

# Can Catholic Social Teaching Bring Peace to the “Liturgy Wars”?

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## Abstract

A way past the “liturgy wars” opens up if we view contemporary liturgy from the perspective of Catholic social teaching. Freedom of conscience and worship requires toleration of diverse theories of liturgy. Respect for the dignity of the human person foregrounds Vatican II’s fundamental teaching that active participation is the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit. The right to culture signals the importance of culturally informed liturgical formation. In this way the “liturgy wars” can be reinterpreted as illustrating Congar’s dialectical understanding of ecclesiastical tradition.

## Keywords

Catholic social teaching, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, freedom of worship, human dignity, liturgy, “liturgy wars,” *Pacem in terris*, right to culture, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, solidarity, subsidiarity, Vatican II, Yves Congar

The year 2013 marked the fiftieth anniversaries of two central documents in Catholic history, Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in terris* (April 11, 1963) and the first document issued by the Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, promulgated by Pope Paul VI (December 4, 1963). *Pacem in terris* begins and ends with quotations from the liturgy. Though papal encyclicals had traditionally been addressed to the patriarchs, primates,

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archbishops, and other prelates of the world, *Pacem in terris* was the first to add an address “to all men of good will,” echoing the *Gloria in excelsis* of the Mass. And *Pacem in terris*, which was published on Holy Thursday, closes with a quote from a Gregorian chant for Easter Week: “The sacred liturgy of these days reechoes the same message: ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ, after His resurrection stood in the midst of His disciples and said: Peace be upon you, alleluia. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.’”<sup>1</sup> *Sacrosanctum concilium* does not cite *Pacem in terris*. Yet in some ways the two texts are parallel, having been written in close historical proximity. Both describe a right to worship and a right to culture. One advocates that Catholics take an active part in public life, the other that they take an active role in the church’s public prayer. Both mention the changing aspects of modern society that should be seen in the light of eternal, immutable truths. Fifty years later, reading the two documents side by side can suggest a way forward through some of the difficulties of our own present time, difficulties referred to colloquially as “the liturgy wars.”

## Liturgy Wars?

As an expression of journalistic origin, the phrase “liturgy wars” emphasizes the element of conflict, while giving us no real information about the issues. It has been in use since at least 2002,<sup>2</sup> but it may owe something to the phrase “worship wars,” which has been used since 1999 to describe similar controversies taking place in American Protestant churches.<sup>3</sup> Both, in turn, are indebted to the label “culture wars,” used since at least 1990 to describe recent political realignments in American society and academia that often ignore or transcend traditional political and religious

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1. *Pacem in terris* no. 72, quoting the responsory *Surgens Jesus* for Matins, Feria VI within the Octave of Easter, according to the 1962 *Breviarium Romanum*; ET, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/encyclicals/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents). All URLs referenced herein were accessed January 29, 2014.
  2. The earliest uses I can find in a Lexis-Nexis search are Steven G. Vegh, “Catholic Worship: Liturgical Changes Shake Up Churches; Goal of Amendments Is to Seek Uniformity,” *Virginian-Pilot*, December 22, 2002; Laurie Goodstein and Cindy Chang, “A Changing Mass for U.S. Catholics,” *New York Times*, June 16, 2006, referring to “a 10-year struggle that many English-speaking Catholics had dubbed ‘the liturgy wars.’” See also Aidan Nichols, O.P., “Archi-Liturgical Culture Wars,” *New Blackfriars* 89 (2008) 522–42; Timothy P. O’Malley, “Call Off the War: Let’s Put an End to Liturgical Politics,” *Oblation: Catechesis, Liturgy, and the New Evangelization* (October 25, 2012), <http://blogs.nd.edu/oblation/2012/10/25/call-off-the-war-lets-put-an-end-to-liturgical-politics>.
  3. Martha Sawyer Allen, “Religion for the Masses,” *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), February 7, 1999. Recent works by Protestant pastors and seminary professors include: Thomas G. Long, *Beyond the Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2001); Elmer L. Towns, *Putting an End to Worship Wars* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997); Terry W. York, *America’s Worship Wars* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003); Perry Stone, *Worship Wars in America’s Churches*, audio compact disc CD030 (Cleveland, TN: Voice of Evangelism, n.d.).

boundaries by pitting liberals and conservatives against each other even within the same religious denomination or political party.<sup>4</sup> “Liturgy is a flash point in the culture wars,” as Avery Dulles wrote in 1998.<sup>5</sup> Of course, the social teachings expressed in *Pacem in terris* and other Catholic sources are relevant to such disputes. Prior to the election of Pope Francis, a widely read editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* declared that “the next pope should be, in short, a charismatic, missionary culture warrior, challenging the world’s democracies to rebuild their moral foundations and offering Catholic social doctrine as one tool for that urgent task.”<sup>6</sup>

Obviously, though, Catholic social teaching does not fit easily into polarized political categories like “liberal” vs. “conservative” or “progressive” vs. “traditional.” Support for labor unions and opposition to capital punishment would be considered “liberal” in contemporary American society, while opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage would be marked “conservative.” The situation gets even more complicated if we try to look beyond the American scene to take an international, global view, as a universal church must do. For example, a person advocating the legalization of polygamy would seem extremely liberal in the United States, but deeply traditional or conservative in some Muslim and African countries. In former Communist countries, the left and right poles are reversed: it is the Communist parties of the “left” that are conservative, in the sense that they advocate a return to the traditional values of two generations ago.

Of course, to live in any society is to be affected by politics. In the relatively new field of ritual studies, scholars are just beginning to investigate the remarkable capacity of ritual to both generate and mediate conflict.<sup>7</sup> But when the potential solutions to a liturgical or pastoral problem receive political labels like “liberal” or “conservative,” the risk increases that the actual solution will be chosen not by field-testing or evaluating the merits, but by whoever gets control of the situation and is able to impose their preferences. “Warfare,” in any case, is not an appropriate metaphor for disagreements among Christians, particularly about the liturgy, since we are commanded to reconcile with our brother before offering our gift at the altar (Mt 5:42). The take-no-prisoners

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4. Credit for popularizing the term is often given to James Davison, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Hunter Basic, 1991). But the term had already appeared in E. J. Dionne Jr., “Who’s Winning the Culture Wars? Censorship: Redrawing the Lines of Tolerance,” *Washington Post*, July 15, 1990. For the academic side, see Henry Louis Gates Jr., *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (New York: Oxford University, 1992).

5. Avery Dulles, “The Ways We Worship,” *First Things* 81 (March 1998) 28–34, at 29.

6. George Weigel, “What to Look For in a New Pope,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324582804578344292898872644.html>.

7. Ronald L. Grimes et al., eds., *Ritual, Media, and Conflict*, Oxford Ritual Studies (New York: Oxford University, 2011). Ute Hüsken and Frank Neubert, eds., *Negotiating Rites*, Oxford Ritual Studies (New York: Oxford University, 2012). The relationship between “moral polarization” and “the fragmentation of tradition” in two American parishes is studied in Mary Ellen Konieczny, *The Spirit’s Tether: Family, Work, and Religion among American Catholics* (New York: Oxford University, 2013).

tone of some publications and of many blogs and websites focused on liturgy contrasts starkly with something C. S. Lewis wrote about disputed worship practices in the Anglican Church of 1942. In his imaginative and entertaining fiction *The Screwtape Letters*, an experienced senior devil writes the following to his young trainee, a novice tempter:

We have quite removed from men’s minds what that pestilent fellow Paul used to teach about food and other unessentials—namely, that the human without scruples should always give in to the human with scruples. You would think they could not fail to see the application. You would expect to find the “low” churchman genuflecting and crossing himself lest the weak conscience of his “high” brother should be moved to irreverence, and the “high” one refraining from these exercises lest he should betray his “low” brother into idolatry. And so it would have been but for our ceaseless labour. Without that the variety of usage within the Church of England might have become a positive hotbed of charity and humility.<sup>8</sup>

Transpose this to today: try to imagine a Catholic church in which die-hard folk mass fans worked together to mount celebrations in Latin, so that their liberty would in no way be a stumbling block to the weak, while the Tridentine Mass enthusiasts outdid themselves in launching liturgical hootenannies, rather than bring to destruction the weak brother for whom Christ died (see 1 Cor 8:9, 11). The fear of being wrong may convince us that we dare not risk being charitable, but “perfect love drives out fear” (1 Jn 4:18).

