

# Looking Back

## National Biennial Liturgy Conference, Parramatta 2020

### Liturgy: Forming a Prayerful and Eucharistic Church

Paul Turner, 12 March 2020

#### Introduction

Thank you for your kind welcome. My visits to Australia continually amaze me at the beauty of God's creation and the charity of God's people.

Americans and Australians share the same language, but I realize that sometimes we do not. I thank you in advance for your patience while I continue to develop my Australian vocabulary. One American traveler shared this opinion with me about our relationship with another country: Americans love France, but they don't much love the French; the French love Americans, but they don't much love America. I cannot speak for what Australians think about Americans, but I can tell you this: Americans love Australians, and we love Australia - we just wish you would move it closer to us.

Consequently, the recent fires here caused great concern among Americans. We love you, your country and your wildlife. When I told people I was planning this trip, the communal reaction was concern about the fires.

Now the menacing coronavirus is uniting our world. Our care for other human beings and our own vulnerability to illness unite us in affection for others and fear for ourselves.

Perhaps less known among Americans is the struggle of the Australian Catholic Church through the sex abuse crisis. We have faced a similar storm, but many Americans seem unaware of the suffering here - probably due to our ignorance, certainly not to our indifference.

Similarly few American Catholics seem aware of the upcoming Plenary Council and its potential for Australia. The purpose of that plenary is to discern how God is calling you to be a Christ-centered Church that is missionary and evangelizing; inclusive, participatory and synodal; prayerful and eucharistic; humble, healing and merciful; a joyful, hope-filled and servant community; open to conversion, renewal and reform. I find those goals exciting, illuminating and inviting. Your very articulation of these goals shows already the promising fruits of the plenary.

This National Biennial Liturgy Conference shares directly in the plenary's third goal, to be a Christ-centered Church that is prayerful and eucharistic. Hence, the overarching theme for these two days is "Liturgy: Forming a Prayerful and Eucharistic Church," which "will focus on fostering and forming the people of God at prayer."

A little about myself: I first got interested in the liturgy as a musician. I am the third of six children. Our parents, who could not afford very much, bought a piano for our home and had each of us take lessons. I started when I was four years old because I had already upset the nuns in our parish. My

parents noticed at home that after turning four, I was starting to learn how to read. My mother called the nuns at the grade school where my older brother and sister were enrolled to explain what was happening. The nuns quickly gave my mother this advice: “Stop him. He will be bored when he gets to kindergarten. Give him something else to do.” So on Easter Sunday, Mom sat me down at the piano and showed me middle C. I was literally reading notes before I was reading words. By the time I was nine, I was taking organ lessons. That was the same year that the Second Vatican Council opened, 1962. I also became an altar boy who served both the pre-Vatican II mass and the post-Vatican II mass. I was part of the last generation of boys who showed their expertise in matters liturgical by reciting the *Suscipiat* faster than any other server. *Suscipiat Dominus sacrificium de manibus tuis, ad laudem et gloriam nominis sui, ad utilitatem quoque nostram, totiusque ecclesiae suae sanctae.* You know this as, “May the Lord receive this sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name....” Please don’t recite it fast.

During the years after the council, there must have been controversy, but I mostly remember the excitement. My parents, brothers and sisters, friends, teachers and priests were all talking about it. I remember one priest guiding a classroom of us 14-year olds through a debate over retaining some Latin in the mass. We could not all agree, but we learned early on that the way forward would involve opinion and direction, clarity and confusion, prayer and eucharist. Those who say there was insufficient liturgical formation at the time of the Second Vatican Council did not attend my grade school. We learned about the issues in class, and we experienced them at church.

I had discerned a vocation to the priesthood at a young age as well, so my childhood swept me into church life, which meant liturgical life. Today I am grateful for these experiences and a proud son of the Vatican II liturgical renewal. You know from my bio that I am now pastor of the cathedral in my diocese and director of the diocesan Office of Divine Worship. I have also served the International Commission on English in the Liturgy in a secretarial role. This has given me a front row seat on the redevelopment of the English translations of the liturgy. From there I’ve come to know Archbishop Denis Hart, Archbishop Mark Coleridge and Bishop Patrick O’Regan, all of whom have represented your conference with acumen and pastoral care.

My path, following Christ through the liturgy, has now encountered your path, a Christ-centered Church that is prayerful and eucharistic. We stand at this intersection for the next two days to enjoy one another’s company and to discover Christ at our center. In my two keynote addresses I will invite you to look back and to look ahead. Your program describes the topics this way: “Looking Back: The liturgical renewal developed in anticipated and unanticipated ways. This talk will review the fruits of the Second Vatican Council as they continue to blossom under Pope Francis. Looking Ahead: What does the Catholic liturgy offer contemporary society? How can the eucharist best reach a secularized people in search for the meaning of life?”

