THE 2013 ALCUIN CLUB LECTURE:
"THE RECEPTION OF *SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM* FIFTY YEARS ON"
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1. Introduction

Five and a half years ago at Archbishop's House in Westminster when the former Papal Master of Ceremonies Archbishop Piero Marini launched his new book, *A Challenging Reform: Realizing the Vision of the Liturgical Renewal* (Liturgical Press, 2007), he made a rather bold statement: "The Future of Liturgy is the Future of the Church. The following morning during a press conference he expanded on what he meant by those words:

"...Celebrating the liturgy is itself the primordial source of renewal in the Church. We learn the liturgy by celebrating it. The more we succeed at celebrating the liturgy, the more we'll live the Christian life fully and the more we'll succeed in transforming the Church... The great ideals of the Church are in crisis today in part because there's a crisis in the liturgy. The great ideals of ecumenism, of internal reform of the Church, are all connected. The crisis of the liturgy places in crisis these other great values, because the Council wanted to confront these challenges of the mission of the Church, or reform, of dialogue with the world, by beginning with the liturgy. If the liturgy is the source and summit, then we foster in the liturgy the kind of life we need to meet these great goals. If these great movements of the Church are in difficulty today, we have to look to the difficulty in the liturgy."[1]

But as we consider the legacy of *Sacrosanctum concilium* fifty years on, and as we look toward the future of Roman Catholic worship, hope lies also in the past.

2. Twentieth Century Conciliar Foundations

In his *Tablet* article of last December reflecting on the foundations of the Second Vatican Council, Archbishop Rowan Williams underlined the importance of the *nouvelle théologie*, particularly the work of French theologians Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac. That theology challenged the old philosophical and theological presuppositions of Scholasticism, ultimately breaking down barriers between Church and society, and leading to a recognition that God's grace at work in the world is not limited to our human or religious constructs. Together with Jean Danièlou in France and Hans urs von Balthasar in Switzerland, a new generation of Patristic scholarship emerged.2 This *nouvelle théolgie*, of course, would have serious implications for the renewal of Roman Catholic worship and would bear fruit within the Conciliar liturgical reforms. Indeed, the ultimate success of the twentieth century liturgical movement can be attributed to the

[1]Marini Interview with John L. Allen, Jr., Archbishop's House, Westminster, London U.K., December 15, 2007, 6.

2 Rowan Williams, "Lead, radical light." *The Tablet* (22/29 December 2012), 24-25.

fact that it did not work in isolation but rather grew in tandem with the evolving biblical, patristic, and ecumenical movements as they emerged within Europe and North America. This collaboration within ecclesial renewal was all part of the wider movement of *Ressourcement* – a return to the sources that would contribute significantly to an overall renewal of pastoral and liturgical life in the latter twentieth century.3 With the first volumes of the collection *Sources Chrétiennes* published in 1942, *Ressourcement* sought to re-shape Catholic Theology from the perspective of the Patristic age where liturgy, theology, and mysticism shared an intrinsic relationship. What *Ressourcement* offered the liturgical movement was a rediscovery of liturgy's Christological dimension – liturgy itself as a theological act.

Like the liturgical pioneers themselves, both De Lubac and Congar had their own detractors as the theological vision they were proposing was seen as less than Orthodox. Indeed, in those pre-Conciliar years, any suggestion that the Church was the mystical body of Christ was considered suspect. When the Founder of the U.S. Liturgical Movement Virgil Michel stated the same in the pages of *Orate Fratres* (later *Worship*), he was accused of attempting to undermine the Church hierarchy. Thus, it was not until Pius XII's 1943 encyclical *Mystici Corporis* that the ecclesiological and patristic movement's recovery of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ came to be ratified and officially accepted. That encyclical was written in the midst of the Second World War and addressed the pain and grief of so much death and destruction in a call to solidarity with those who suffered. It stated that the Eucharist gives us "a striking manifestation of our union among ourselves and with Christ." Through the power of the Spirit we receive "the spirit of charity which draws us into loving Christ by zealously loving the members of his social body: the weak and wounded; the poor and sick in whom we recognize Christ himself." Similarly, it was not until 1947 when the same Pius XII published his encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy *Mediator Dei* – the first encyclical on liturgy in the history of the Church – that the liturgical movement was actually legitimated and made credible. It is for the same reason that the Second Vatican Council must be seen not only as a point of departure but also a point of arrival – the fruit of these various ecclesial movements that were borne in the twentieth century.