However, exhortations to charity, though much too scarce, cannot by themselves solve the theological issues at the academic level, where questions need to be decided by informed, rational argument. That is why I propose that three principles of Catholic social teaching can suggest some routes through the present impasse. These principles, spelled out at length in *Pacem in terris* and other documents, are: (1) respect for conscience and freedom of worship, (2) the fundamental principle of the dignity of the human person, and (3) the right to culture. In the course of exploring how each principle might be applied to theological discussions of liturgy, I believe it will become clear that both “liberal” and “conservative” theologians are construing the Catholic liturgical tradition too narrowly, but that each side is raising legitimate concerns that the other side ought to listen to rather than dismiss or ignore. In the process, one can make progress toward mapping more accurately the areas of agreement and disagreement, moving beyond political labels by identifying what the disputed points actually are.

## Freedom of Conscience, Freedom of Worship

Also among man’s rights is that of being able to worship God in accordance with the right dictates of his own conscience, and to profess his religion both in private and in public.<sup>9</sup>

8. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter 16 (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1942) 84–85. See also James F. Caccamo, “Been There, Sung That: How the Music of Worship Shapes People of God,” *Liturgy* 22.1 (2007) 47–54.

9. *Pacem in terris* no. 14.

This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.<sup>10</sup>

If Catholics must recognize that even polytheists and satanists have a certain human right to worship, following the dictates of a misinformed conscience, surely we can extend that much tolerance to our fellow Catholics, who aim to worship the Creator revealed in the Bible, according to deeply held convictions that are grounded in Catholic tradition. When we extend the principle of freedom of worship to our own coreligionists, it becomes easier to examine these convictions dispassionately.

### *Comparative Liturgy*

One way to explain our disagreements about liturgy is to say that the historical-critical study of the liturgy has not yet attained the near-universal acceptance that the historical-critical study of the Bible has. Most Catholic theologians now accept that certain books of the Bible were not actually composed by the author to whom they are traditionally ascribed, or even during the historical period to which they were traditionally assigned. Most understand critical concepts like “literary form” or “the historical Jesus/the Christ of faith.” But the critical study of liturgical history is much less familiar. Liturgical scholarship for the last century has focused on the comparative study of all the Eastern and Western rites of Christian worship, through philological research on the early texts in the original languages.<sup>11</sup> Liturgical scholars have learned that, across the centuries but especially in the early period, Christians in different places have taken a wide range of approaches to the universal problems of instructing and initiating new converts, forming the eschatological community through table fellowship, commissioning community leaders for the full range of ministries, committing individual adults to vocations of marriage or celibacy, excluding and reconciling sinners, caring for the sick and the dying, and so forth. Faced with the many pastoral problems that the church encounters in all the cultures of the modern world, liturgical historians see a huge reservoir of texts, practices, and theologies that, in appropriate circumstances, could be revived by church authority or serve as a guide for new developments to help the church fulfill its God-given mission today.

When the problem is stated that way, the solution seems simple: what we need is better education so that most theologians and clergy obtain at least a basic understanding of

10. Vatican II, *Dignitatis humanae* (1965) no. 2, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents).

11. “Liturgiology, like linguistics, is a comparative discipline: one can no more be a liturgiologist by studying one tradition than one can develop a theory of linguistics knowing only one language” (Robert Taft, *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding* [Washington: Pastoral, 1984] ix).

what liturgical experts now know. That is why Vatican II mandated compulsory courses on liturgy in seminaries, taught by properly trained professors.<sup>12</sup>

### A Historiography of “Continuity”

Fifty years later, however, things have not worked out as hoped. The academic field of liturgy seems smaller than it was in the 1980s. Many voices have expressed doubts about the liturgical renewal as it actually turned out; one hears calls for a “new liturgical movement” or a “reform of the reform.”<sup>13</sup> The most articulate of these voices was Joseph Ratzinger, prior to his election as pope. When the Missal of Paul VI was published in 1974, Ratzinger wrote in his memoir:

I welcomed the fact that now we had a binding liturgical text after a period of experimentation that had often deformed the liturgy. But I was dismayed by the prohibition of the old missal, since nothing of the sort had ever happened in the entire history of the liturgy. . . . Pius V had simply ordered a reworking of the *Missale Romanum* then being used, which is the normal thing as history develops over the course of centuries. . . . It was a continual process of growth and purification in which continuity was never destroyed. . . .

But more than this now happened: the old building was demolished, and another was built, to be sure largely using materials from the previous one and even using the old building plans. There is no doubt that this new missal in many respects brought with it a real improvement and enrichment; but setting it as a new construction over against what had grown historically, forbidding the results of this historical growth, thereby makes the liturgy appear to be no longer a living development but the product of erudite work and juridical authority; this has caused us enormous harm. For then the impression had to emerge that liturgy is something “made,” not something given in advance but something lying within our own power of decision. . . . When liturgy is self-made, however, then it can no longer give us what its proper gift should be: the encounter with the mystery that is not our own product but rather our origin and the source of our life. A renewal of liturgical awareness, a liturgical reconciliation that again recognizes the unity of the history of the liturgy and that understands Vatican II, not as a breach, but as a stage of development . . . This is why we need a new Liturgical Movement, which will call to life the real heritage of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>14</sup>

Actually, there is a lot of precedent for a pope to “prohibit an old missal” in favor of one revised by scholars. Nicholas III (r. 1277–80) removed the manuscripts of the

12. *Sacrosanctum concilium* nos. 15–18.

13. For the probable origin of the phrase “new liturgical movement,” see the Ratzinger quote below. The source of the phrase “reform of the reform” appears to have been László Dobszay, *The Bugnini-Liturgy and the Reform of the Reform*, *Musicae Sacrae Meletemata* 5 (Front Royal, VA: Catholic Church Music Associates, 2003). Dobszay’s reform proposals are detailed in *The Restoration and Organic Development of the Roman Rite* (London: Continuum International, 2010). John F. Baldovin defends the liturgical reforms in *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2008).

14. Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927–1977* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998) 146–48.

old Urban rite from the churches of Rome when he ordered them to adopt the new Franciscan edition of the liturgy of the Roman Curia.<sup>15</sup> The bulls of Pius V, Clement VIII, and Urban VIII and the *motu proprio* of John XXIII all state that their new editions of the Missal have been emended by *virī eruditi* (in John's case, *periti viri*), and they forbid all editions that do not conform. The real fulcrum of Ratzinger's objection is his opinion that the Missal of Paul VI represented "a new construction" that departed too radically from the received tradition—a "product of erudite work and juridical authority" rather than of "a continual process of growth and purification"—even though Ratzinger himself admitted that the new missal "largely us[ed] materials from the previous one and even us[ed] the old building plans."

The difference, then, seems to be one of degree: liturgical books have been revised before, but this revision went too far; continuity was lost. As pope, Benedict XVI gave a much-quoted allocution in which he stated that the documents of Vatican II should be read through a "'hermeneutic of reform,' of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given us," rather than through a "hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture."<sup>16</sup> Thus "continuity" and "given" are key terms in this perspective,<sup>17</sup> but they raise the obvious questions: How much continuity is enough? How much reform is too much? Where is the tipping point at which a rite passes from "given" to "self-made"? In a book called *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, for which Ratzinger wrote the preface, Alcuin Reid moved toward answering such questions. "Organic development," which he sometimes calls a "principle" and sometimes a "law," "combines profound respect for the received liturgical Tradition with an openness to necessary development. Continuity and harmony with Tradition are primary concerns. Liturgical orthopraxy and orthodoxy are thus ensured, with precluding necessary and natural development."<sup>18</sup> Thus Reid identifies "the preeminent demonstration in liturgical history of the priority [that] organic development of the Liturgy enjoys over approbation by competent authority" with the Breviary of Cardinal Francisco de Quiñonez (ca. 1482–1540)—certainly a major departure from what came

15. Radulphus de Rivo, *De canonum observantia*, Prop. XXII. See Cunibert Mohlberg, *Radulph de Rivo, der letzte Vertreter der altrömischen Liturgie*, vol. 1, *Studien* (Louvain: Bureau de Recueil, 1911) 130; vol. 2, *Texte* (1915) 128; and S. J. P. Van Dijk and J. Hazelden Walker, *The Origins of the Modern Roman Liturgy* (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1960) 411.

