lord, and thus banishing all that distracts and that makes your attention drift to aspects that are only human and external to the liturgical celebration.¹⁷

[31]What St. Francis said in reference to the Liturgy of the Hours is valid for every prayer and liturgical activity: "Clerics should say the Office with devotion before God, not concentrating on the melody of the voice but on the harmony of the mind, so that the voice may blend with the mind, and the mind be in harmony with God. Let them do this in such a way that they may please God through purity of heart and not charm the ears of the people with sweetness of voice."¹⁸

A New Way of Presiding

[32]The celebrant who presides exercises a primary and fundamental responsibility in the liturgical action, though not the only one. In a special way, in fact, he represents and reveals Jesus Christ, the head and savior of the church. He has the responsibility to provide the celebration with a dignified structure as well as an organic vitality. Therefore, the community should truly realize that it is participating in a celebration in which every element (word, attention, silence, song and gesture) has its role and is connected with all the others. The celebrations depend on the entire fraternity.

[33]In contrast with the preconciliar liturgical books, the present ones provide introductions entitled Principles and Norms. As a result, you cannot understand and respect the norms if you have not first tried to deepen your understanding of the principles, that is, the theological content of the liturgical rite. The priest has a serious responsibility to know the mystery that he is celebrating and at which he presides. As St. Paul admonishes: "He who presides should do so with diligence" (Rom 12:8).

Lectio Divina and Penance

[34]In speaking of formation in religious institutes entirely dedicated to contemplation, the document of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life cited above insists on some points that are certainly not foreign to our life of contemplation in action (LM XII 2). We call them to your attention because they are elements of our tradition.

[35]The liturgy is the privileged place for the joyful and grateful celebration of the work of salvation accomplished by Christ in the name of the church. The *lectio divina*, which is nourished on the Word of God, finds its point of departure and arrival here. Together with work, which is service to the community and "an element of solidarity with all the workers of the world," it belongs to the rich patrimony of our tradition, and helps us to make our very existence a perennial liturgy of praise.

[36]Conversion, penance and reconciliation are at the center of our life according to the Gospel.¹⁹ In accepting the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ, we are called not only to overcome our tensions, but also to give of ourselves and to serve the brethren, assuming a precise obligation to eliminate every form of injustice or inequality that alienates man from the source of love.

[37]In the frequent and, wherever possible, community celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in opening ourselves to the work of the Spirit, we will learn to live the new life in Christ that was given in baptism and toward the fullness of which we yearn through the commitment of our religious profession.

The Eucharist as the Summit of Our Life

[38]Without being a theologian, but through his love and purity, Francis already understood that the Eucharist is the source and summit of all evangelization. In fact, he preached the life of penance enlightened by the Eucharist, because in this mystery of the Body and Blood of the Lord, "that which is in the heavens and on the earth is brought to peace and is reconciled to the all-powerful God."²⁰ For Francis the eucharistic mystery was the indispensable foundation of the life of penance and the Sacrament of Penance. He exhorted the brethren that "contrite and confessed, they should receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with great humility and reverence."²¹ Within it and its heartfelt celebration, the life of penance and gospel conversion finds its beginning, nourishment, continuous development and completion.

[39]We recall the profoundly ecclesial sense of the admonition regarding the single Mass in the fraternity, suggested by St. Francis.²²

[40]The life of an authentic Franciscan fraternity must be informed by the daily celebration of the Eucharist. It gathers us all together in the love of Christ, opens us up to the world redeemed by the paschal sacrifice of Christ and makes our entire existence a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God. There follows from this the practical need to incorporate the people of God into our celebrations, especially members of the Secular Franciscan Order and other ecclesial associations or movements, so that the unity of a community constituted by its various orders and ministries might be visibly revealed.

[41]The same Eucharistic concelebration, exercised with greater commitment despite some psychological or practical difficulties, will permit us to express clearly the mystery of the church, the sacrament of unity and source of communion with God and our brothers and sisters.

The Liturgical Year, Sunday, Franciscan Feasts

[42]We cannot forget to make reference to other fundamental aspects of the liturgical life. What we have in mind is the celebration of the mystery of Christ in time through the cycle of the liturgical year and particularly on Sunday ("The sovereign day of the resurrected Lord" but also a day of joy and fraternity strengthened in the Eucharist, the foundation of Sunday), as well as the Liturgy of the Hours, the prayer of Christ and His church on its journey toward the eternal pasch.

[43]We celebrate with special attention the Franciscan feasts and those of the Franciscan calendar, adapting them to the fraternity and their particular circumstances.

[44]United to the brothers and sisters of our families we remember especially the holy ones who have gone before us in the following of Christ according to the example of St. Francis. Every celebration is a deepening of our rich tradition and propels us toward the future to discover new outlooks and to incarnate our Franciscan life in today's world and circumstances.

[45]We celebrate the divine praises imitating the fervor of blessed Francis, who "used to say the Psalms with such attention of mind and spirit, as if he had God present."²³ And in the *Rule* of the Friars Minor he pointed out the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours as the first active service imposed on the fraternity by the following of Christ and the observance of the holy Gospel.²⁴ Even in his *Testament* he considered those friars who neglected this obligation as enemies of the catholicity and unity of the church,²⁵ and in his *Letter to the Entire Order* he admonished them in very strong words: "If any of the brothers do not wish to observe these things, I do not consider them to be Catholics nor my brothers, and I do not wish to see them

or speak with them until they shall have done penance."²⁶

Announcing the Word

[46] Since the conciliar reform has put a premium on the Liturgy of the Word, it would be an error not to view the homily as a valid and most suitable instrument for evangelization. "The faithful assembled as a paschal church, celebrating the feast of the Lord present in their midst, expect much from this preaching, and will greatly benefit from it provided that it is simple, clear, direct, well-adapted, profoundly dependent on Gospel teaching and faithful to the Magisterium."²⁷

[47] "Our responsibility is to preach the Gospel... and the requirements of this proclamation are the following: to believe, to pray, to celebrate. The people must be stimulated, but not discouraged by systematic doubt, nor perturbed by dangerous hypotheses in matters of doctrine and morals. The more that research becomes needed, the more indispensable should certain points of reference become."²⁸

Franciscan Devotions

[48] Finally, we would like to recall fidelity to devotions that are dear to our piety, such as the Way of the Cross and the Franciscan Crown, and the intelligent modern practice of all the liturgical customs proper to each of our families. All this, however, must be in harmony with the sacred liturgy. In fact, devotions "are in some way derived from it, and lead the people to it, since in fact the liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them" (SC 13).

[49] Without wishing to draw up a list of all the devotions recommended in various ways by the church, we should like to recall some of them to confirm the church's esteem and to propose them once more to the attention of all the brethren.

[50] The prayer of the Angelus, so dear to the Franciscan tradition, and, during the Easter season, the antiphon Regina Coeli ("for its biblical character..., its quasi-liturgical rhythm that sanctifies various moments throughout the day, its approach to the paschal mystery"²⁹), should be kept alive in our fraternities and spread as a devout custom among the Christian people.

[51] Among the forms of prayer to the Virgin Mary recommended by the church we recall the Litany of Loreto, or other ancient or newer forms used by local churches or religious families.

[52] Finally, let us not forget the various expressions of popular religious practices. Looked upon lovingly and purified of their excesses, as well as improved in their expressions wherever they appeared imperfect or incomplete, these popular religious practices can also become a genuine expression of worshiping God in spirit and in truth.³⁰

Conclusion

[53] We are confident that our fraternities, in celebrating divine worship with love, and guided by our Franciscan saints, will know above all how to obey what remains the fundamental and primary law for every authentic act of worship: letting oneself become molded by the realities that are being celebrated, in order to become worthy of proclaiming them to all people through a life that has been totally transformed by the mystery of Christ.

With our fraternal and joyful best wishes,

Lanfranco M. Serrini, O.F.M. Conv.
Minister General, O.F.M. Conv.

Flavio R. Carraro, O.F.M. Cap.
Minister General, O.F.M. Cap.

Hermann Schalück, O.F.M.
Minister General, O.F.M.

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Endnotes

¹ J. Navatel, "L'apostola liturgique et la piété personnelle," *Etudes* 137 (1913): 450.

² See *Mediator Dei*, November 20, 1947, in *AAS* 39 (1947): 524.