In the period between those two encyclicals of Pius XII and the dawn of the Second Vatican Council, it is important to mention the International Liturgical Congress at Assisi held in 1956, which in many respects paved the way for the Council's Preparatory Commission on the Liturgy. There, a network of contacts and resources grew and the liturgical movement was no longer a mere lobbying effort registering limited success. Indeed, the Assisi Congress was convoked by the Prefect of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani who presided over the meeting and all 1400 delegates were received by Pope Pius XII in a private audience at the end of the week. Thus, the Assisi convocation represented a certain coming of age for the liturgical movement, and it was the "A List" at Assisi that became the primary group involved with shaping the Council's liturgical agenda.

3. The Liturgical Reforms of The Second Vatican Council

3 See Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Vatican II was well aware of change in the world – more than any of the twenty ecumenical councils that had preceded it. It had emerged within the complex social context of the Cuban Missile Crisis, a rise in Communism, and military dictatorships around the globe. Despite those global crises, however, the Council generally viewed the world positively and with a certain degree of optimism. The credibility of the Church's message – its capacity to link liturgy with ordinary life and work – would necessarily depend on its capacity to reach far beyond the confines of the Catholic ghetto into the marketplace – into non-Christian and indeed, non-religious spheres. This is evident in various Conciliar documents such as *Gaudiam et Spes* and particularly in its Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*. The Council also affirmed the Church's way forward as one of pilgrimage – as a "universal sacrament of salvation," as "the people of God" imbued with a variety of gifts, as "a communion of life and love." All this, once again, was quite consistent with the vision articulated by the protagonists of the *nouvelle théologie* twenty years prior.

Indeed, one cannot underestimate the influence of *ressourcement* within *Sacrosanctum concilium* itself. A mere survey of the extensive biblical and Patristic references bears this out as compared with the relatively few references to the teachings of the Catholic Church such as those that refer to the final sessions of the Council of Trent. As *ressourcement* meant a return to the Fathers of the Early Church, this also opened the door to a more ecumenical ecclesiology that would easily find a home within *Sacrosanctum* concilium. As Massimo Faggioli notes in his recently published text *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum concilium,4:* "Liturgy seemed to provide for the encounter between Christians of different Churches a new and at the same time old language, shaped by the first millennium and thus ecumenically shared and far less polemical than dogmatic theology and canon law."5

Thus, the major theological, historical, and pastoral themes that marked the liturgical movement itself came to play a significant role in the shaping of the Liturgy Constitution, and then in the implementation of the reforms under the leadership of the international *Consilium*. Moroever, *Sacrosanctum concilium* contains the ecclesial vision of the entire Council in miniature – the vision underlying all the other Conciliar documents can be found inherent within this first document to be approved by the Council Fathers. Faggioli argues that this is true to such an extent that one could actually apply the classic principle of *Lex orandi, lex credendi* to *Sacrosanctum concilium:* the *lex orandi* of the Liturgy Constitution as articulated in the *lex credendi* of subsequent Conciliar documents. Consequently critics of the liturgical reform in these post-Conciliar years must be seen as critics of the Council itself -- of its ecumenical ecclesiology and its theological import in the wider sense.6

The Liturgy Constitution strikes a careful balance between historical and theological foundations, between "sound tradition and legitimate progress." In many respects, it was a *via*

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4 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2012).