16. "Address of his Holiness Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia Offering Them His Christmas Greetings," December 22, 2005, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents).

17. See also Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000) 159–70. The following article seems to me a fair summary of Ratzinger's writings on liturgical reform: Eamon Duffy, "Benedict XVI and the Liturgy," in *The Genius of the Roman Rite: Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspectives on Catholic Liturgy*, ed. Uwe Michael Lang (Chicago: Hillenbrand, 2012) 1–21.

18. Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and Their Relation to the Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005) 26.

before it—which was requested by Pope Clement VII in 1529, promulgated by Paul III in 1535 with a second edition in 1536, yet repudiated by Paul IV in 1558, and proscribed by Pius V in 1568.<sup>19</sup>

To avoid the implications and connotations of the word “conservative,” then, I would describe Ratzinger and Reid as historiographers of “continuity”—a word they both use. Their “liberal” opponents, of course, do not recognize themselves in Ratzingerian terms as advocating a “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture.” A one-word label for their point of view might be “restoration,” which I derive from a statement by the great twentieth-century liturgical theologian Josef Jungmann: “Happily, Vatican II has restored the old order, not only reviving at the theoretical level the total concept of the Church in its integrity and richness, but also calling for ‘that full, conscious, and active participation’ of the faithful.”<sup>20</sup>

### *A Historiography of “Restoration”*

Practitioners of comparative liturgical scholarship have inherited a historiography from the twentieth-century liturgical movement. One can get a succinct outline of it from Theodore Klauser’s *A Short History of the Western Liturgy*, published while Vatican II was still in progress. Klauser traced a progression from “creative beginnings,” to a medieval period characterized by “dissolution, elaboration, reinterpretation, and misinterpretation,” to a period of “rigid unification and rubricism” that began with the Council of Trent.<sup>21</sup> These unfortunate developments were partly undone in the reforms authorized by Vatican II, which, as Jungmann said, “restored the old order” not by slavishly emulating any specific era in liturgical history, but by “reviving” a fuller understanding of what the liturgy is, acquired through modern biblical and patristic scholarship as well as comparative liturgiology.

Like everything else, the “restoration” historiography was a product of its time. Its origin was polemical, since it was developed to justify a substantial reform of a liturgy that had changed very little for hundreds of years, and seemed to have grown rather distant, in many ways, from the spiritual lives of too many of the faithful.<sup>22</sup> A compelling explanation of how this situation had come about and what was wrong with it was essential if the entire Catholic Church would be persuaded to undertake a thorough liturgical renewal. But in our time, when a modest amount of congregational participation is the norm and some people mourn the loss of continuity with the past, Catholics

19. Ibid. 38; for the entire story see 34–38.

20. Josef A. Jungmann, *The Mass: An Historical, Theological, and Pastoral Survey*, trans. Julian Fernandes, ed. Mary Ellen Evans (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1976) 124, quoting *Sacrosanctum concilium* no. 14.

21. Theodor Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy: An Account and Some Reflections*, trans. John Halliburton, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University, 1979) ix–x.

22. For some examples, see Bernard Botte, *From Silence to Participation: An Insider’s View of Liturgical Renewal*, trans. John Sullivan (Washington: Pastoral, 1988) 2–8, with further anecdotes throughout; and Gerald Ellard, *The Mass of the Future* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1948).

can no longer unite behind a metanarrative that the church worshipped badly for half or more of its lifetime. To respect one another's freedom of worship, everyone needs to recognize that both the "continuity" and "restoration" historiographies speak to legitimate concerns, while both also have their limitations. With the passage of time, in fact, it is easier to question the accuracy and objectivity of much that has been written by "restoration" historians of the liturgy. One notices, for example, that while the classic historians tell a similar story of decline and restoration, they differ on the details of when and how the decline actually happened. If Klauser locates "dissolution" in the period starting with Pope Gregory VII, Louis Bouyer placed it later, in the Renaissance and Baroque periods.<sup>23</sup> Joseph Gelineau placed it earlier, in the Carolingian period.<sup>24</sup> Jungmann, in his many publications, finds so many examples of decline that we might sadly conclude the wrong path was chosen every step of the way.

We need histories of the liturgy that are more respectful of what medieval and early modern Christians thought they were doing at worship, and what they valued about the rites they celebrated in their times. We still lack, for example, a comprehensive, documented monograph on how lay people across the centuries were taught to understand the liturgy and their relationship to it, even though there have been numerous studies of lay piety in specific environments, particularly for the medieval period.

### *Liturgy in Time*

Paralleling the two approaches to liturgical scholarship, one can detect two constructions of "ritual time"<sup>25</sup> in liturgical practice today. The ordinary and extraordinary forms of the Roman Mass<sup>26</sup> are shaped by two different conceptions of how the Eucharist of the church is connected to what Jesus did, and similar differences can be seen by comparing the new English translation of the Missal with the translation it replaced.

The more traditional extraordinary form has been shaped by a notion of salvation history that is rather like medieval typological exegesis: eternal realities lie just below the surface of historical events, always accessible and ever the same. Thus the Roman Canon says (in the more literal new translation) "he took this precious chalice," as if no time has passed between the Last Supper and the Mass we are celebrating right now. Celebration in an ancient language—a Latin that no longer grows and changes—contributes to the impression that something happens at Mass that is eternal or outside

23. Louis Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1956).

24. Joseph Gelineau, *Voices and Instruments in Christian Worship* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1964) 196–99.

25. On ritual time see Richard Bradley, "Ritual, Time and History," *World Archeology* 23 (1991) 209–19; Roy A. Rappaport, "Ritual, Time, and Eternity," *Zygon* 27 (1992) 5–30; and Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University, 1989).

26. The terminology was introduced in Benedict XVI's 2007 *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, which reauthorized the Roman Missal of 1962 (now called the "extraordinary form") alongside the Missal of 2002 (the "ordinary form").

history. The strict and detailed rubricism of the preconciliar rite, including the preservation of actions that had lost their functional purpose like the carrying and holding of the paten, wordlessly enacted a message of timelessness, of a changeless rite that goes on forever. To listen to lay Catholics who prefer the extraordinary form is to hear that, in an age when so many people are desperately trying to construct experiences of authenticity and transcendence out of whatever the entertainment industry is selling this year, an entire symbolic vocabulary of great age and beauty and tranquility was discarded on the cutting-room floor, for the sake of a liturgy that strives to compete with whatever the entertainment industry was selling last year. But to attend the traditional Roman Mass is to temporarily step outside the mundane time of a world that is passing away.

The ordinary form of the Mass, on the other hand, the one reformed by Vatican II, plunges us back into human history, now transformed into salvation history by the mighty acts of an incarnate God. Jesus simply “took the cup,” as the 1973 translation says, and as any first-century carpenter would have done—but that simple act changed everything. Anamnesis, the assembled church remembering, looms large in the theology of liturgical renewal, but so does eschatological hope, proclaimed in the memorial acclamations that have no precedent in the preconciliar Roman Mass (though they do in some Eastern rites). No medievalizing mumbo-jumbo here. We are back in the imbroglia of human experience, in time and space—but our life has been remade by something that happened long ago, and that fills us with hope that something even greater will happen any day now. “Happy are those who are called to his supper,” as the 1973 translation says.

What the “liturgy wars” demonstrate is that both constructions of ritual or sacred time are powerfully meaningful today, though to different people. To insist on suppressing one so that the other can have the monopoly seems to me both impossible and unjust: both are true, after all, and neither is the whole truth. No doubt the best we can do right now, at the pastoral level, is to hold on to both in a kind of dialectical tension, as Pope Benedict tried to do when he reauthorized the liturgical books of 1962.<sup>27</sup> Having two authorized rites preserves a living witness to what Roman Catholic worship has been, and presents a fuller account of the liturgical tradition as living and multidimensional, until such time as a more comprehensive, synthetic reform will be possible—preserving and renewing the Catholic tradition with a wholeness that the current bifurcation of ordinary and extraordinary forms does not fully achieve.