³ Pope Paul VI to a study conference of diocesan liturgical commissions, November 7, 1969, in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol. 7 (Poliglotta Vaticana, 1969), 72.

⁴ See *Letter to the Clergy* 13: "And we know that above all else we are bound to observe all of these matters according to the precepts of the Lord and the constitutions of holy mother church."

⁵ *Test 10-11*, See also *EpCler* 3.

⁶ D. Barsotti, "Questo è il mio Testamento," in *Esercizi spirituali sul Testamento di S. Francesco d'Assisi* (Milan, 1974), 96, note.

⁷ The French Episcopal Conference, *Dix ans après Le Concile: Lettre des Evêques aux catholiques de France*, Lourdes, October 25, 1976, *Documentation Catholique* 58 (1976): 961-62.

⁸ Italian Episcopal Conference (hereafter cited as CEI), *Comunione, comunità e disciplina ecclesiale*, nos. 70-73.

⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Vigésimo quinto aniversario*, no. 13.

¹⁰ CEI, 11, *Rinnovamento liturgico in Italia*. A pastoral note from the CEI twenty years after the conciliar constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, November 21, 1983, no. 16.

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, *Vigésimo quinto aniversario*, no. 23.

¹² The Final Report of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops 1985, II, B, b, 1.

¹³ See Kajetan Esser, "Sancta Mater Ecclesia Romana: La pietà ecclesiale di S. Francesco d'Assisi," in *Temî Spirituali* (Milan, 1967), 147-99; Oktavian Schmucki, "Franziskus von Assisi erfährt Kirche in seiner Bruderschaft," *Franziskanische Studien* 58 (1976): 1-26; Mariano d'Alatri, *San Francesco d'Assisi diacono nella Chiesa* (Rome, 1977).

¹⁴ See also The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on Liturgical Formation in Seminaries* (Rome, 1979).

¹⁵ See in this regard the recent document from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes* (Rome, 1990).

¹⁶ See Pope John Paul II, "To a Group of Bishops," in *AAS* (1989): 1209.

¹⁷ Pope John Paul II, "To the Roman Parish of Sts. Fabian and Venance," *OR*, January 16, 1990.

¹⁸ *EpOrd* 41-42. ¹⁹ See *Test* 1-4. ²⁰ *EpOrd* 13. ²¹ *RegNB* XX. ²² See *EpOrd* 38-42.

²³ *LM X*: 6. ²⁴ See *RegNB* III; *RegB* III. ²⁵ See *Test* 31. ²⁶ *EpOrd* 44.

²⁷ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975, no. 43, in *AAS* 68 (1976): 33-34.

²⁸ *Dix ans après le Concile: Lettre des Evêques aux catholiques de France*, Lourdes: Documentation Catholique 58 (1976), 960-61.

²⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Marialis cultus*, 41: EV 5/72.

³⁰ See the Congregation for Divine Worship, *Guidelines and Proposals for the Celebration of the Marian Year*, April 3, 1987, nos. 51-72: EV 10/1084-1097.

"ON LITURGICAL LIFE":

Franciscans, Liturgy and Eucharist

EDWARD FOLEY, O.F.M. CAP.

Introduction

The Letter of the Ministers General of the Franciscan Families *On Liturgical Life* is a rich and complex document. The task given to me by the editors is to say something substantive about the *Letter* in a few pages. While daunting I do not think such is impossible, as long as the focus is appropriately narrowed, the method understandable and the goal of the analysis clear.

My focus in this article is the use of the term "liturgy" in the *Letter*. More specifically, I will examine the usage of this term in the hopes of unearthing some of the preunderstandings that shape its employment in the *Letter* through the use of a modified literary-structural analysis.

The concept of preunderstandings, preconceptions or prejudices is of considerable importance in contemporary hermeneutics. Philosophers like Martin Heidegger¹ (1889-1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer² (b. 1900), have developed this concept in response to the work of Wilhelm Dilthey³ (1833-1911) and others who contend that in the act of interpretation it is possible — and even preferable — to purge oneself of all prejudices, and to set aside one's own horizons through rigorous method. Heidegger, on the other hand, contends that that it is not only impossible to separate oneself from basic preunderstandings or prejudices, but that understanding itself is only possible within a given horizon of preunderstandings. Gadamer goes even further, and stresses the continuity between understanding and interpretation. To understand is to interpret. The challenge for an authentic interpretation or understanding is to acknowledge and test our prejudices throughout the process.

The *Letter* under consideration — like every document — is based on certain preunderstandings. These preunderstandings are useful to explore, for

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they significantly influenced the writing of the *Letter* and need to play an equally important role in the assessment of the *Letter*. To the extent that one acknowledges, understands and accepts the basic preunderstandings that undergird the *Letter*, then what follows similarly be acceptable. The converse is also true.

The method that I will employ for attempting to reveal some of the basic preunderstandings of the *Letter* is a modified literary-structural method, focused on the term "liturgy."⁴ Specifically, I will attempt to demonstrate how the *Letter* defines the term "liturgy" by noting synonyms for the term, identifying the literary context in which the term is employed, and by demonstrating variations of the term and what synonyms or literary contexts surround such usage.

Obviously the very method that I employ and the focus of that method is indicative of some of my own preunderstandings or prejudices. While space does not permit an articulation of all of these, one central preoccupation needs to be acknowledged. It stems from my reading of the official documents of the Roman Catholic Church which leads me to believe that the terms "liturgy" and "eucharist" are neither coterminous nor synonymous.⁵ Liturgy is the more generic term, and eucharist a specific type of liturgy. While eucharist is a prized and privileged liturgical expression, it does not supplant or eclipse the rest of our liturgical expressions.

Now it is to discover something of the preunderstandings of the *Letter*, particularly as revealed through the *Letter*'s employment of the term "liturgy."

Occurrences and Usage of the Term "Liturgy"

My reading of the text indicates that the term "liturgy" is employed three different ways in the *Letter*: 1) as a noun, with or without adjectival modification, 2) as a noun, modified by a prepositional phrase, and 3) as an adjective, modifying a wide variety of terms.

As a Noun with or without Adjectival Modification: The term "liturgy" or "liturgies" (liturgia, liturgie) appears 23 times in the text without adjectival modification [para. 5 (2x), 6 (2x), 9 (2x), 10 [3x], 13, 16 (2x), 18 (3x), 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 35 (2x), and 48].⁶ It appears twice in titles without adjectival modifications [before para. 15 and 21]. Finally, it appears three times with the same adjectival modification, i.e. "sacred liturgy" (sacra liturgia, in para. 1, 2 and 48).

As a Noun, modified by a Prepositional Phrase: Five times during the course of the *Letter* the term "liturgy" appears modified by the prepositional phrase "of the Hours" (Liturgia delle Ore, para. 25 (2x), 31, 42, 45). Once in the

Letter the term appears modified by the prepositional phrase “of the Word” (*Liturgia della Parola*, para. 46).

As an Adjective: The adjectival form, “liturgical” (*liturgica, liturgiche, liturgici* or *liturgico*) is the most common form of the term to appear in the *Letter*. It modifies the following words:

act (*liturgico fatto*, para. 23)
actions (*azioni liturgiche*, para. 12, 31, 32)
assembly (*assemblea liturgica*, para. 15)
books (*libri liturgici*, para. 16, 33)
celebration (*celebrazione liturgica*, para. 6, 12, 13 [2x], 15, 30)
Constitution (*Costituzione liturgica*, para. 22)
customs (*Consuetudini liturgiche*, para. 48)
directions (*disposizioni liturgiche*, para. 6)
experience (*esperienza liturgica*, para. 30)
field (*campo liturgico*, para. 6, 18, 28)
formation (*formazione liturgica*, para. 4, 5, 6, 19, 20
and in the title before para. 28)
life (*vita liturgica*, para. 6, 7, 42)
presiding (*presidenza liturgica*, para. 19)
quasi liturgical rhythm (*ritmo quasi liturgico*, para. 50)
reform (*riforma liturgica*, para. 5, 6, 6, 23 [2x])
spirit (*spirito liturgico*, para. 5)
theology (*teologia liturgica*, para. 5)
year (*Anno liturgico*, para. 42)

Definitions of Liturgy in the Letter

This inventory of the usage of the term “liturgy” enables us to begin to say something about the way the *Letter* defines the term. Specifically, we will consider 1) the range of meanings surrounding the term “liturgy” in the *Letter*, 2) contrasts in the usage of the term “liturgy” in the *Letter*, and 3) priorities in definitions of the term “liturgy.”