5 Faggioli, 34.

6 Faggioli, 19-22.

media – a compromise document that attempted to appease both conservative and progressive camps. But *Sacrosanctum concilium* was also much more than a *via media*. In some cases it called for a complete revision of liturgical books and not a mere superficial editing of what was present in the Tridentine liturgy.7 And while the Constitution did not use the term ïnculturation," it does acknowledge the need to allow for "legitimate variations and adaptation to different groups, regions, and peoples, especially in mission lands."8 Several paragraphs later, the text is even more forthright: "In some places and circumstances, however, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed."9 In other words, it may not be enough to simply adapt the Roman Rite to particular cultures and circumstances.

In approving the Liturgy Constitution *Sacrosanctum concilium* on the 4th of December 1963 by an extraordinary margin of 2147 bishops in favor and only 4 opposed, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council initiated a movement which is irreversible. The fundamental principles established in the Liturgy Constitution of the priesthood of the baptized, the primacy of Sacred Scripture; a return to Patristic sources; the possibility of adaptation in language and in other elements of the Church's rites are not limited to a historical period, rather they are perennial.[10]

With the desire to recover "full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy,"the Council took up once again discussion on the vernacular question that had first been introduced at the Council of Trent four centuries prior, arguing in favor of the employment of local languages on the grounds of intelligibility;11 not surprisingly, it proved to be one of the most hotly debated topics at Vatican II. There were some bishops present at the Council who contended that Latin, even if it was not understood by most, gave Catholics a special identity. Shifting to local languages, they argued, would be tantamount to abandoning Catholic orthodoxy.

The principle of collegiality among bishops was clearly operative in the Constitution: liturgical matters pertaining to the local church were best dealt with by episcopal conferences or even by diocesan bishops themselves.12 Such liturgical de-centralization was justified by the fact that the diocesan bishop is empowered to shepherd that local church and not merely serve as a sort of district representative or middle-manager. Thus the diocesan bishop or episcopal conference should have the authority to make appropriate liturgical decisions that pertain to the particular local church in question.13 Nonetheless, an underlying tension around the issue of collegiality held sway during Council sessions, largely between bishops and cardinals of the

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7 Anscar J. Chupungco, "Sacrosanctum concilium: Its Vision and Achievements"in Ecclesia Orans XIII (1996/3), 500. See Art. 50 on the revision of the Order of Mass.

8 Art. 37

9 Art. 40

[10] Marini Interview with Allen, 5.

11 Art. 36. On the vernacular debate at the Council see Pecklers, Dynamic Equivalence: The Living Language of Christian Worship (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 170-225.

12 Art. 22.

13 Art. 41; Chupungco, 507-508.

Roman Curia who were suspicious of extending authority to episcopal conferences, and diocesan bishops whose pastoral experience made them less threatened by such de-centralization.

4. The International *Consilium* and the Implementation of the Liturgical Reforms

Those tensions during the Council itself became even more acute in the implementation of the liturgical reforms: between the International *Consilium* charged with the task of coordinating that implementation around the world, and the Congregation for Divine Worship which exhibited a much more cautious approach to the same implementation, exerting strict control over the task of translation and implementation at all cost. By and large, with the support of Pope Paul VI, members of the *Consilium*, operated more collegially and with a certain degree of freedom, trusting in their own pastoral experience and appreciation of what it meant to be a local church in communion with the universal Church. Such convictions made them less fearful of change and more open to cultural adaptations at the local level.

Thus, the International *Consilium* moved forward with its task of implementing the liturgical reforms and assisting in the process of reception of the new vernacular texts. Throughout the year of 1964 concrete form was given to the first hopes and proposals, and the ten conferences of bishops gave to the International Commission on English in the Liturgy its formal mandate. In November, 1965, Paul VI addressed liturgical translators from various language groups gathered in Rome for a conference on their new task. Translations into the vernacular, he told them, "have become part of the rites themselves; they have become the voice of the Church gathered in prayer. They now serve a different purpose, he said, for they are no longer merely aids to understanding for those untrained in Latin. That time had passed.[14] Put differently, we could say today that each vernacular language has its own inherent genius – English included – and is capable and indeed worthy of worshiping almighty God.