At the level of academic theology, the way to begin dissolving the present deadlock will be for every interlocutor to honor the Catholic social principle of freedom of conscience, not only for fellow Catholics with whom we disagree, but also for all those poor benighted souls—our spiritual ancestors—who sincerely believed that elaboration, misinterpretation, rigid unification, and rubricism were what Almighty God wanted. “Restoration” historians should investigate more even-handedly what priests

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27. Peter Jeffery, “Widening Our Hearts,” *Commonweal: A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture* 134.14 (August 17, 2007) 10–13.

and laity of every century thought they were doing when they took part in the liturgical celebrations available to them. “Continuity” historians need to absorb all that has been learned in a century of comparative research on all the Eastern and Western rites of the Catholic Church. After all, the principle that Catholic worship should be simple, familiar, and understandable to ordinary modern people, like the principle that the sacramental presence of God should not appear to be subordinated to the passing fads of popular culture, suggests that these are not frivolous differences of taste or preference, but grow out of deep Christian beliefs about who God is and how God should be worshipped. There have indeed been extremists at both ends of the liturgical spectrum who separated themselves from Catholic unity—one thinks of former Dominican Matthew Fox at one end, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre at the other—but they are rare. The vast majority of Catholics and Catholic theologians are doing their best to learn from Catholic tradition how to worship the God revealed by Jesus Christ, and their freedom of conscience should be treated respectfully by all.

## The Dignity of the Human Person

Like all of Catholic social teaching, freedom of conscience and of religion is ultimately grounded in the principle of the dignity of the human person:

The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right.<sup>28</sup>

And, of course, it is only in Christ that this dignity can be fully realized. “In Christ and through Christ man has acquired full awareness of his dignity, of the heights to which he is raised, of the surpassing worth of his own humanity, and of the meaning of his existence.”<sup>29</sup> Thus it could be said that the aims of liturgical renewal fit within the overall goal of realizing our full humanity in Christ, since “full and active participation by all the people” in liturgical celebration “is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.”<sup>30</sup>

With nothing less than “the true Christian spirit” at stake, the official worship of the Catholic Church must be an activity of the entire Mystical Body, not something each individual can design for him- or herself by alleging claims of conscience. In balancing the demands of conscience with the unity of the Church and fidelity to divine revelation, the Church avoids both excessive individualism and excessive

28. *Dignitatis humanae* no. 2.

29. John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis* no. 11, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents).

30. *Sacrosanctum concilium* no. 14, referencing the preamble to the 1903 motu proprio *Tra le sollecitudini* of Pope Pius X; Italian text of *Tra le sollecitudini* at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_x/motu\\_proprio/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/motu_proprio/documents).

collectivism, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith explained in *Libertatis conscientia* (1986). The way to avoid both excesses is to balance the complementary principles of solidarity and subsidiarity.

The supreme commandment of love leads to the full recognition of the dignity of each individual, created in God’s image. . . . Intimately linked to the *foundation*, which is man’s dignity, are the *principle of solidarity* and the *principle of subsidiarity*. By virtue of the first, man with his brothers is obliged to contribute to the common good of society at all its levels. Hence the Church’s doctrine is opposed to all forms of social or political individualism. By virtue of the second, neither the State nor any society must ever substitute itself for the initiative and responsibility of individuals and of intermediate communities at the level on which they can function, nor must they take away the room necessary for their freedom. Hence the Church’s social doctrine is opposed to all forms of collectivism.<sup>31</sup>

Disputes about liturgy often raise the question of who should decide, and at times the principle of subsidiarity has been invoked.<sup>32</sup> However, the subsidiarity principle, as worked out by the popes in response to totalitarian civil regimes, has been applied most clearly to the relationship between the individual and the state, and between nation-states and the world community.<sup>33</sup> Discussion of how subsidiarity pertains to church governance remains inchoate.<sup>34</sup> And, since the time of Pope John Paul II,

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31. *Libertatis conscientia* no. 73, emphasis original, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents).

32. See, e.g., J. M. R. Tillard, “Primaute romaine,” *Irénikon* 50 (1977) 291–325; G. Wilhelms, “Subsidiarität und Liturgie: Reflexionen über die Bedeutung der christlichen Religion für die ‘moderne’ Persönlichkeitsbildung,” *Theologie und Glaube* 84 (1994) 47–57; John M. Huels, “The New General Instruction of the Roman Missal: Subsidiarity or Uniformity?,” *Worship* 75 (2001) 482–511; Thomas Mark Condon, “The Sanctifying Function of the Diocesan Bishop Especially in Relationships with Pastors: A Canonical Analysis of Liturgical Developments with Special Reference to the Eucharist” (D.Can.L. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2009); R. Kevin Seasoltz, “Liturgy and Ecclesiastical Law: Some Canonical and Pastoral Challenges,” *Jurist* 70 (2010) 114–30; and Seasoltz, *A Virtuous Church: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Liturgy for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012) 42, 60, 141–43, 189.

33. Pope Pius XI developed the outlines of subsidiarity in *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) nos. 79–80, in opposition to totalitarianism and socialism. In *Pacem in terris* no. 140, Pope John XXIII expanded the concept so that it applies not only between individuals and their government but also between nation-states and the world community. See Simeon Tsetim Iber, *The Principle of Subsidiarity in Catholic Social Thought: Implications for Social Justice and Civil Society in Nigeria* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

34. The applicability of the subsidiarity principle to the church was discussed at the Second Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (November 25–December 8, 1985); its final report (C, n. 8, c) said, “A study is recommended of the question whether the principle of subsidiarity that has force in human society can be applied in the Church, and at what level and in what sense,” citing Pope Pius XII in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 38 (1946) 144. See Xavier Rynne (pseudonym), *John Paul’s Extraordinary Synod: A Collegial*

discussions of subsidiarity must also take account of the complementary principle of solidarity, the obligation to promote the common good.<sup>35</sup> Two recent examples illustrate aspects of the question.

(1) *Sacrosanctum concilium* (nos. 36.3–4; cf. 22.2) decreed that “competent territorial ecclesiastical authority” (i.e., bodies of bishops) would approve liturgical translations with confirmation by the Holy See, and that process was followed for the 1973 translation of the Roman Missal. A revised translation, completed in 1998, was approved by all the English-speaking bishops’ conferences, but denied approval by the Vatican.<sup>36</sup> In 2001 the Congregation for Divine Worship issued the decree *Liturgiam authenticam*, which put the translation process more directly under Vatican control. Some people saw this as a rejection of subsidiarity. Others thought the more important issue was assuring the accuracy of the translations to be used in the liturgy; the existing process seemed to them not to be producing adequate results. Their position could be formulated as a “common good” argument: the community of all believers needs and deserves the most literal possible translation, so that their common prayer is the prayer of the church.

(2) In 1974, after the Missal of Paul VI had been published, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued the notification *Conferentiarum Episcopatum* stating that “Ordinaries cannot grant” permission to use the preconciliar missal “for the celebration of Mass with a congregation . . . with no exception based on the claim of any, even immemorial custom.” Ordinaries could grant permission to elderly and infirm priests, but only for private masses.<sup>37</sup> The Congregation’s 1984 circular letter *Quatuor abhinc annos* created a process by which groups of laity that met certain conditions could apply to their bishop for an indult to celebrate according to the 1962 missal, and the 1988 *motu proprio, Ecclesia Dei*, created a pontifical commission to oversee this process. Local bishops retained ultimate control, however, until 2007, when the *motu proprio*

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*Achievement* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1986) 127; Peter Huizing, “Subsidiarity,” in *Synod 1985: An Evaluation*, Concilium 188 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1986) 118–23; Avery Dulles, *Vatican II and the Extraordinary Synod* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1986) 28; and Ad Leys, *Ecclesiological Impacts of the Principle of Subsidiarity*, trans. A. van Santvoord (Kampen: Kok, 1995).