The Range of Meanings surrounding the Term “Liturgy”: The wide-ranging usage of the adjectival form “liturgical” (*liturgica, liturgiche, liturgici* or *liturgico*) in the *Letter* suggests that — at least as presented here — liturgy is understood to be dynamic insofar as it is an “act,” a “celebration,” and an “experience,” that involves the act of “presiding,” has a distinctive “spirit” and “rhythm,” and can even be considered a type or way of “life.” The liturgy does not, however, simply appear to be some amorphous experience because, according to the *Letter* it is recognized as a “field” with its own “theology,” “books,” “customs,” “directions,” concept of the year and “Constitution” which have recently undergone a “reform.” Therefore, it appears that liturgy — as a

dynamic reality wed to visible forms and a distinctive frame of ideas — is either complex or important enough (maybe both?) that it requires and even suggests a particular kind of “formation.” To repeat a previous statement, this is a rich and complex document.

Contrasts in the Usage of the Term “Liturgy”: Within this wide range of usage, it is interesting that there are certain types of liturgy that often have a further modification. Most notable here are the five occurrences of the phrase “Liturgy of the Hours.”⁷ While it is clear from the context of the *Letter* that the “Liturgy of the Hours” could also simply be called “liturgy,”⁸ this seldom happens.

Priorities in Definitions of the Term “Liturgy”: Despite a rather wide range of meanings in the use of the term “liturgy,” the *Letter* seems to give a certain priority to one definition of “liturgy,” i.e. liturgy as eucharist. The unmistakable equation of liturgy and eucharist occurs in the first paragraph of the *Letter*, which places the *Letter* in the context of Holy Thursday, the commemoration of the Last Supper, and follows with the rather dubious assertion that Jesus commanded the apostles and “their successors in the priesthood” to perpetuate this offering.⁹ The second paragraph of the *Letter*, as well, focuses on “this act of thanksgiving” [Greek *eucharistia*], “the paschal supper of Jesus.” It is notable that these two paragraphs contain two of the three occurrences of the phrase “the sacred liturgy” (*sacra Liturgia*) in the *Letter*. The message seems to be that “the sacred liturgy” is “the eucharist.”

Another key paragraph which suggests a priority or even a narrowing of the wide ranging definition of the term “liturgy” is paragraph 13. In the previous paragraph, the *Letter* quotes the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* [para. 7], which notes that the “Sacrifice of the Mass” is one genre of the church’s liturgy, but is not the only or even a complete definition of “liturgy.” Paragraph 13 of the *Letter*, however, does define liturgy solely in terms of eucharist by citing the *Constitution* [para. 10] which talks about the liturgy as the source and summit of our entire life, and then cites the *Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests* [para. 6] which speaks specifically of the “Holy Eucharist” (*sacra Eucharistia*). This juxtaposition of two disjunct citations from the Second Vatican Council gives the impression that the *Constitution* asserts that the eucharist is the liturgy, and that the eucharist is “the source and summit of our entire life.” The *Constitution*, however, is much more nuanced than the *Letter*, and does not equate eucharist” and “liturgy.”¹⁰

A third way in which the *Letter* tends to define “liturgy” only in terms of eucharist is when it addresses the issue of presiding. In paragraph 16, for example, the document speaks of respect for the texts and signs of the liturgy.

In the following paragraph, the *Letter* employs a citation from a document by the French Episcopal Conference which speaks only of presiding at Eucharist. Further in the *Letter*, in paragraph 19, liturgical presiding is again identified as something that “priests” do. Finally, in paragraphs 32 and 33, which occur under the title “A New Way of Presiding” (*Nuovo Modo di Presiedere*), the *Letter* speaks about “the priest” [and no one else] having a serious responsibility to know the mystery that “he is celebrating.”¹¹ In the official documents of the Church, however, presiding is not restricted to priests, as is true of this *Letter*. The *General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*, for example, notes that “In the absence of a priest or deacon, the one who presides (*is qui praeest*) is one among equals” [para. 258].

Conclusions

As noted at the outset, the goal of this brief analysis was an attempt to unearth some of the preunderstandings that lay behind this *Letter* through an examination of the use of the term “liturgy” therein. My reading of the *Letter* suggests that it contains a mixed—even conflicting—message about the nature of liturgy. On the one hand, the varying usages of the modifier “liturgical” suggest a wide range of meanings, and a richness about the nature of liturgy. On the other hand, the sometimes restricted presentation of the term liturgy, and especially the reoccurring tendency to use liturgy as a synonym for eucharist is a limiting and questionable usage of the term. As I have demonstrated, the *Letter* reduces the definition of liturgy to that of eucharist in a way that, for example, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* does not.

My final conclusion from this analysis is that one of the basic preunderstandings, preconceptions, or prejudices that undergirds at least significant parts of this *Letter* is the presumption that liturgy is not only understood as a synonym for eucharist but that, by extension, liturgy is primarily a presbyteral action. This conclusion is not only based on the *Letter*’s equation of eucharist and liturgy, but also on the tendency in the *Letter* to define presiding only in presbyteral terms, and to predicate priesthood and/or presiding as central to certain key biblical memories or dogmatic statements of the Church. As I have demonstrated, many of these are dubious assertions. Furthermore, I would suggest that a presbyteral image of liturgy is not in concert with that outlined in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* which defines liturgy not in terms of priesthood but in terms of “Christ the priest and... His Body, the Church” [para. 7]. Such a presbyteral prejudice in this liturgical instruction is also questionable in a fraternity, whose founding and guiding charism was not presbyteral but much more evangelical—what this age might more appropriately characterize as baptismal. Ironically, the *Letter* only contains a single reference to baptism [para 37].

End notes

¹ Especially *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962 (1927)).

² See his *Truth and Being*, eds. Garret Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

³ See, for example, his 1883 publication *Introduction to the Human Sciences*.

⁴ This analysis is based upon the Italian text, which appears to be the original. It can be found in *Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum* 111:2 (June-September 1992), 85-93.

⁵ See, for example, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* which, in para. 7, enumerates something of the breadth of the liturgy (i.e. eucharist, sacraments, proclamation of the word, when the Church prays and sings), or para. 10 which speaks of the “liturgy” and then specifies by noting “particularly the eucharist.”

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, the paragraph indications employed throughout this article are based on the numbering given in the English translation contained in this issue of *The Cord*.

⁷ The term “Divine Office” which occurs in the English translation (para. 25) does not appear in the Italian, although the term “office” (*l'ufficio*) occurs in a quote from the writings of Francis (para 31).

⁸ See, for example, the occurrences of the term in paragraph 25, which falls under the larger heading “A New Commitment to the Church’s Liturgy” (*Un Nuovo Impegno per la Liturgia della Chiesa*).

⁹ There is no evidence that “apostles” were considered “priests” or “presbyters” in the New Testament; nor is there any evidence in the New Testament that the Apostles (with the possible exception of Paul who, however, was not at the Last Supper) ever presided at eucharist; nor is there any evidence in the New Testament that anybody called a “priest” or “presbyter” ever presided at eucharist. See, for example, Raymond Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), especially pp. 13-20 (“The Absence of Christian Priests in the NT”) and pp. 40-45 (“The One who Presided at Eucharist”). For a more recent discussion, see Kenan Osborne, *Priesthood: A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), pp. 40-85 (“Ministry: 27 to 110 A.D.”).

¹⁰ This is evident, for example, by the previously cited para. 7 of the *Constitution*, as well as para. 10 which speaks of “the liturgy . . . especially the eucharist!”

¹¹ In support of this statement, the *Letter* follows with a totally indefensible employment of *Romans* 12:8 which is translated “*Chi presiede, lo faccia con diligenza* (He who presides should do so with diligence).” The Greek text, however, reads “*ho proistamenos en spoude*, which does not mean “preside” but literally “taking the lead in diligence.” As Bo Reike comments in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, “Here the second expression (i.e. *ho proistamenos* . . .) is plainly analogous to the other two, which both refer to works of love. The meaning, then, is somewhat as follows: “He who gives let him do so with simplicity, he who cares with zeal, he who does good with cheerfulness.” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 6:701. By no stretch of the imagination can the text from *Romans* be construed as even remotely liturgical in its meaning.