With the work of the *Consilium* proceeding, the year 1969 brought the publication of the Instruction *Comme le prévoit* on the norms for translation of liturgical texts. In many respects, the document can be seen as an elaboration of what Paul VI had stated in his 1965 address to translators. By and large, it was a hopeful and forward-thinking document arguing in favor of the translation principle of "dynamic equivalence," in which texts are translated dynamically so that they are intelligible and come alive appropriately within the particular vernacular in question. At number 7, for example, we read that translations "must be faithful to the art of communication in all its aspects." Number 6 is even more direct: "A faithful translation, therefore, cannot be judged on the basis of individual words: the total context of the specific act of communication must be kept in mind, as well as the literary form proper to the respective language."

5. Post-Conciliar Developments

By 1973 The International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) had completed

[14] *Documents on the Liturgy*, no. 787.

its work on the first edition of the Sacramentary in English and this was approved by the now eleven member episcopal conferences in 1974-75. As work on the Sacramentary neared completion, the Advisory Commitee of ICEL recommended to ICEL's Episcopal Board that the Sacramentary be introduced for a limited period *Ad experimentum* – perhaps for a period of five years. But the bishops thought that there had been enough provisional texts and it would not be pastorally prudent to extend this for an additional period, so the Sacramentary was approved in 1975.

ICEL moved into a second stage of revision and with the publication of the Second Edition of the Roman Missal in Latin, the first consultation on the revision of the Sacramentary was held on the 4th of October 1982 and continued through 1983. Those intimately involved in the project recognized the many deficiencies of the 1973 Sacramentary. It was clear, for example, that the presidential prayers would need total recasting rather than simply minor revisions and that work began substantially in 1984. Already in the 1982-83 consultations a clear desire was surfacing for alternative opening prayers that would correspond to the three year lectionary. In fact, such texts began appearing in the sacramentaries of other language groups, most notably in the Italian revised *Messale Romano* of 1982.

But unlike the other language groups, the English-speaking world would have a far more difficult time in agreeing on proposed liturgical texts within the various Episcopal conferences, but even more so in the Episcopal conferences relationship to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. While it is not easy to ascertain exactly what went wrong in the process, there was a fundamental communication problem at play between the Congregation and ICEL's Episcopal Board, not to mention within the bishops' conferences themselves. In the practical order, this meant that as Italian, French, German, Portugese, Spanish, and other language groups saw the revisions of their own sacramentaries approved, the English-speaking world held steady with its 1973 Sacramentary, despite ICEL's continued efforts to produce a new Missal in English through the 1980s and 90s.

In the wider area of implementation and reception there is much to be said. Acknowledging the many laudable elements within the Conciliar liturgical reform itself, veteran liturgical scholar Robert Taft, Professor *Emeritus* of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, notes three areas which the reform did not treat well: the process of Christian Initiation; the Liturgy of the Hours; and Communion from the Tabernacle. Taft underscores the irony that one of Pius X's most celebrated and enduring reforms: the lowering of the age for first holy Communion from adolescence to the age of reason, had the unfortunate effect of shifting the time of first Communion before Confirmation, and in the process making first Confession precede first Communion, thereby destroying the age-old sequence of the rites of Christian Initiation.

Taft's second point deals with the Liturgy of the Hours, which he remarks, is not "liturgy" at all but rather a breviary or book of prayers. Even in its reformed state, it remains largely a private and clerical activity rather than a prayer of and by the whole Church. The ancient tradition of the Cathedral Office was largely unknown by the architects of the Council's Liturgy Constitution, or those who were aware of it apparently didn't consider it an urgent matter to

argue for its restoration. Thus, fifty years on, the daily offices remain a rarity in the typical Roman Catholic parish. Here, Roman Catholics have much to learn and receive from their Anglican counterparts not only in the traditional Choral Evensong, but also in the simple praying of Morning and Evening Prayer at the parochial level.15

Thirdly, despite the injunction of Pope Benedict XIV back in 1742 to stop distributing Communion from the tabernacle during the Eucharist, it remains a widespread problem in many Roman Catholic parishes. Church legislation, of course, never made provision for distribution of Holy Communion during Mass from the tabernacle, rather the tabernacle is to be reserved for viaticum and for Eucharistic devotion. But it remains difficult to convince clergy to change their practice of over-consecrating so that the tabernacle is always stocked with the Sacrament.