35. The linked principle of solidarity was first mentioned by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum progressio* nos. 44, 48, but developed further by John Paul II, especially in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*.
36. One can read about this translation in Mark R. Francis and Keith F. Pecklers, eds., *Liturgy for the New Millennium: A Commentary on the Revised Sacramentary; Essays in Honor of Anscar J. Chupungco, O.S.B.* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000).
37. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Conferentiarum Episcopatum: Notitiae* 10 (1974) 353. Translation from International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Documents on the Liturgy 1963–1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1982) 549.

*Summorum Pontificum* stated that if "a stable group of faithful" requested the 1962 Mass, "the pastor should willingly accept their requests" (art. 5., sec. 1). But if the group "has not obtained satisfaction to their requests from the pastor, they should inform the diocesan bishop. The bishop is strongly requested to satisfy their wishes. If he cannot arrange for such celebration to take place, the matter should be referred to the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*" (art. 7).<sup>38</sup> Thus we have come full circle, from a situation where ordinaries could not grant permission to one where they cannot refuse it. Anticipating that many bishops would be concerned about a process that encourages lay people to circumvent their authority, Pope Benedict sought to reassure them in a letter accompanying *Summorum Pontificum*: "I very much wish to stress that these new norms do not in any way lessen your own authority and responsibility, either for the liturgy or for the pastoral care of your faithful. Each Bishop, in fact, is the moderator of the liturgy in his own Diocese. . . . Nothing is taken away, then, from the authority of the Bishop."<sup>39</sup>

I am not qualified to render opinions on matters of canon law,<sup>40</sup> and I intended these examples as mere illustrations. Both of them raise important questions about the ministry of bishops who, in presiding over "any community of the altar," embody both the unity of the whole church and the catholicity of the particular local church.<sup>41</sup> But the relevant point here is that both liturgical theology and pastoral policy could be formulated with more explicit attention to questions of whether, or how, the common worship could or should be promoting human dignity as the Catholic Church understands it. It is, in fact, distressingly easy to find evidence that, for far too many Catholics, the liturgy is not being experienced as the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit.

Most American theologians have heard of the 2008 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, which found that, while nearly one in three Americans (31 percent) was raised Catholic, fewer than one in four (24 percent) still describe themselves that way.<sup>42</sup> Only 42 percent of Catholics attend church weekly, but only 34 percent of

38. *Origins* 37 (2007) 129–32, at 131, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/b16summorum-pontificum.htm>. Recently a slightly different English translation has been posted at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/motu\\_proprio/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu_proprio/documents).

39. *Origins* 37 (2007) 132–34, at 134; ET, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/letters/2007/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2007/documents).

40. But see Norbert Lüdecke, "Canonical Remarks on the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*," *Antiphon* 13 (2009) 193–227.

41. *Lumen gentium* no. 26. See also Henri de Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church: Followed by Particular Churches in the Universal Church and an Interview Conducted by Gwendoline Jarczyk*, trans. Sergia Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982).

42. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic, February 2008" (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2008) 6, <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>.

Catholics under the age of 30 do so.<sup>43</sup> Less well known is the follow-up study of 2009, which examined the reasons given by ex-Catholics for leaving the Church. A striking number of these had something to do with the liturgy, such as feeling “dissatisfied with atmosphere at worship services” and preferring Protestant worship. Catholics who felt “uncomfortable with feeling of community at congregation [*sic*]” were nearly triple those who found “not enough feeling of community.”<sup>44</sup> Concerns related to liturgy seem to have been even more prominent in an unpublished study conducted for the diocese of Trenton: “I just didn’t seem to be getting anything out of the Mass.” “The homilies were so empty.” “The Catholic Church as a whole is ritualistic and cold.” There were also “many complaints about . . . poor music at Mass.”<sup>45</sup>

Doubtless there are many factors contributing to these difficulties, which need to be addressed in a variety of ways. For my purposes it is enough to observe that it requires social science research to find these problems, since they are largely invisible to theological conversations. The training of liturgical experts and theologians relegates such difficulties to the “pastoral” domain, but it fails to equip anyone, theologian or pastor, with adequate tools for solving them. That would have to change if promoting human dignity and the true Christian spirit were to become central concerns.

One becomes a theologian by learning to read and interpret written texts. One becomes a liturgical theologian by reading liturgical texts and texts about the liturgy in the original languages. That is as it should be. We need more and better textual research, and there is plenty of comparative liturgiology still to be done. But much of the liturgy, particularly as the average worshipper experiences it, is not text—it is movement, sound, art, music, words delivered through oral speech rather than through written media. Indeed, at its most fundamental level, Christian liturgy is not text but action or, as anthropologists would say, performance. What, after all, does our worship have in common with the worship of the Apostles and first disciples? Only the actions of water immersion, anointing, laying on of hands, breaking bread, and so on. Whether the first Christians, while performing these ritual actions, recited Jewish texts or composed their own, we generally do not know, and in any case we do not have those texts in their original form. Scholars remain unsure how the institution narratives, the Lord’s Prayer, and other texts preserved in the New Testament were related to contemporary ritual practice, though they certainly influenced later practice.<sup>46</sup>

43. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Beliefs and Practices; Diverse and Politically Relevant, June 2008” (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2008) 36–38, <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>.

44. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “Faith in Flux: Changes in Religious Affiliation in the U.S.,” April 2009 (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2009) 24, 26, 29, <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2009/04/fullreport.pdf>.

45. William J. Byron and Charles Zech, “Why They Left: Exit Interviews Shed Light on Empty Pews,” *America* (April 30, 2012), <http://americamagazine.org/issue/5138/article/why-they-left>.

46. For a historical, comparative approach, see Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (New

As a result, liturgical experts who have been trained only in textual methodologies often remain untrained in much of what liturgy is. One resulting problem is the temptation to see every issue as a textual one with a textual solution—hence the enormous amount of freight that some people expect liturgical translations to carry, without the kind of support from nontextual media that have characterized the liturgy throughout history. As the new translation of the liturgical books came into use, some of its advocates asserted that it would promote greater reverence. On the other side, advocates of gender-inclusive language hoped—and perhaps some opponents feared—that its use in the liturgy would promote far-reaching changes in the church and society at large. How much any translation can realistically accomplish remains to be seen. Language is powerful, but not necessarily more powerful than other media. The central role that the *toyi-toyi* dance played in South African political demonstrations against apartheid shows that sometimes movement and sound can be the most eloquent media available.<sup>47</sup> And if dance can smash apartheid, how much more could the liturgy, celebrated with comparable force and conviction, do for Catholic social teaching!

In fact many of the difficulties we face in the liturgical sphere are not textual, but behavioral. When some people reject authorized liturgical changes, or try to introduce sentimental customs from the surrounding culture into the liturgy, or ask to worship in an ancient language they do not understand, or fail to show up at all, the reasons for these behaviors might have more to do with symbolisms, narratives, memories, or social structures than with texts. Liturgical experts whose training was limited to texts will be unable to understand or deal with these behaviors; they will be reduced to merely reaffirming the supposed ideal and lamenting that people do not know theology.

Much remains to be discussed about the functions of subsidiarity and solidarity in modern liturgy. But we need not wait to address the deeper value they are meant to protect: the dignity of the human person and fostering the true Christian spirit. To address the exodus of people who “just don’t seem to be getting anything out of the Mass,” then, we need liturgical celebrations that engage the whole human person, and for that we need a corps of liturgical experts collectively trained not only in the study

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York: Oxford University, 2002). For an approach that attempts to apply some of the findings of ritual studies, see Richard E. DeMaris, *The New Testament in Its Ritual World* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

47. See Jeremy Cronin, “‘Even under the Rine of Terror . . .’: Insurgent South African Poetry,” *Research in African Literatures* 19 (1988) 12–23; Isak Niehaus and Jonathan Stadler, “*Muchongolo* Dance Contests: Deep Play in the South African Lowveld,” *Ethnology* 43 (2004) 363–80; Gwen Ansell, *Soweto Blues: Jazz, Popular Music, and Politics in South Africa* (New York: Continuum, 2005) 133, 180, 194, 195, 330; Shirli Gilbert, “Singing against Apartheid: ANC Cultural Groups and the International Anti-Apartheid Struggle,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33 (2007) 421–41; Marcelle C. Dawson, “Protest, Performance and Politics: The Use of ‘Nano-Media’ in Social Movement Activism in South Africa,” *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 17 (2012) 321–45.

of texts but also in all the nonverbal media and all the methodologies that social science research has developed for studying live human beings acting in real time: ethnography, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, documentary videography, and more.<sup>48</sup> If our theories of liturgy are uninformed about the full human person, no wonder our celebrations deteriorate into mere words, sending many Catholics to search elsewhere for a community that respects and promotes their full dignity.