**“ON LITURGICAL LIFE”:
An Incarnational Approach**

PETER A. LYONS, T.O.R.

The pastoral letter *On Liturgical Life* from the four Ministers General is a helpful addition to the doctrinal and pastoral materials being offered for the general renewal of the liturgy in the church as well as its implementation within the Franciscan family.

The present response will comment on three points made by the Ministers and offer a few suggestions relative to Franciscan themes which have a bearing on liturgical practice.

In their Introduction the Ministers note that the swiftness of changes taking place after Vatican II made for inadequate assimilation not just of the external changes in the Rites but of their spirit and rationale. In retrospect it seems clear that the revision of the Rites should have been accompanied by a more intensive theological assimilation of the principles contained in *Lumen Gentium*, *Dei Verbum*, and *Gaudium et Spes*. Revised rites were appearing helter skelter in the years after the Council, with little internal cohesion and without reference to one another. Among the more glaring examples of this was the issuance of a new *Rite of Baptism* in 1969, a new *Rite of Confirmation* in 1971 and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* in 1972, where the last to be issued is really foundational for the earlier ones. Typically in the United States each new rite was accompanied by catechetical and pastoral programs for their preparation and implementation, with catechists having a virtual free hand to create a theological rationale for what we are doing and why. These theologies have not always stood the test of time.

Happily the situation shows signs of improvement as the theological and biblical reforms of Vatican II gain wider acceptance in the church and a new series of ritual revisions is being issued, rooted in both the theology of Vatican II and the experience of liturgical renewal. But the horizon is not without its clouds as reactionary voices in the church seek to induce pastors and office

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holders to reverse the process of liturgical renewal and return to pre-conciliar practice. Warnings against taking unjustified liberties with the rites is one thing; apodictic statements that the period of liturgical reform is over is quite another. The Catholic faithful are receiving confusing mixed messages from their pastors and this in turn is fueling dissension and division in the very area that should be the church's source of unity. The Ministers General are to be commended for their balanced presentation in which they warn against the twin dangers of unjustified innovations and that "literal and scrupulous observance of the norms" that results from laziness or fear.

Under Title I, "Rediscovering a Treasure," the Ministers call upon the brothers and sisters to make a critical examination of our actual liturgical practices in light of both conciliar and post-conciliar documents. While this is an excellent suggestion, its full impact may easily be lost because of its vagueness and generality. Perhaps national, regional or jurisdictional groups of Franciscans will develop an instrument for a liturgical audit by which local communities can make such a self assessment. Among the issues such an audit might address would be:

- Are the churches and chapels free of clutter, so that the primary liturgical symbols of altar and ambo, font and chair, are clearly featured?
- Are these primary symbols of noble design and execution and in harmony with one another?
- Are devotional objects placed in such a way as not to compete with the liturgical action?
- Are chairs or pews so arranged that the assembly is drawn into the celebration rather than being passive recipients of the action of another?
- Are the rites prepared each time or do the liturgical ministers merely open the ritual books and go through the motions?
- Is music used appropriately to facilitate the sung prayer of the assembly, especially for acclamations and responses?
- Do cantors, choirs and instrumentalists support the singing of the assembly or do they replace it?
- Is music selected because it harmonizes with the liturgy or for personal, devotional reasons?
- Are the continuous readings of the daily lectionary proclaimed regularly or are they often replaced by readings of the sanctoral cycle which interrupt the continuity of the Word?
- Are the Eucharistic elements consecrated at each Mass for the whole assembly or are the laity offered previously consecrated elements from the tabernacle?
- Where a number of priests concelebrate the Eucharist together, does this become a cause of unity or a sign of separation with those brothers and sisters in the assembly who are not ordained?
- Does the practice of Mass stipends have a more controlling effect on Eucharistic practice than our theological and liturgical tradition?

Surely others will come up with additional criteria, but the suggestion of the Ministers relative to liturgical self examination will have a long list of concerns to consider.

Still under Title I, the Ministers go on to explain that the liturgy reveals to the world who Jesus Christ is and what the church is called to become. This formative and evocative power of the sacramental rites is one of the more valuable elements of our tradition and one re-discovered and developed in the liturgical renewal emanating from Vatican II. It places a special responsibility upon consecrated religious to experience and to embody this power. For sacraments are no longer seen as quick and easy channels of divine grace but as powerful symbolic realities which shape and form the religious consciousness and call forth a response of faith and action. For Franciscans there may be a particular challenge here if we are accustomed to think of ourselves as already saved from the gritty realities of life or if our structures and lifestyle keep us from close contact with the reality of people's lives, because the mystery of Christ revealed in the liturgy is that of the whole Christ: male and female, black, white, brown and yellow, Catholic and Protestant, rich and poor, homosexual and heterosexual, young and old. And the church is called to become the reality which embraces all of these. If worship in friaries and convents insulates us from the reality of crying babies, restless children, militant minorities, alienated women, bored adolescents, poor people, divorced people, handicapped people, homeless people, then we neither recognize nor proclaim the total Christ or witness to his work in the world. We act counter to the dream of Francis if we insulate ourselves in monasteries cut off from the reality of people's lives. We must, in the image of G. K. Chesterton, be like little fish who swim in and out of the net which surrounds this world, able to enter genuinely into the reality of people's lives and lead them into ours. And while the primary reference here is to active communities of Franciscans, this by no means prejudices those cloistered brothers and sisters whose lives give powerful witness to Christ in the world.

Implicit in the letter of the Ministers are certain elements from our Franciscan heritage which ought to shape our attitude and practice in matters liturgical. At the heart of it, Francis' fundamental vision of reality was incarnational. Witness the Canticle of the Creatures and his deep devotion to the humanity of Jesus in the cross, the crib at Bethlehem and the Holy Eucharist. Francis' spirituality was graphic and tactile, expressive and experiential. In other words it was sacramental. For Franciscans today the same incarnational approach to worship can express itself in the following ways:

Popular preaching. Centered in the gospel call to conversion, and accompanied by deep conviction and passion, such proclamation is rooted in the Franciscan tradition and is not restricted to ordained clerics.

Integrity of presiders and liturgical ministers. A simple, unaffected style of liturgical presence is implicit in the Franciscan character. As liturgical renewal places new emphasis on symbol and ritual and not merely on effective causality, it offers new opportunities for Franciscans to make the gospel credible by the integrity and directness of their liturgical presence.

Solidarity among the brothers and sisters of St. Francis. In a church fractured along gender lines and a culture rampant with individualism, a Franciscan liturgical stance is a strongly communal and egalitarian one. It proclaims and embodies a hope-filled message that relationships of equality and respect are achievable and that confrontation and conflict are not inevitable.

We must be like little fish who swim in and out of the net which surrounds this world, able to enter genuinely into the reality of people's lives and lead them into ours.

Concern for the poor. From New Testament times the Eucharistic liturgy created no false dichotomies between the praise of God and the service of the human community. Communal needs were brought into the assembly and met from the assembly. For Franciscans this is a particularly apt part of our heritage to be reclaimed. The liturgical assembly is a place for consciousness raising and gospel conversion, not only in relation to God, but in relation to God's people, especially those who are poor and oppressed. The Eucharistic assembly has ample resources for serving the poor if the gospel mandate of service is clearly proclaimed.

Peace making. Our rites signify and effect reconciliation and unity. Too often these remain abstractions, idealized concepts that are not experienced tangibly or made available to the wider community beyond our walls. If the power of our rites were accessed anew and made visible to others it would surely go a long way toward creating avenues of bridge building among all the groups in conflict with one another in our society.

Concern for the created order. Since liturgy is symbolic and expresses the transcendent through created reality, it is also a privileged place for witnessing to the holiness of creation. For Franciscans this is second nature, and the liturgy provides an ideal forum for cultivating a respectful and conservative awareness of the material environment.

As with most of these points, they are often embodied and transmitted in non-verbal ways. Franciscan liturgical themes are expressed not so much by courses of instruction as by Franciscan persons imbued with the spirit of Jesus and the Paschal Mystery after the example and in the style of Francis of Assisi.