6. *Sacrosanctum concilium* Fifty Years On

As we look back over the past fifty years there is much for which to be thankful. The post-Conciliar years in the Roman Catholic Church have gradually recovered an understanding of the important and intrinsic relationship between worship and culture; worship and mission—what Karl Rahner called "the liturgy of the world" – liturgy that is lived out beyond the confines of church buildings in the service of those most in need. A recovery of the priesthood of all the baptized has also emerged as an important factor in the years after Vatican II: the liturgical assembly as subject rather than object; "full, conscious, and active participation" not as an option but a baptismal imperative.

This Conciliar understanding of the Church as a *weltkiche* or world Church to use Rahner's terminology, in constant dialogue with the complex and multicultural realities wherein it dwells, led to an awakening of what we now call liturgical inculturation. Here, much has been gained from the insights of CELAM – the organization of Episcopal Conferences in Latin America especially regarding the relationship between liturgy and popular piety, and from the important work that has been done by Latino/a theologians since the 1970s. From the official Roman perspective, the greatest ratification of liturgical inculturation came in 1988 with the approval of "The Roman Rite for the Dioceses of Zaire." It is commonly called the "Zairean" or "Congolese" Rite since it bears very little resemblance to the Roman Rite as we know it.

Another gift of the Conciliar reforms has been the recovery of the laity's rightful place within the Church's worship. A liturgical theology centred around the paschal mystery of Christ and therefore baptism, led to a newfound appreciation of the laity's role as subjects rather than objects within the liturgical act under the rubric of "full, active, and conscious participation." Today, the Roman Catholic Church in the 21st century recognizes more clearly that handing on the Church's tradition through its worship necessarily involves more than the clergy. It is a partnership involving a complimentary rather than competing exercise of ministry within the

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15 See Keith F. Pecklers, S.J., "What Roman Catholics Have to Learn from Anglicans," in Paul D. Murray, *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 107-121.

liturgical assembly as within the Church itself. Baptism, not ordination, appropriately becomes the common denominator in this equation.

Such a baptismal theology of worship reawakened at Vatican II has also lent itself to gradual but steady ecumenical collaboration on matters liturgical. Thanks to organisations such as *the International Societas Liturgica*, The North American Academy of Liturgy, the English Language Liturgical Commission, and indeed, the Alcuin Club, Roman Catholics became increasingly interested and involved in what Donald Gray would come to call "ecumenical liturgical cooperation." He coined that phrase in his important 1997 lecture at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome: "Ecumenical Liturgical Cooperation: Past, Present, and Future" – the first time that an Anglican had lectured at that Pontifical Institute. Indeed, such ecumenical liturgical cooperation, evidenced here today at San Pancras is one of the greatest gifts of the post-Conciliar Church in my estimation. The Council has set us on an ecumenical path of common mission and witness from which we cannot and shall not turn back.

There has been much "water under the bridge" since those heady days of the *Consilium* and the post-Conciliar liturgical history of the past fifty years has yet to be chronicled. But tensions between Episcopal conferences and the Roman Curia appear to be as perennial as the principles found within *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, and I believe that such tensions have largely shaped liturgical developments in these post-Conciliar years. It is no secret that in the 1980s and 90s a significant polarization within the Roman Catholic Church over liturgical issues was registered. Often referred to as "the Liturgy Wars," various attacks against Pope Paul VI and the *novus ordo* (the New Order of Mass) were launched, and the "Reform of the Reform" movement grew – a growing group of individuals arguing that the liturgical reforms of Vatican II were themselves in need of reform. These critics generally argue that what has unfolded liturgically these past fifty years contradicts the Council's original intent and must therefore be recovered.16 Ironically, the Liturgy and especially the Eucharist – source of our unity – had become the source of our disunity within the Roman Catholic Church itself.