## The Right to Culture

The Church that teaches all nations has always struggled with questions of how to incarnate a universal religion in local languages and cultures. But Vatican II, the most international of all ecumenical councils, expressed a new openness in its “Norms for Adapting the Liturgy to the Culture and Traditions of Peoples.”<sup>49</sup> The new openness soon gave rise to a new theological term, *inculturation*, which made its first official appearance in the decrees of the 1975 Jesuit general congregation.<sup>50</sup> A definition put forward by the Second Extraordinary Synod of Bishops (1985) was reproduced in John Paul II’s 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris missio* no. 52:

As she carries out missionary activity among the nations, the Church encounters different cultures and becomes involved in the process of inculturation. The need for such involvement has marked the Church’s pilgrimage throughout her history, but today it is particularly urgent. The process of the Church’s insertion into peoples’ cultures is a lengthy one. It is not a matter of purely external adaptation, for inculturation “means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.”<sup>51</sup>

The paradox of inculturation, then, is that it is urgently needed yet requires a lengthy process. We get a picture of lengthy, cautious, and deliberate process in the 1994 instruction *Varietates legitimae*, which repeatedly emphasizes the need to conserve and preserve: the unity of the Roman rite, the unity of the Church, the authority and laws of the Church, and the integrity of the faith. The concern that nothing be lost is much more evident than any idea that something might be gained, that an encounter with a specific

48. To sample the huge bibliography, I recommend beginning with John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014); and John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013).

49. *Sacrosanctum concilium* nos. 37–40.

50. Society of Jesus, 32nd General Congregation, December 2, 1974, to March 7, 1975, Decree 4, “Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice” nos. 36, 56, <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/our-mission-today.html>.

51. John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio* no. 52, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents). The pope here quotes the Synod of Bishops, Extraordinary Assembly of 1985, *Final Report* II, D, 4, <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=5132>.

culture might produce something that could enrich the worldwide church. Thus there is an opposition or dialectic between caution and urgency, or closedness and openness, that somewhat parallels the dialectic between “continuity” and “restoration.” Dialectical tensions should not be seen as problems to be avoided, however, since ecclesiastical tradition, as Yves Congar explained, is by nature dialectical:

Tradition, then, comprises two equally vital aspects, one of development and one of conservation. This is why some see tradition eminently as a safeguard for the purity of the deposit, at the risk of cutting the present off from the future, while others see it eminently as a way of opening the present to the future, in the search for a total synthesis. There is a sort of tension or dialectic between purity and totality, neither of which should be sacrificed. It is understandable that the Magisterium, whose chief mission is to keep and transmit a deposit, should be more concerned with the purity, and that this should be its duty. Faced with time’s challenges, the Church’s first reaction is always an instinct of conservation. This is natural. But it is also part of her mission to display the Gospel as extensively as possible to mankind, which is growing ceaselessly, not only externally and numerically, but also internally.<sup>52</sup>

*Varietates legitimae* offers a second reason for restraint: “Since the theological principles relating to questions of faith and inculturation have still to be examined in depth.”<sup>53</sup> Here is an area where we can anticipate significant development of doctrine as inculturation efforts continue.

One Catholic principle that has been very little considered in relation to inculturation and the liturgy is the right to culture. A terse statement in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights seeded an abundant growth of international law: “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”<sup>54</sup> The Catholic Church recognized a right to culture (*ius ad culturam*) in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes* (1965): “Everything must be done to make everyone conscious of the right to culture and the duty he has of developing himself culturally and of helping others.”<sup>55</sup>

Both international law and Catholic social teaching, however, are hampered by the lack of a precise definition of “culture,” one of the most complex terms in the modern intellectual vocabulary.<sup>56</sup> In anthropology and other social and biological sciences,

52. Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, trans. A. N. Woodrow, Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism: Knowledge and Faith 3 (New York: Hawthorn, 1964) 110; repr. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004) 117.

53. *Varietates legitimae* no. 3, *Origins* 23 (1994) 745–56, at 747.

54. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 27. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=eng>. See Elsa Stamatopoulou, *Cultural Rights in International Law: Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Beyond* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007) 11.

55. *Gaudium et spes* no. 60, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents). On the composition of this section, see Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica* (New York: Paulist, 2005) 18–19, 23–24, 52–55.

56. Stamatopoulou, *Cultural Rights* 107–15, 245–46.

debates about the definition and proper use of the term “culture” have been going on for over a century.<sup>57</sup> Does culture reside in the mind, in behavior, or in the perceptions of outside observers? Structural definitions would define culture as systems of beliefs, rules, customs, symbols, law, government, or even a people’s “whole way of life.” Functional definitions would see culture as a group’s shared values, its sense of identity or belonging, its survival strategies for adapting to its environment, or the means of control exercised by the leaders over the members. Process definitions would define culture as the transmission of a “way of life” from older to younger members, or even as “whatever differentiates one group from another.” Product definitions would locate culture in artifacts, symbols, or texts. Even platitudes like “culture is what makes us human” are naive and inadequate, for we know now that many animals have cultures: discrete communities within the same species that are distinguished by differences in learned behavior.<sup>58</sup> Relatively little theological writing on inculturation has seriously grappled with the complicated discussions taking place in biology and the social sciences about the definition of culture—much to the consternation of anthropologists,<sup>59</sup> and in contrast to the situation we find in, say, Catholic bioethics, where the need to be fully informed about scientific advances is taken for granted.

The conception of culture that we do find in *Gaudium et spes* and other documents of the magisterium grows out of the original Latin meaning of *cultura* as cultivation: through processes of education, development, and labor, human beings become “cultivated.”

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57. What follows is derived from John R. Baldwin et al., eds., *Redefining Culture: Perspectives across the Disciplines* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006).
58. See Grant Ramsey, “Culture in Humans and Other Animals,” *Biology and Philosophy* 28 (2013) 457–79; Mauricio Cantor and Hal Whitehead, “The Interplay between Social Networks and Culture: Theoretically and among Whales and Dolphins,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 368.1618 (May 19, 2013), <http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/368/1618/20120340.full>; Michael Tomasello, et al., “Two Key Steps in the Evolution of Human Cooperation: The Interdependence Hypothesis,” *Current Anthropology* 53 (2012) 673–92; Krist Vaesen, “The Cognitive Bases of Human Tool Use,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 35.4 (Aug 2012) 203–18; Andrew Whiten and David Erdal, “The Human Socio-Cognitive Niche and Its Evolutionary Origins,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 367.1599 (August 2012) 2119–29; Ellen J. M. Meulman et al., “The Role of Terrestriality in Promoting Primate Technology,” *Evolutionary Anthropology* 21.2 (March–April 2012) 58–68; Michael Krutzen, Erik P. Willems, and Carel P. van Schaik, “Culture and Geographic Variation in Orangutan Behavior,” *Current Biology* 21 (2011) 1808–12; Andrew Whiten, “The Scope of Culture in Chimpanzees, Humans and Ancestral Apes,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 366.1567 (Apr 2011) 997–1007; and Claire J. Santorelli et al., “Traditions in Spider Monkeys Are Biased towards the Social Domain,” *Plos One* 6.2 (February 2011) 1–10.
59. For example, Michael V. Angrosino, “The Culture Concept and the Mission of the Roman Catholic Church,” *American Anthropologist* 96 (1994) 824–32; Paula Montero, “The Catholic Church and Culture in a Postnational Era,” *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 4 (1999) 268–89; and Gerald Arbuckle, *Culture, Inculturation, and Theologians: A Postmodern Critique* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2010).