Most of this first talk concerns what the council accomplished for the liturgy, and most of that concerns the mass. I will treat somewhat superficially several of the other ceremonies. At the end, I will offer some observations about the liturgy under Pope Francis.

## What the Council Accomplished

If you ask almost any Catholic my age, “What were the two biggest liturgical changes you experienced after Vatican II?” you will get the same answer: Mass went into English, and the priest faced the people. What they heard and what they saw - that is what people most remember. However, they actually experienced more. Even so, these two examples illustrate two different liturgical movements: bringing the people to the liturgy and bringing the liturgy to the people. People whose prayer focused on devotions had to be brought into the liturgy, so the priest turned to face them. The use of the vernacular brought the liturgy to the people to facilitate their involvement. Both these accomplishments demonstrate what the council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy resoundingly stressed, “In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit” (14).

The council did not coin the term “active participation.” Pope Saint Pius X first used it in 1903 to express three goals for the liturgy of his day: participation in “the most holy mysteries,” or the reception of communion; participation “in the public and solemn prayer of the Church,” encompassing the dispositions, words and actions of the liturgy; and participating through chant.

Vatican II’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy built on these sixty years later: “To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes. And at the proper time a reverent silence should be observed” (30). It also said of the liturgy, “it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and that they cooperate with heavenly grace;” it thus gave pastors the duty “to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by it” (11). Four years later the Sacred Congregation of Rites combined these ideas in paragraph 15 of *Musicam sacram*: Full participation requires not just external actions, but internal attitudes. These goals radiate not only in the words of the liturgy, but even in the rubrics.

These initiatives have successfully nourished the spiritual lives of Catholics throughout the world, although a few Catholics cling to the preconciliar liturgy. They appeal to the reverence of its ceremonies, silences, music, art and traditions, as well as the faithful’s deep interior participation. The preconciliar liturgy formed many generations of Catholics, including my own parents. Even so, I remember how happy my father was when he first heard the words of the mass in his own language. The council enhanced the mystery of the eucharist for people like my dad. It also showed a breakthrough in ecclesiology when the Vatican exercised its authority to change its own liturgical books, even books in force for four hundred years. All this happened to elicit the full, conscious and active participation of the people.

## The Mass

Last year marked the fiftieth anniversary of Pope Saint Paul VI's Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* and the implementation of the revised liturgy in Advent 1969. We can now look back gratefully on the work that specialists did for us. I'd like to propose five different ways of seeing the changes that came to the mass: creating better focus, mining the tradition, setting new directions, expanding the lectionary, and re-centering eucharistic theology.

### Creating Better Focus

The rearrangement of material from the Order of Mass created better focus on the purpose of each celebration. For example, in the past the priest sometimes prayed more than one collect near the beginning of mass - such as one for a saint and one for a season. Now he prays only one. This also explains why many saints' days were moved out of Lent so that people could observe them with greater celebration. Thomas Aquinas is but one example, formerly commemorated on March 7, which almost always falls during Lent, now remembered on January 28.

Another example of creating better focus is the rearrangement of the material between the Lord's Prayer and the communion of the people. At the end of the Lord's Prayer, the priest used to say "Amen", but this was removed because he continues praying in the next line, "Deliver us, Lord, from every evil." The priest used to say that embolism quietly, and it included a mention of several saints: Mary, Peter, Paul and Andrew. Now he says it aloud to involve the people and omits those names because they duplicate some saints of the Roman Canon. To this prayer was added "the blessed hope and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," alluding to Paul's Letter to Titus 2:13. This proclamation of the Paschal Mystery includes the Second Coming of Christ, something that the Memorial Acclamation also does. An acclamation for the people was added, "For the kingdom," which many Christian denominations use to conclude the Lord's Prayer. This change happened partly for ecumenism and partly to give the people another vocal role in the communion rite. Then the priest prays for peace and unity. He used to pray, "look not on my sins," but now he prays for the forgiveness of all. He used to say this prayer immediately before the Lamb of God, but it has been moved forward, linking it to the previous prayer for peace. He greets the people by extending "the peace of the Lord," and the deacon may invite the community to exchange the sign of peace. Only then comes the Lamb of God, which ends with the prayer, "grant us peace." This rearrangement of elements gave better flow to the communion rite and focused the purpose of this part of the mass.

A final example of focus is the dismissal formula, "Go in peace." Before the council, that command preceded the blessing, but it was moved to its present position after the blessing to give it more integrity. In many parishes we sing a final hymn, which is not in the rubrics, but the intent of the dialogues at the end was to conclude the mass with the commission to go forth into the world, the ministers leading the way.

These are simple examples of reforms to the Order of Mass that brought more intentionality to our celebrations by creating better focus.

## Mining the Tradition

The revisions to the mass also mined magnificent traditions of the Catholic Church. Scholars have long known about prayers preserved in sources outside the missal. Some came to light only recently and are now incorporated into the living worship of the people of God.