As a final comment upon the letter of the Ministers, I would pose a modest suggestion. The letter is addressed to "Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord" but signed only by the Ministers General of the three branches of the First Order and the Third Order Regular. Thus these pastoral directives and exhortations are addressed to the full membership of the Franciscan family but presumably the leadership of most of the family was not involved in their formulation. By most of the family I refer to the full membership of the Second Order, the numerous congregations of men and women who follow the Rule of the Third Order Regular and who find a common voice in the International Franciscan Federation and the millions of men and women in the Secular Franciscan Order. Admittedly it can become a daunting task to involve everyone in every project, and there are times when a Minister or Ministers may choose to consult only a particular group. But the renewal of Franciscan liturgical life surely touches every segment of the Order and holds out great promise for the spiritual revitalization of the entire Franciscan family. Moreover the sisters and brothers who are not ordained have a great deal to contribute to liturgical renewal since, from where they sit, they have often experienced the pain of unreformed liturgy.

Finally one can only be grateful that the Ministers have addressed this area of great hope and promise for the Order and the church. May the process continue; may we find means to do critical evaluation of our liturgical practices and to listen to the experience and the suggestions of all our brothers and sisters in St. Francis.

It is quite refreshing that our leadership has taken the responsibility of calling us to consider our attitudes toward the liturgy, the quality of our liturgical lives, and the ways in which a liturgical spirituality feeds our ministerial spirituality.

"ON LITURGICAL LIFE": Attending to Ritual Attitudes

DANIEL P. GRIGASSY, O.F.M.

It is indeed a daunting task to respond to the pastoral letter of the general ministers on liturgical life, especially since such a response was not requested. No doubt, one or the other or all of them may read our words here published and will receive them graciously as we have received theirs. Close scrutiny of our liturgical praxis remains an important concern for periodic investigation by those who follow Christ in the way of Francis. Fresh ways to approach the paschal mystery made present and active in liturgical celebration need to be recovered. The liturgy must find its way back to the center of our Franciscan lives as the source of fraternal unity for which we strive, the foundation of the holiness and justice toward which we aim, and the catalyst of evangelical and missionary commitment which remains our charism. What is the lifespan of a ministerial spirituality if it is not first grounded securely in a eucharistic spirituality to nourish and sustain it?

The tone of the generals' letter raises several questions: Why has this letter been written at this particular juncture? Is there a hidden agenda which motivates it? How are the issues addressed going to resolve themselves in actuality? Do the authors have expectations about such resolutions? Do they regard the state of liturgical life in the Order at a critical juncture or is the letter simply a pious exercise admonishing the friars to remain steadfast and faithful?

To draw this string of questions from the text of the letter may be overstating the general ministers' intentions. Whatever their responses may be, this author, nevertheless, finds it quite refreshing that our leadership has taken the responsibility of calling us to consider our attitudes toward the liturgy, the quality of our liturgical lives, and the ways in which a liturgical spirituality feeds our ministerial spirituality.¹ The invitation from the editor of *The Cord* to put ourselves in dialogue with the ministers' letter is a clever attempt to keep in play the issue of our liturgical life, if only for a time. Ideas set out here may stimulate exchange among friars who have experienced in the last two decades a malaise concerning things liturgical. Hopefully, our words will spark further discussion in rec rooms, refectories, house chapters, and perhaps on future pages of this journal.

The general ministers toss out several liturgical hot potatoes: doctrinal principles and normative pastoral guidelines; the ecclesial meaning of the liturgy; the need for liturgical catechesis; the public nature of worship; the priest as servant; the style of presiding; creativity within appropriate limits; the liturgical formation of our candidates; reexamination of attitudes toward the liturgy; the formative value of daily Eucharist; observance of the liturgical calendar

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and Franciscan feasts; reclaiming popular Franciscan devotions; cultivating a liturgical piety. Juggling all these items would certainly stimulate discussion; the other respondents will probably pick up on some of them. Time and space limit this reflection to four items: (1) presiding at Eucharist; (2) liturgical abuses; (3) eucharistic concelebration; and (4) the mutual formation of liturgical attitudes among friars in initial and ongoing formation.

(1) *Presiding at Eucharist.* The general ministers refer to a letter of the French Episcopal Conference in which a useful distinction of roles is made: "The one who presides is not the proprietor of the Eucharist, but its faithful servant, in communion with the entire universal church." In other words, the Eucharist and its rites do not belong to me because I am a priest; rather, it is because I am a priest that I have been commissioned to exercise responsible stewardship over eucharistic rites and symbols such that their power is unleashed for the assembly convoked in memory of God's definitive deed for us in the death of Christ. This servant-responsibility, claim the general ministers, is "to provide the celebration with a dignified structure as well as an organic vitality." They name it "the art of liturgical presiding."

Indeed, it is an art to escort the assembly through the labyrinth of the rite with style and grace so that the same sensation of meaning and intention may nourish and sustain them as a community at worship. The art of presiding demands skills which go beyond the appropriation of technique. The art presupposes the priest's ability to inhabit the rite so that his presence invites the assembly to join Christ's prayer to the Father in the Spirit. The priest-presider is first and foremost the servant of the rite, the one who oversees the proper movement of the rite and leads the baptized as one of the baptized to the source of refreshment for further ministry and service which is the gospel commission of all the baptized.

Indeed, it is true that the ritual texts and rubrics, the symbols, gestures, and postures which the universal Church has endorsed in liturgical books provide boundaries and limits. However, these boundaries are not drawn to shackle or constrain us; they instruct us to move freely within their limits. As the general ministers warn, "barbarous creativity" which does violence to the very nature of the liturgy is to be avoided. To balance a potentially reactive interpretation of that rather humorous phrase, they refer to the Italian Episcopal Conference's pointed statement that addresses the other side of the same coin, that is, the lack of any attempt to be creative: "the literal and scrupulous observance of the norms, excluding the possibility of making choices and adaptations provided by the norms themselves [is not] always a sign of praiseworthy fidelity [but rather] the result of laziness." The responsibility remains for every friar to find that balance.

The American culture has exerted a powerful force on all that occurs in Sunday assemblies. At present there is a movement in several free churches toward "entertainment evangelism" or "performance evangelism" which sets out as its goal the close imitation of current media forms of advertizing and advancement to disarm the audience's sentiments, grip their emotions, and satisfy their immediate needs.² The Catholic spirit since Vatican II has resisted this tendency to reduce the assembly to an audience and has insisted on inviting full and active participation among all who worship. Nonetheless, the seventies birthed forth many young priests who started off as ecclesiastical Johnny Carsons and have culturally adapted to accommodate the changing demands of the nineties, yet insist on placing themselves at the center of the action rather than leading the assembly's worship. There is a significant difference between the two mindsets. Ample literature based on good theology and insightful communication theory has been generated in the last decade. It warns against the effectiveness of the former approach and calls presiders to a renewed style of presiding.³

The general ministers call all the friars to a "rediscovery" of enthusiasm which accompanied the early liturgical reform as well as to a "reconversion" to the liturgy itself. Both entail

a "reexamination" of attitudes toward the liturgy, a deeper understanding of the principles of liturgical renewal, and a "heading decisively toward a new style of celebration." This impassioned call for ongoing conversion causes one to pause. What precisely is the "new style of celebration" of which they speak? A friar who approaches the text, whether young, middle-aged or more mature, whether right or left, whether center-right or center-left, could interpret this call from whichever angle of vision he chooses to legitimate his own stance. The intended meaning of "a new style of celebration" is unclear and leaves room for multiple interpretations. Perhaps the ambiguity is purposeful in order to leave room, but does the lack of clarity here help the situation or frustrate it?

In some pockets of our country, something positive is happening in liturgical presiding these days. A renewed self-consciousness on the part of presiders is crystallizing a refreshing self-awareness of the presider not as performer before but minister to the assembly. Some question this tendency as a move to formalize the rites. As one friar recently stated: "It seems that if it is not high Episcopalian, no one is satisfied!" Other friars see the change in mood as a desire to reclaim the rites in their integrity and to reinvigorate them with "an organic vitality." However one interprets the recent turn in attitude, there is no doubt that the presider brings his personality and personal prayer style to the public act of worship. Wherever he stands on the ideological spectrum, it is important for the responsible steward of Christian symbols to be mindful that rubrics are included in liturgical books as helps in securing a recognizable standard of usage found appropriate in worshipping assemblies.⁴

Fr. Aidan Kavanagh, O.S.B., has suggested that, on the one hand, to regard rubrics as more than this is unhealthy and unproductive; on the other, to regard them as less than this is an attitude fraught with risks which ought to be monitored with caution and care.⁵ He then draws parallels between rubrics and grammar, and offers an insightful principle for effective presiding: "Grammatical rules also will not produce great speech any more than liturgical rubrics alone will result in a great act of celebration, [but] neither great speech nor great liturgy can afford to ignore the rules basic to each without risking the collapse of both."⁶ Friars need to consider the wisdom in these words.