Man comes to a true and full humanity only through culture [*culturam*], that is through the cultivation [*colendo*] of the goods and values of nature. Wherever human life is involved, therefore, nature and culture are quite intimately connected one with the other.

The word “culture” in its general sense indicates everything whereby man develops and perfects his many bodily and spiritual qualities; he strives by his knowledge and his labor, to bring the world itself under his control. He renders social life more human both in the family and the civic community, through improvement of customs and institutions. Throughout the course of time he expresses, communicates and conserves in his works great spiritual experiences and desires, that they might be of advantage to the progress of many, even of the whole human family.<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, where the Vatican’s English translation of *Pacem in terris* mentions “the natural right to share in the benefits of culture,” the original Latin actually speaks of a right to knowledge and education (“*in partem scientiarum*”).<sup>61</sup> Statements by the Pontifical Council for Culture do not seem to have moved much beyond what is expressed in *Gaudium et spes*,<sup>62</sup> though the Pontifical Council very recently recognized a right to beauty.<sup>63</sup>

The average parish liturgy can hardly be said to be animated by the conciliar mandate that “everything must be done to make everyone conscious of the right to culture and the duty he has of developing himself culturally and of helping others” (*Gaudium et spes* no. 60). Even if we are still working toward a complete definition of what it is everyone has a right to, we can still acknowledge some of the things a right to culture entails. A right to culture surely implies a right to robust inculturation: since God reveals God’s self in every culture and epoch, a person cannot be denied the right to worship according to his native culture. In the world of international pop music, some of the biggest stars of 2012 came from South Korea, Barbados, Canada, Sri Lanka, Denmark, and Colombia. Why does our supposedly universal church seem so much more parochial?

On the other hand, if culture is understood as education, cultivation, and human formation, then there is also a right to be formed by the historic liturgy we inherited. Ancient languages, traditional chant, classical music, and high art cannot be withheld from those who want them, on the specious grounds that these are nobody’s culture

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60. *Gaudium et spes* no. 53; Latin text at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents).

61. *Pacem in terris* no. 13; Latin text: at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/encyclicals/documents](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents).

62. Pontifical Council for Culture, “Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture” (1999) art. 2, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/cultr/documents](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents); Italian text at same site.

63. Pontifical Council for Culture, “The *Via Pulchritudinis*, Privileged Pathway for Evangelisation and Dialogue,” (2006) section III.3, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/cultr/documents](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents). See also Patrick T. McCormick, “A Right to Beauty: A Fair Share of Milk and Honey for the Poor,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010) 702–20.

anymore. Those who hope to find God in these forms of expression, and are willing to put in the educational effort to use them well, have a right to be formed by them—even if there are very few such people; minorities have rights.

## The Will to Peace

Foregrounding the Catholic social principles of respect for conscience, the dignity of the human person, and the right to culture offers many ways to move beyond the divisions of the “liturgy wars,” in theology, theological training, and in the development of pastoral programs to improve liturgical celebrations. This is a goal to be desired, not only for the sake of peace in the Church but also because the Church needs both sides if we are to have a fully Catholic liturgy. Viewing liturgical disputes through the lens of Catholic social teaching does more than make us more tolerant of diversity. It also helps us recover a more sophisticated understanding of the complex reality of the Church, and particularly of tradition. For in the tension between the “continuity” and “restoration” accounts of liturgical history and their contrasting perceptions of ritual time, we can see a living demonstration of Yves Congar’s profound insight that tradition is fundamentally dialectical. Congar, who has been described as “the most distinguished ecclesialogist of this century and perhaps of the entire post-Tridentine era,”<sup>64</sup> commands respect from both “liberals” and “conservatives.” In numerous publications he identified dialectically paired themes in Christian history and tradition. Particularly well known is what he described as “this twofold truth [*double vérité*] we would call a dialectic of ‘gift [*le donné*] and task [*l’agi*]’; it is closely bound up with the mystery of the theandric reality of the Church, and we meet it also in connection with the sacraments.”<sup>65</sup> Congar’s dialectic of structure and life has also been the subject of much discussion,<sup>66</sup> as have several other dialectical pairs.<sup>67</sup>

To avoid misunderstanding Congar’s use of dialectical pairs, two points need to be kept in mind. First, Congar’s concept of dialectic owes less to G. F. W. Hegel than it does to church historian J. A. Möhler, who formulated the crucial distinction between *contrast* (*Gegensatz*) and *contradiction* (*Widerspruch*). Congar writes,

64. Richard McBrien, “Church and Ministry: The Achievement of Yves Congar,” *Theology Digest* 32 (1985) 203–11, at 203.

65. Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church: Studies*, trans. A. V. Littledale, 2nd rev. ed. (Baltimore: Helicon, 1965) 27. For the original French, see *Esquisses du mystère de l’église*, new ed. (Paris: Cerf 1953) 26. See also A. N. Williams, “Congar’s Theology of the Laity,” in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed. Gabriel Flynn (Leuven: Peeters, 2005) 135–60, at 153–54.

66. See Timothy I. MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); and Anthony Oelrich, *A Church Fully Engaged: Yves Congar’s Vision of Ecclesial Authority* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2011) 43–116.

67. Joseph Famerée, *L’Ecclesiologie d’Yves Congar avant Vatican II: Histoire et église; analyse et reprise critique* (Leuven: Peeters, 1992) 401–36.

Contrasts are healthy and are an aspect of life and of progress. In the end, all progress is dialectical and takes place through a process of surpassing what went before, under pressure from elements that prove unsatisfactory and that call for improvement.

That is the role of the reactive and dynamic factors, of the potentialities, *within the church*. If this yeast—this internal pressure—was eliminated, the very moving force of development would be nullified.<sup>68</sup>

But a contrast situation can deteriorate into a contradiction. If “reactive and dynamic elements destroy the communion of the whole, if they become selfishly isolated and, refusing to acknowledge their links with others and with the whole tradition, they make themselves into autonomous principles, then they turn into heresy and break the unity of the church.”<sup>69</sup> Thus “dialectic” for Congar means “the simultaneous truth of two opposed terms, which are yet necessary to each other, conditioning each other.”<sup>70</sup> The dialectical process does not treat all opinions equally; it is not dialectic when one of the terms is false.

The second important point to understand is that Congar’s use of dialectic was no mere philosophical or rhetorical strategy. It proceeded from a profound truth about the very nature of the church. Over the course of his career “he became increasingly convinced that the crux of all ecclesiology lay in the dual reality of an eschatology that is both already realized and still anticipated.”<sup>71</sup> Or, as Congar himself put it, “Once I had accepted the eschatological point of view, I had to speak of the church dialectically.”<sup>72</sup>

To this rediscovery of the eschatological sense is linked that of the fact that one can only speak validly of the Church dialectically, in affirming of it at the same time attributes between which there exists a tension: holiness and [the] need for reform, already Kingdom of God, but without the glory of the Reign.<sup>73</sup>

68. Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, trans. Paul Philibert (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2011) 206, emphasis original.

69. *Ibid.*

70. “Verité simultanée de deux termes opposés et cependant nécessaires l’un à l’autre,” ET in Yves Congar, *Priest and Layman*, trans. P. J. Hepburne-Scott (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1967) 281. See also Yves Congar, *Sacerdoce et laïcat devant leurs tâches d’évangélisation et de civilisation*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Cerf, 1965) 310; William Henn, *The Hierarchy of Truths according to Yves Congar, O.P.* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1987) 87–88; and Maxime Allard, “Yves Congar,” in *Penseurs et apôtres du XXe siècle*, ed. Jean Genest (Quebec: Fides, 2001) 469–95, esp. 486.

71. Rose M. Beal, “In Pursuit of a ‘Total Ecclesiology’: Yves Congar’s De Ecclesia, 1931–1954” (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2009) 239.

72. Congar’s “Forward” [*sic*] to MacDonald, *Ecclesiology of Yves Congar* xxii–xxiii, at xxii.

73. Yves M.-J. Congar, “En guise de conclusion,” in *L’Église de Vatican II: Études autour de la Constitution conciliaire sur l’Église*, vol. 3, ed. Guilherme Baraúna (Paris: Cerf, 1966) 1365–73, at 1370–71, as translated in Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004) 179.