For example, the collects and prefaces of today's missal have been greatly expanded. The Verona, Gelasian and Gregorian Sacramentaries from the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries respectively had supplied many of the prayers in use, but these sources were mined for additional material, such as the third Christmas preface, which is based on one from the Verona.

The Ambrosian Rite, a smaller but faithful brother to the Roman Rite, comes out of Milan, where Pope Saint Paul VI had been the archbishop. Its Bergamo Sacramentary for the first time supplied collects that we now use in the Roman Rite on the 13th, 16th and 19th Sundays in Ordinary Time.

Some collects new to us have come from the fifth- or sixth-century Rotulus of Ravenna, a collection that had been lost, but was rediscovered in the nineteenth century. It gave us a prayer we now use on the Third Sunday of Advent, probably the oldest Advent collect we know. We priests sometimes read these prayers with no more fervor than we assign junk email, but they were carefully recovered and cannily set in place for a new generation of believers to enjoy.

Another part of the tradition that scholars mined is the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful. This allows the community to articulate particular intentions that require prayer at this time and place. They are universal in scope, though they include local needs. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, recognizing that these petitions would be new for twentieth-century Catholics, gave a rare theological explanation for them. Paragraph 69 says, "In the Prayer of the Faithful, the people respond in a certain way to the word of God which they have welcomed in faith and, exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all." Note that this part of the mass was added after the council not just to voice petitions to God, but so that the people could exercise their ministry. I hear of cases where priests omit the prayer of the faithful at mass; when they do, they remove one of the ways in which the church asks the people to accept their baptismal responsibilities. First evidence for these prayers can be found in the second century apologist Justin the Martyr. Examples existed through the tenth century, but the missal that preceded our current one had only one Latin word here: *Oremus*; "Let us pray." That's all there was to the prayer of the faithful for over four hundred years.

Collects, prefaces and the Universal Prayer are some examples of ways that the Roman Missal has mined the tradition of our church and restored some words and practices.

## Setting New Directions

Not only does the missal contain recovered old prayers, it has newly composed ones as well. For example, we had no preface for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord or for the First Sunday of Lent; these among others were

created for the missal. The same is true of the collect for the Second Sunday of Lent, the one for Holy Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Supper, and others.

Most amazingly, however, the missal added new eucharistic prayers. For centuries the Roman Canon was called the canon because it was the only eucharistic prayer. Happily, others have joined its company. Eucharistic Prayer III is a completely new composition with no historical precedent.

It is widely said that Prayer II comes from the third- or fourth-century *Apostolic Tradition*, which also gave us resources for the Christian Initiation of Adults and the prayers of ordination. Indeed, it has a sample eucharistic prayer during its description of the ordination of a bishop. The new bishop was expected to improvise one on the spot. But foreseeing he might have difficulty, the *Apostolic Tradition* sketches one that the new bishop could use. That serves as the source for what we know as Eucharistic Prayer II.

Why did we stop using that prayer between the 4th and the 20th century? Somebody lost it. The *Apostolic Tradition* was only rediscovered a couple hundred years ago. Because it was believed to come from roughly the same century and location as the Roman Canon, the group preparing the revised Order of Mass after the Council unanimously agreed to incorporate it. However, they changed it considerably, revising the preface, adding the Sanctus, moving the epiclesis to a theologically friendlier spot, and adding prayers for the living and the dead. This reshaping made it more a new eucharistic prayer than a recovered old one.

Something similar could be said of Eucharistic Prayer IV, which was inspired by the Anaphora of Saint Basil, with parts dating back to the fourth century. The revisers wanted to adopt it entirely because many churches of the Eastern Rites share it. How beautiful, they thought, if churches East and West had one eucharistic prayer they could all offer in common. However, it had its epiclesis after the institution narrative.

Let me explain this problem to you. The Roman Catholic tradition has held that the consecration of the bread and wine comes when the priest repeats the words of Jesus, "This is my body; this is my blood." The Eastern Rites held that the consecration came throughout the entire prayer or at the epiclesis, the prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Eucharistic prayers generally list the account of the Last Supper among the marvelous deeds for which we give God thanks and praise; in the East, having recounted these deeds, the priest then asks for the Holy Spirit to change this bread and wine. But the Roman Canon, which we used exclusively for over a millennium, had no explicit epiclesis, so we developed the tradition that the words of Jesus during the account of the Last Supper, the institution narrative, consecrated.

Many members of the group charged with revising the order of mass wanted to adopt the Anaphora of Saint Basil, but others could not get over the belief that even in that prayer, the consecration happens with Jesus' words from the Last Supper. It made no sense to them to pray after the institution narrative for the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. When the group put the anaphora to a vote, the proposal lost by one. The members then created Eucharistic Prayer IV, inspired by Eastern traditions, but with its epiclesis before the institution narrative.