(2) *Liturgical abuses.* In the same letter of the French Episcopal Conference which the general ministers used to challenge the proprietor model of presiding in favor of the servant model, there is also a call to bishops and priests to raise objections against abuses when they arise. This notion of "abuse" needs to be broadened. The ordinary interpretation of the term triggers images of ritual renegades who throw all discretion to the wind and "do their own thing" with liturgical form and expression. Indeed, that is an abuse. Unfortunately, that extraordinary interpretation of the term all too often does not include those who still resist even the most minimal adaptation of liturgical expression and thus remain stuck in the priest-proprietor model of presiding at Eucharist which the French bishops contest.

If there are abuses (and there are), they should certainly be corrected. But why are liturgical enthusiasts who step beyond the limits of the rite consistently the ones who are reproved? For instance, a shift in language in the Eucharistic Prayer may cause a stampede from the right, whereas the good people of God may regularly tolerate the elimination of the rite of peace, the refusal of the cup to ministers and assembly, the stockpiling of hosts in tabernacles for convenience sake, or the insulting and alienating effects of proprietor-presiders who allow the people to watch him say Mass rather than inviting them to pray the Great Prayer with him, all of which are directly contested in the normative documents of the Church in this country. Such regressive abuses from the right are equally threatening to integral ritual expression as Progressive abuses from the left appear to be. Frequent abuses of authority and the failure to

minister responsibly on the part of those who have either consistently opposed or given lip service to liturgical renewal need to be named "abuses" and addressed as such.

(3) *Eucharistic concelebration.* For many American Franciscans, concelebration is a word with bells hanging on every letter. They have rung loudly and sometimes fiercely in large communities where the practice becomes especially problematic. In the midst of various opinions playing themselves out in practice, an admonition to continue concelebration now comes from the general ministers. Although their letter slips in a surprisingly brief and oblique sentence on the subject, it warrants attention here because, for many friars, cleric and lay, concelebration is not a positive ecclesial experience. Where some regard it a personal right, others consider it fragmenting the primal eucharistic symbol of unity. Priests who concelebrate are often accused of dividing the unity of the community while those who simply take communion at the conventual Mass are regarded as equally divisive and even contemptuous.

To concelebrate or not to concelebrate is a choice that confronts every friar-priest at one time or another. The dynamics in the choice also provide the arena in which current anticlericalism plays itself out even within our Order which perceives itself as a non-clerical religious institute despite other categories assigned to it from without. To engage the issue of concelebration here is not to insinuate that it is always and everywhere out of order. Indeed, there are times when it is most appropriate, for instance, when the local church gathers and the bishop presides. However, it seems that in recent years what could function as a healthy pluriformity has been muzzled into a mutual toleration of ideologies so much so that there is no fraternal exchange on the subject at all. Of course, for those who live in small parochial communities, this discussion is irrelevant, but for those who find themselves in large academic or (semi-)retirement communities, this issue colors the community's fraternal life. Larger friaries may find themselves dealing with the question of economics and its relation to concelebration. If the accruing of stipends is the singular item that drives the debate in favor of regular concelebration, such arguments misplace the theological focus by privileging economics over theology.⁷

Abundant theological literature on concelebration has been generated in the last decades, but little critical evaluation of the actual practice has been done. While much of the literature stresses the theological value of the unity of the Church as communion, it is not clearly symbolized in the current rite. In fact, the opposite is true. Many Franciscans formed after *Perfectae Caritatis* (1965) experience a fundamental uneasiness with concelebration because it takes the ministerial rite of Eucharist and transposes it to a primatial rite. More emphasis is placed on the unity of the ministerial priesthood or the equality of ministerial priests as distinguished from the laity; less is placed on the unity of the Church at worship. Such a ritual gesture reaffirms the identity of the priest rather than reaffirming the unitive role of the community. Friars need to consider these non-verbal statements seriously.

In ordinary circumstances, concelebration does not function as an effective symbol of the unity of the eucharistic assembly. What may appear to be a committee presidency creates confusion on the symbolic level with regard to leadership. If each priest insists on exercising his office in an active way, then the ritual expresses an individualistic rather than a communal attitude. Never would we imagine setting up a committee chairmanship at a convention or at a formal banquet with each member of that committee delivering a part of the presidential address or with all of them reciting it chorally.⁸

The comments set out here attempt to distill the dissonance that many friars experience in the current rite of eucharistic concelebration. Of course, it is not a black or white issue, that is, concelebration is not always appropriate nor is it always inappropriate. While regular

concelebration may run the risk of reinforcing the primatial character of a ministerial rite, regular refusal to concelebrate may create the illusion that ministerial priesthood is simply a function and nothing more. It is no longer responsible to instruct candidates for the Order, as one recently testified, that only diocesan priests concelebrate while Franciscan priests never concelebrate because the act is one of violence against the fraternity. Franciscans need to reappropriate the healthy distinction between ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of the faithful as one of kind and not of degree. Some balance needs to be achieved where presbyters gathered around the bishop with the entire worshipping assembly may indeed be a vital symbol of unity and service.

(4) *Initial and ongoing liturgical formation.* In some ways the first three concerns spill over into a fourth: the reciprocal relationship of attitudes between friars in initial and ongoing formation and the mutually formative power of these attitudes. Consciously or unconsciously appropriated attitudes color the worship event and often influence both the personal and communal reception of the experience. Whether friars prepare for solemn vows, whether they look forward to silver or golden jubilees, they have absorbed dominant American values by a kind of cultural osmosis. Scientific or analytic knowledge remains the only trusted way to grasp reality; communication functions as a process of conveying information about that reality. This cultural mood induces a literalistic mindset which often hinders religious symbols from being experienced as symbols in all their richness. Thus, the symbols are reduced to mere signs. Their meanings are either captured in static statements about an ontological deity who exists in the conscious mind, or they are encapsulized in overly sentimental statements about a feathery deity who lives in a holy elsewhere.

A revitalized notion of the vital role of liturgical symbols needs to be reawakened in us. The purpose of liturgical symbols is not to convey supernatural facts but to engage us in relationships with God and with each other. All too often liturgical rituals seem to be executed to "get the job done." That attitude stymies their primary intention which is to constitute meanings and express dispositions. As friars who are busy about many things, we need to ask ourselves the hard question: are our rituals accomplishing that primary purpose?

Many among us continue to interpret the liturgy as one among several ministerial functions whose purpose is to educate the assembly and to provide an exercise in catechesis to update and inform them on issues of faith and morals. Though these concerns are important, they are not the primary goal of liturgical celebration. The real objective of the liturgy is an encounter with the mystery of God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. That encounter then gives rise to thought, insight, and recommitment. Creative imaginations are presupposed. Reflective dispositions and lives of personal prayer on the part of those who participate are presupposed. An ability to engage the event of word and sacrament not only analytically but also analogically is a requisite. Willingness among the participants to bridge the gap between themselves and the celebration is presumed so that the symbols may enable them to experience reality in new and transformed ways. Ordained or lay friars who lead the faithful in worship must be willing to enter into the symbols, to lead the assembly into the symbols, and to dwell there, even if just for a time. If we inhabit the symbols with a sense of expectation that, indeed, something is going to happen, that sense of joyful expectation may be revitalized.⁹

Several provinces of the Order as well as other religious institutes are currently absorbed in the responsible task of refounding through ministries. They are about the business of recrafting religious life for a new era. However vital this task is, it may be blinding us to our own need on a regular basis to express ourselves as Church and thus constitute ourselves as the Body of Christ. Some Franciscan communities rarely if ever express themselves liturgically because everything they do is centripetal; everything has an outward thrust. This, of course, is

a prized piece in our charism. But there is a hidden demon here that, over a protracted period of time, can be corrosive. In other words, the Eucharist, seasonal communal penance services, individual penance, regular popular devotions, and other public liturgical acts can be perceived as services which we perform in order to ingratiate the people who come to our churches to pray. Thus, the friar's personal prayer runs the risk of remaining extrinsic to the act of public worship. Should we not be perceiving our liturgical ministry as public acts of prayer into which we enter with the People of God who assemble with us in the name of Christ?