It is within such a framework, I suggest, that we must understand the publication of *Liturgiam authenticam*, in 2001, issuing a new set of directives for liturgical translation which placed new restrictions on the process, insisting on a literal translation at all cost. In many respects, that document evokes the memory of those same Conciliar tensions mentioned earlier, and what transpired immediately after the Council between the Congregation for Divine Worship and the International *Consilium*. It was essentially a document that was produced in a non-consultative and therefore non-collegial manner, abrogating the 1969 Instruction that had been produced by the *Consilium* and insisting that all subsequent translations would need to follow the strict translation principles stated in the new Instruction. And most tragic of all, of course, was that in calling for a re-translating of the entire *Ordo Missae* the document became the death knell for common liturgical texts. Yet just because we remain divided at the Altar of the Eucharist, we

16 See for example, László Dobszay, *The Restoration and Organic Development of the Roman Rite* (London: T&T Clark, 2010). See also John F. Baldovin, *Reformingh the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2008).

need not be divided around God's Word. Donald Gray made the point very well in his Sant'Anselmo address of 1997 in advocating ecumenical usage of *The Revised Common Lectionary*:

"Sadly, we are still very divided at the altar, perpetuating the scandal of baptized Christians of different traditions unable to stand or kneel together and stretch out hands side by side to receive the same Lord and Saviour, whom we all worship and serve, in his real and sacramental presence in the holy eucharist. Yet we could be fully united around the scriptures."17

Another set back for the implementation of the Conciliar Liturgical Reforms –at least on a symbolic level -- was the *Motu Proprio* of 2007 which granted universal permission for the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, and has been seen by some as an attempted subtle reversal of the liturgical reforms of the Council or at least as a corrective. Liturgy and Ecclesiology are inseparable as we are well aware, and so the concern regarding the universal permission for the Extraordinary Form has been the ecclesiology that undergirds that particular liturgy since it is fundamentally Tridentine and not reflective of the ecclesiology of Vatican II.

7. Conclusion: "The Future of Liturgy is The Future of the Church"

When Archbishop Marini published his already cited text in 2007, he called for an eventual reform of the Roman Curia which will eventually be necessary to streamline the Congregations and Pontifical Councils, using the *Consilium* as a model, "so that they're not just organisms bound by certain rigid norms, but more flexible bodies" for resolving the problems of the contemporary world. He contended that diocesan bishops and Episcopal conferences should be more involved in the decisions that concern the Church, including those that concern the liturgy before any decisions are taken by the Roman Curia, because liturgy belongs to the whole Church.[18] One does get the impression that the newly elected Pope Francis may be on the same page here as he consistently has spoken of collegial and synodal structures of leadership in which the Roman Curia serves Episcopal conferences around the world rather than the contrary.

These days in Rome as Spring as emerging, there is also the feeling of an ecclesial Spring, as well – *"l'aria fresca"* or "fresh air," as one Vatican cardinal said to me last month. Some suggest that this newfound hope and freshness has not been felt since the days of the Council. And this is being felt liturgically as well, thanks to this new Pontificate. Time will tell. But the mere speaking of liturgy that flows into the service of the poor surely points us in the right direction. Yes, the future of the liturgy is the future of the Church. As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum concilium* we have barely scratched the surface in appreciating its inherent richness, and its inherent call to live liturgical lives not only

17 Donald Gray, "Ecumenical Liturgical Cooperation: Past, Present, and Future" in *Studia Liturgica* 28/2 (1998), 241.

[18] Marini Interview with Allen, 6.

as Roman Catholics, but together as Christians united within the one Body of Christ – servants of God's mission within the world.

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