The drafts of Congar's unfinished book *De Ecclesia*, therefore, discuss as many as ten dialectical pairs, while in his oeuvre as a whole one can find at least 13.<sup>74</sup>

In other words, in a church that is both "already" and "not yet," contrasts will inevitably emerge, and everyone is responsible for keeping these contrasts from becoming contradictions. It is also inevitable that many of these double verities will emerge in the area of liturgy, which is "a privileged custodian and dispenser of Tradition, for it is by far the principal and primary thing among all the actions of the Church."<sup>75</sup> Therefore it is no accident that while writing an article on the liturgical assembly Congar expressed his view of conflict in the Church with particular force.

There is a certain way of representing unity, communion, and reconciliation that fails to appreciate the seriousness and the legitimacy of conflicts. An entire Catholic morality and spirituality considers them a priori and altogether sinful—the same with the emotions, taking a cue from a hagiography and iconography of choirboys. We need a representation of unity that assumes conflicts and pluralism, and an ethic to match.<sup>76</sup>

Well, the liturgy wars look like a fine place to start, with all the conflicts and pluralism one could ask for. Each side needs the other's help in recognizing the "twofold truth" of both positions and ensuring that neither becomes too extreme and falls into heresy. Recognizing the dialectic qualities of the Church is not only tactically prudent, but it will help restore a healthier understanding of tradition as the life of the Church that celebrates the liturgy. When conservatives speak of "tradition" as if it were merely a synonym for "magisterium," and liberals talk as if "tradition" meant little more than the received interpretation of the Bible, it is no wonder that the two have so much trouble finding common ground. When, on the other hand, tradition is seen as the "place" where theological contrasts get worked out with honesty and love, then tradition can be restored to its rightful, independent role alongside Scripture and magisterium—the three remain distinct even though they all agree as one.<sup>77</sup>

A small example of what I mean could be supplied by the text with which *Pacem in terris* begins: how should we translate "pax hominibus bonae voluntatis" in the Gloria of the Mass? At first it looks straightforward: peace to people of good will. This is widely thought to mean that, if people are well disposed and choose to act with good will, God will grant them peace. But the historical-critical study of the Bible has shown that the original meaning was different. Underlying the biblical Greek, from

74. Beal, "In Pursuit of a 'Total Ecclesiology'" 270–75, 40.

75. Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough (New York: Macmillan, 1966) 354.

76. Yves Congar, "Réflexions et recherches actuelles sur l'assemblée liturgique," *La Maison-Dieu* 115 (1973) 7–29, at 25 (my translation). See also Yves Congar, *Ministères et communion ecclésiale, théologie sans frontières* (Paris: Cerf, 1971) 229–58; and Congar, "Le droit au désaccord," *Année canonique* 25 (1981) 277–86.

77. Vatican II, *Dei verbum* no. 10, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents).

which the Latin was translated, is an ancient Hebrew expression: אַנְשֵׁי רַצוֹן (*anshey ratson*) were the righteous recipients of God’s good will or favor.<sup>78</sup> It is God’s good will that brings peace. Thus modern Catholic Bibles render this line “peace to those on whom his favor rests” (New American Bible, rev. ed.), or “peace for people whom he favors” (Anchor Bible), or “peace to men [who are the object] of [God’s] benevolence” (Jerusalem Bible).<sup>79</sup> The 1973 translation of the Roman Missal attempted to render this understanding with “peace to his people,” perhaps downplaying “good will” to avoid the impression that God favors only Catholics. The 2011 translation, on the other hand, ignores the underlying Hebrew in favor of the apparent Latin meaning, “peace to people of good will.” The interpretation that this refers to the good will of human beings has some support in the Latin exegetical tradition,<sup>80</sup> as well as in John XXIII’s use of it to open *Pacem in terris*.

Thus a “continuity” translation favoring the Latin liturgical tradition has replaced a “restoration” translation that turns to the original biblical sources. Indeed the two translations of the Missal consistently differ in this way, with the 1973 translation preferring the known or hypothetical underlying Greek or Hebrew, and the 2011 translation preferring the surface Latin. There are many places where a translator must make this choice, some of which involve much more complicated issues than “people of good will” does. But since every choice excludes alternate possibilities, something always gets lost in translation. When many such cases are consistently handled in the same way, as they are in both the 1973 and 2011 translations, the result begins to look like a significant narrowing of the Catholic tradition. That is one of the reasons that the “continuity” and “restoration” parties feel excluded by each other’s translations.

In the Catholic Church, however, one should not have to choose between the Bible and the liturgy, or between Scripture and tradition. A dialectical view of tradition means that we do not need to. Ancient and medieval exegetes had no problem working

78. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, Anchor Bible 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1970) 411; cf. 391. See also Fitzmyer, “‘Peace upon Earth among Men of His Good Will’ (Lk 2:14),” *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1974) 101–104; and Birger Olsson, “The Canticle of the Heavenly Host (Luke 2.14) in History and Culture,” *New Testament Studies* 50 (2004) 147–66.

79. *The Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), New Testament 95 n. e, on Luke 2:14 (brackets in the original). The reading of the King James Version, “peace, good will toward men,” is based on a variant found in most Greek manuscripts, but no longer considered by textual critics to be the original reading. This variant is, however, the traditional text of the Byzantine rite; it was used in the Roman rite only when Mass was celebrated in Greek.

80. A search through the electronic *Patrologia Latina* database turned up the following instances: Ambrosius, *Sermo V De Natali Domini* (PL 17.612D); Hieronymus, *Epistola LXXV ad Theodoram Viduam* (PL 22.686); Bonifatius Moguntinus, *Sermo II De origine humane conditionis* (PL 89.847C); and Bruno Astensis, *Expositio in Psalmis* (PL 164.1027C).

with differing translations and alternate interpretations, an openness that the Scholastics formalized under the exegetical principle *diversi, sed non adversi*.<sup>81</sup> Yet some modern theologians are so uncomfortable with diversity that hundreds of instances of medieval allegorical exegesis were excised from the Roman liturgical books after Vatican II, and even the Latin Vulgate was revised to eliminate readings that diverged from the Hebrew and Greek.<sup>82</sup>

In three principles of Catholic social teaching, every partisan can find both support for his or her own views and a justification for recognizing the other position as “simultaneous truth.” The process begins with the principle that freedom of conscience and worship need to be respected, so that some degree of liturgical diversity is a good thing. Staying focused on the dignity of the human person and the true Christian spirit as our ultimate purpose can keep disagreements about subsidiarity and solidarity from upstaging the many pastoral problems that are keeping the liturgy from being all it should be. Recognizing everyone’s right to culture and education can help us see our differences in broader perspective, and force us to think in new ways about both the meaning of universality and the liturgical formation of each individual. The end result should be a changed view that sees disagreements about the liturgy as instances of the dialectical nature of tradition rather than sources of conflict. The liturgy itself teaches us to prefer Catholic social teaching over the merciless rituals of holy war. Before we approach the sacrament of Holy Communion, we must offer each other the sign of peace.

## Postscript

Although *Theological Studies* does not usually publish memorials or dedications with articles, while writing this article I could not help but think of two recently departed liturgical scholars: Kevin Seasoltz, O.S.B. (1930–2013), the longtime editor of *Worship*; and László Dobszay (1935–2011), the author of *The Bugnini-Liturgy and the Reform of the Reform* (see note 13). The two never met, and each deeply disapproved of the other’s views on the liturgy. Yet I can honestly say that both men were my friends.

81. See Marcia L. Colish, “Authority and Interpretation in Scholastic Theology (2004),” reprinted in Marcia L. Colish, *Studies in Scholasticism* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006) II/1–16, esp. 15–16. For examples related to liturgy see Peter Jeffery, *Translating Tradition: A Chant Historian Reads Liturgiam Authenticam* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2005) 20, 30. The classic work on medieval exegesis is now becoming available in English (3 vols. out of 4 so far): Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. Mark Sebanc and E. M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998–).

82. Not entirely successfully, however. See Lynne C. Boughton, “Transubstantiation and the Latin Text of the Bible: A Problem in the *Nova Vulgata Bibliorum*,” *Gregorianum* 83 (2002) 209–24.

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