Slowly and unpredictably, understanding dawns and new meanings are disclosed to those who become involved in the symbols and who linger over them imaginatively. What remains a lost piece in the liturgical puzzle of the last several decades is the development of this symbolic disposition. How has this tendency affected the liturgical behavior of friars currently in formation to solemn vows? Of course, it is always a danger to generalize when one has not been exposed to everything that lies beyond one's own limits. But indulge this author for just a moment.

Most friars with a living memory of the day prior to Vatican II have noticed that recent candidates have not been marinated in the Catholic ethos or socialized to its structures and language as in the past. At present, we are reaping the harvest of the last few decades. Of course, through no fault of their own, they have not assimilated dispositions or appropriated worlds of meaning generated by image, symbol, posture, gesture, and movement. The cultural mood has induced a literalism which is difficult to crack or stretch. Compounding this situation are friars well beyond the years of initial formation who long ago relinquished those burdens and now find themselves stuck in their most formative years of the seventies with little else than "entertainment evangelism" as their liturgical *modus operandi*. The liturgical style which accompanies this attitude has the potential to create confusion for those in initial formation. They do not know where to find a standing place: with those who desire to call them beyond informal deritualized liturgies, or with those who tend toward a neo-iconoclasm and barb at any ritualization whatsoever, such as the sign of the cross, praying the presidential prayers with arms extended, signing the gospel, genuflecting, bowing, wearing appropriate vesture, etc. The deritualization of rites brings on the malaise which our candidates often sense in acts of worship. Inconsistency in the celebration of public rites make them appear as private rites which are then often interpreted as private worship for a private church. As Franciscans, that is not what we are about. The tendency of the past decades to appropriate a minimalistic attitude toward liturgy or even total deritualization of public worship inevitably leads to privatization of rites and their ecclesial meanings.

Further compounding an already confusing situation are recent choices of design for building new worship spaces or renovating old ones. The physical context for ritual often demands the deritualization of rites. This is an unfortunate turn which determines liturgical style. The mood of the seventies created a reactive tone which influenced a move from choirstalls and bare floors to comfortable chairs and carpets. Austerity meant coldness; decor meant intimacy. Since hindsight sharpens vision, we can see that some of these choices were unfortunate. While this judgment may smack of a restorationist position for some, be assured this is not the intent. The question, nonetheless, must be raised regarding the wisdom of some hasty shifts in worship spaces which have proven to restrict the experience of worship. As Sir Winston Churchill said somewhere: "We form our buildings, then our buildings form us." Vital to the overall spiritual formation of candidates for the Order (and thus ministerial formation) is the design and furnishing of chapels in pre-novitiate, novitiate, and post-novitiate houses. Recently, a colleague claimed that, for the last decade or more, most religious in local formation houses have had the singular experience of worship within the context of "boutique liturgies."

Do we as followers of Francis perceive this concern as an issue which debilitates the spirit which he desired to secure for us? We form our worship spaces, then our worship spaces form — or deform — us.

This sort of analysis, no doubt, causes some friars to bristle. Abstracting from the space around them, they are convinced that, as Franciscans, these things do not and, indeed, should not matter. On the contrary, a corollary of the sacramental principle is that environment conditions us. The physicality of our world permits things to happen or limits things from happening.¹⁰ Therefore, a chapel with wall-to-wall carpeting and white-washed walls may please some eyes, yet the space has all the acoustical vigor of an elevator. Spoken or sung words behave in a very limited and limiting way. The texture of sound and sense are constrained to a one-dimensional surface. This judgment is not simply the whimsy of "liturgical types." Communication theorists also insist that, with no "ding" in the air and no sharpness of visual lines or focus, ritual speech, music, and movement are impaired and thus debilitate the entire ritual action.

The current tragedy is that missed opportunities abound due to physical constraints. It seems the dominant therapeutic culture of the last two decades has successfully insinuated itself into liturgical architecture and furnishings and continues to massage and soften us. Aidan Kavanagh boldly claims: "[The liturgy] needs hardness, sonority, and a certain bracing discomfort much like the Gospel itself. Liturgical ambience must challenge, for one comes to the liturgy to transact the public business of death and life rather than to be tucked in with fables and featherpuffs."¹¹ As friars, we need to consider the wisdom of these words.

Architecture either hamstring ritual postures, gestures, and movements, or it frees them. Soft ritual spaces spawn a singular style. The liturgy is thus straight-jacketed into sameness and runs the risk of becoming rote, disengaging, even alienating. Over a protracted period of time, this is usually experienced not as fostering and nourishing faith, but as weakening, numbing, or even destroying it. Liturgical spirituality, which is the condition for the possibility of ministerial spirituality (and thus a re-founded Order), does not seem to hold a priority, or, more subtly, it becomes simply a concept around which one thinks, not an experience which one remembers and values. The general ministers' pastoral letter calls us back to a value.

Concluding Remarks. Given these four items which open up all sorts of Pandora's boxes, a few concluding remarks are in order. The anniversary of the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* will be celebrated on 4 December 1993. Thirty years ago, the fermentation of the early part of this century finally gained papal approbation. We all have stories to tell of the liturgical battlefields upon which we nobly fought, or of the liturgical adolescence which we endured in ourselves and in others. As the turn of millenium approaches, despite the restraint and sometimes mixed signals from those entrusted with authority, a new fermentation percolates.¹² A certain well-balanced maturity has been straining to eclipse the awkward yet stubborn liturgical adolescence which from time to time shows itself. Most Franciscans wince at the trivialization of public prayer when it is reduced to blowing liturgical bubbles or when it acquiesces to idiosyncratic spiritual therapy encounters, all in the name of the Lord. Many of us desire with Francis an observant, dignified yet simple life of common worship.

The Holy Thursday 1992 publication of the general ministers' pastoral letter affords friars the opportunity to bring to the top layer of discussion the quality of their liturgical life together as well as the quality of their liturgical ministries to the churches in which they serve. One wonders why some provinces alerted their friars to the letter's existence while others did not.¹³ Thanks to this publication which serves the English-speaking Franciscan world, it is now accessible as a catalyst for discussion to a much broader Franciscan audience. Let us begin again, for up to now we have done very little.

Endnotes

¹The general ministers tend to use "liturgy" and "Eucharist" interchangeably. The larger term, "liturgy," will be employed here to include Eucharist and all other acts of worship.

²For a fascinating diagnosis and prognosis, See Patrick R. Keifert, *Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 15-55.

³See Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Art of Public Prayer: Not For Clergy Only* (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1988) and Dennis C. Smolarski, S.J., *How Not To Say Mass: A Guidebook For All Concerned About Authentic Worship* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986).

⁴See Theresa F. Koernke, I.H.M., "Toward An Ethics of Liturgical Behavior," *Worship* 66 (1992): 25-38.

⁵*Elements of Rite* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1982), 3.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷John H. Huels, "Stipends in the New Code of Canon Law," in *Living Bread, Saving Cup*, R. Kevin Seasoltz, O.S.B., ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, rev. ed., 1988), 347-356; Edward J. Kilmartin, "Money and the Ministry of the Sacraments," in *The Finances of the Church*, Concilium 117, William Bassett and Peter Huizing, eds. (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 104-111; M. Francis Mannion, "Stipends and Eucharistic Praxis," in *Living Bread, Saving Cup*, 324-346.

⁸R. Kevin Seasoltz, O.S.B., *New Liturgy, New Laws* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980), 86-90. See also Patrick W. Collins, *Bodying Forth: Aesthetic Liturgy* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 112-134 and Gilbert Ost diek, O.F.M., "Concelebration Revisited," in *Shaping English Liturgy*, Peter C. Finn and James M. Schellmann, eds. (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1990), 139-171.

⁹See Robert Taft, S.J., "What Does Liturgy Do? Toward a Soteriology of Liturgical Celebration: Some Theses," *Worship* 66 (1992): 194-211.

¹⁰See Patrick Collins, *Bodying Forth*, 11-36.

¹¹*Elements*, 21.

¹²See the collected papers of the December 1988 colloquium at Georgetown University marking the twenty-fifth anniversary: Lawrence J. Madden, S.J., ed., *The Awakening Church: 25 Years of Liturgical Renewal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992).

¹³The letter was first published in English in *Greyfriars Review* 6, no. 3 (1992): 267-278.

"ON LITURGICAL LIFE": An Inter-jurisdictional Conversation

BRAD A. MILUNSKI, O.F.M. CONV.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T. S. Eliot

Though T. S. Eliot most probably was not thinking of Christian liturgy when he composed these lines, they struck me as particularly apt words with which to continue this inter-jurisdictional conversation concerning "On Liturgical Life." When Christians take one or two steps back to reflect on this primary language of communal worship, it is done — one would hope — not to enforce norms, or worse yet, to attempt to create an experience where none yet exists. Rather it is done to celebrate in a more profound way God's saving action for us in Christ. The rituals, songs, and gestures which remember what God has done for us in Christ are not the products of abstract philosophical and theological treatises but of the faith-born experience of salvation. Liturgy is an action which invites our response as if we were discovering salvation for the first time in awe and wonder. I believe it is within this context that the letter from the ministers general should be received and welcomed. Given the time which has elapsed since the words *Sacrosanctum Concilium* were first heard, this exhortation for a deeper and richer liturgical reform from our own brothers is indeed late in coming, but as the saying goes, better late than never.

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Before I begin my own reflections it might be helpful to the reader to hear the context out of which I write this response. As a friar nearing the end of initial formation, I used the letter first as a springboard to reflect on the past ten years in thanksgiving for the friars who have helped form me and my peers in the church's rites by the example of their own lives of faith and celebration. They have taught me not only the "how to's" but also the theological, spiritual, and pastoral dimensions of the liturgical life of the body of Christ. I remember with gratitude my pre-novitiate director who instilled in me a love for the liturgy by walking through its rituals in a way that invited participation, enthusiasm, and reverence. My current professors in presiding and liturgy have continued to form me in this living tradition as I am called to delve more deeply into the liturgy's theological richness with its pastoral implications.

Formation has not consisted solely of peak liturgical experiences, however. I have also witnessed by chance private Masses by lone presiders at solitary altars and the occasional matter-of-fact liturgies—all having the propensity to weaken rather than foster and nourish faith.¹ These occurrences notwithstanding, the liturgy prepared and prayed as an expression of the communal and ecclesial experience of faith has won the day in my own life. It is this hope which propels my own enthusiasm for the length and breadth of the church's ancient and venerable traditions and their future expressions. I have no doubt that the gifts I have been given by formation directors, professors, and peers are set upon a firm foundation.

The tensions and compromises often come in the proverbial "out there," that is, in the places we minister, whether as ordained ministers or not. It is for this reason that I applaud the letter's call for ongoing formation in the liturgy. The first cry of exasperation might be, "More workshops? Who has the time?!" Ongoing formation in the liturgy does not necessarily entail even leaving the comfort of one's home. What it does entail, however, is a willingness at the very least to re-read the principles and theology which undergird the conciliar vision of the liturgy. There is no time like the present to allow our pastoral praxis and manner of celebrating to be critiqued by the vision of Vatican II concerning the liturgy. If this necessary dialogue between theology and liturgy does not continue in the life of each professional minister, especially those who preside daily at the church's rites, both theology and liturgy show forth debilitating effects.

One of the most daring yet honest statements of the letter concerned the tension which results when conciliar theology clashes with a training characterized as "mostly rubrical." [para. 5] Such a training, taken for granted in its day, may have instilled a reverence for the liturgy; however, such a reverence would be characterized today as divorced from its moorings. What grounds the believer to celebrate is the conviction that the liturgy is meant to be transformative of the whole human person in Christ—not human persons as solitary

individuals but as members of a community which celebrates and remembers in a most profound way its salvation. Precisely because liturgy, the *lex orandi*, is the heart of the church's expression of itself, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the quality and prayerfulness of a community's liturgical celebrations indicate its vitality as a community committed to the realization of God's reign among us. From my limited albeit diverse experiences of liturgy, it seems that the vitality of liturgical celebration, especially of the Sunday Eucharist, and the degree of welcome given by members of the community to strangers in their midst are two very significant factors which draw people inside the doors of our convents, friaries, and church buildings. And should this surprise us if we really believe, in the words of the often-quoted axiom, that liturgy is the source and summit of our life as church?² No doubt such vibrant, often simple celebrations strike at something in the hearts of those in the assembly and contribute to whatever degree to their authentic human development as Christians.

Perhaps the ecclesial and communal nature of the liturgy is one of the most valuable reminders to take from the letter. This is a lesson which we have known and theologized about for centuries but need to be reminded of sometimes as if we were hearing it for the first time. The liturgy is essentially ecclesial, therefore communal, therefore not private—in theory or in pastoral praxis.³ The letter promptly reminds us that one implication of this is that we who celebrate the liturgy, whatever our ministerial function, must respect its texts and signs and pay attention to the whole celebrating assembly [para. 6-7]. Liturgy is never celebrated in the abstract but only within the concrete context of a community remembering its salvation. As the sources quoted in the letter reveal, however, "respect" should not mean rigidity or failure to promote real creativity. "Respect" also means the legitimate use of options which the texts themselves provide but which are not used because we have slid into comfortable patterns of complacency. Too often, it seems, our corporate ministries are governed not by real fidelity to the liturgical norms and principles but by the "L-word" which the document itself uses: laziness [para. 18].

The letter rightly acknowledges the role of presider as servant of the shared rituals of the church; the presider is therefore not the owner of the liturgy. One should also add that the presider is the servant of the community as well and that each community gathered has the right to all the richness of the church's heritage of ritual, song, and symbol.⁴ As diverse as the liturgical ministries in a given community may be, "[N]o other single factor affects the liturgy as much as the attitude, style, and bearing of the celebrant..."⁵ From welcome to homily to appearance, the presider sets the tone, regardless of how diverse and well-prepared the other liturgical ministers may be.

As I stated above, this letter from our brother friars is a little late in coming; it also has its limitations. The language of the text is such that it could have been written in 1972 as well as 1992. Perhaps this is a two-edged sword. On the one hand this letter manifests the felt need we have as communities of friars and sisters minor continually to imbibe the principles of liturgical reform. This is done so that our liturgical life celebrated with the wider church community suffers neither neglect nor so much creativity that its ecclesial character is called into question. On the other hand, the language of the letter serves to ignore the thornier issues which engage many in our church, especially religious communities, for example, the official exclusion of women from sectors of ministerial life. No amount of quotes from the Second Vatican Council or Francis of Assisi will make such issues dissipate.

A second caution concerning the letter concerns the suggestions toward the end as to concrete forms of liturgy and devotions which should have pride of place in our ministries and communal life. For the more rubrically minded among us who take this letter as more legislation rather than no-less-important exhortation, the temptation is to use the letter as a checklist and perfunctorily implement all the devotions and forms of liturgy listed without attention to the way in which they are implemented, and more importantly, celebrated. As the letter implies, no amount of legislation alone is going to make the liturgy the center of our lives. Only prayerful discernment of the liturgy as a vital part of our spirituality and attention to the theological principles which underlie the liturgy will do this for us and the people whom we serve.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, what the letter calls for at the very least is for friars and sisters minor to be active promoters of the church's tradition of liturgy by encouraging study of the documents, and more importantly, by the hard work of quality celebration of liturgy. If the liturgy is indeed the source and summit of our lives as those washed and reborn in Christ's dying and rising, then attentiveness to how we celebrate the church's rites cannot but be a priority for Franciscans who profess, like our founder, to be in tune with the church. The paradoxical result of this willingness to be attuned is that our exploration of the church's rituals and symbols lead us not to something alien and completely new to our experience, but to the dynamic presence of Christ in our midst as if we were seeing him for the first time.

Endnotes

¹ *Music in Catholic Worship* (1972), 6.

² *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 26-27.

⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14.

⁵ *Music in Catholic Worship*, 21.

Franciscan Federation, Third Order Regular, of the Brothers and Sisters of the United States

The Franciscan Federation is offering a Summer Enrichment Experience at St. Bonaventure University from July 3-24, 1993:

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