These are just a few of the ways that the missal after Vatican II included new material and set new directions.

### **Expanding the Lectionary**

One of the most impressive accomplishments of the renewal was the Lectionary for Mass. Previously the typical Sunday mass included two readings - an epistle and a gospel, both from the New Testament. These repeated every year. If a weekday did not have its own readings, the liturgy repeated the readings from the previous Sunday. By the end of the year, people had heard 1% of the Old Testament and 17% of the New. The lectionary now contains three readings on Sundays, including a first reading from the Old Testament each week except during Easter Time, when a New Testament reading is proclaimed, and these follow a three-year cycle. The weekday readings have their own two-year cycle. As a result we now hear 14% of the Old Testament and 71% of the New Testament over three years, improving by astonishing statistics the volume of the bible Catholics get to know. You may be thinking that 14% is still not very much of the Old Testament, and you would be right. You should be grateful that you are only hearing 14% of the Old Testament. The Old Testament takes up about three fourths of the bible, so it contains a lot more material. Some of it contains genealogies, sexual exploits, and legacies of warfare that are difficult for modern readers to grasp. Still, we are getting the best 14% of the Old Testament, and all its principal parts.

The lectionary builds connections between biblical passages. Throughout Ordinary Time, for example, the Old Testament reading usually foreshadows something in the gospel. One wag explained it this way: If someone sneezes in the first reading, Jesus says "God bless you" in the gospel. There are other connections. For example the first readings of Lent form their own mini-series of salvation history. If you just concentrate on the first readings each year, you will see God's plan unfold from Adam to Abraham to Moses to David and to the prophets. They form a marvelous opportunity of catechesis, especially for those preparing for initiation at Easter.

The responsorial psalms enjoy extraordinary precision. The refrains are usually based on a psalm verse, often taken from the psalm but put in the first person plural and turned into the prayer of this community right here and now. The verses have been selected with sometimes surgical precision. For example, on Palm Sunday we will sing Psalm 22, but only the few selected verses that foreshadow the Passion of Christ.

The lectionary provides resources for preaching, inspiration for the selection of music, ideas for artwork in participation aids, catechesis for both inquirers and faithful Christians, and the model for the readings heard in many other denominations in their Revised Common Lectionary. Our lectionary has succeeded in ways that its compilers could not have possibly imagined.

### **Eucharistic Theology**

The full, conscious, active participation of the people is founded on the biblical passage 1 Peter 2:9 "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light;" and on 1 Peter 2:5, "Let

**yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”**

**These in turn are based on Exodus 19:6: “You will be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation,” and Isaiah 61:6: “You yourselves shall be called ‘Priests of the LORD,’ ‘Ministers of our God’ you shall be called.”**

**This theme reaches a climax in the Book of Revelation: “[To him] who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever [and ever]. Amen (1:6).” “Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over these; they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for [the] thousand years (20:6).”**

**We Christians believe that we are the new chosen people, each a royal priest who praises God and offers sacrifice. That is why full, conscious, active participation is so critical. It gives the common priesthood its expression.**

**The revised missal stressed this in many ways. One is the diversification of ministries. Ideally, a deacon reads the gospel. Lay people proclaim the first readings. A psalmist leads the responsorial. Servers minister at the altar. The General Instruction even mentions a commentator who helps people understand what happens to deepen their participation. For the prayer of the faithful, the intentions are listed by a deacon, a cantor, a reader, or one of the lay faithful (71). The one minister who is not to list petitions is the priest. He opens and closes them, but in the middle he lets others lead the prayer of the faithful. This expresses their royal priesthood.**

**During the preparation of the gifts, the priest commands the faithful, “Pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable.” Many people find this redundant because the sacrifice of Christ belongs to all of us; it isn’t my sacrifice and yours; it’s ours. But the invitation does not concern the sacrifice of Christ. It makes no sense to pray that Christ’s sacrifice may be acceptable to the Father; it is. Rather, it refers to all the sacrifices made by each of us. As priests we each offer ourselves on this altar. The priest incenses the gifts, and a thurifer incenses the priest and the people. We are all offerings to God upon the altar, praying that God will find each of us acceptable. I know a lot of Catholics do not like the smell of incense, but we think that God does.**

**Regarding the eucharistic prayer, the General Instruction says, “The Priest calls upon the people to lift up their hearts towards the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving; he associates the people with himself in the Prayer that he addresses in the name of the entire community to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit” (78). This would have surprised a priest in the years immediately after the Council. During the canon, his back to the people, speaking softly to God in Latin, and the people observing silence, the priest was not associating the people with himself. Now, that is his responsibility. “Furthermore,” the Instruction says, “the meaning of this Prayer is that the whole congregation of the faithful joins with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice” (78). This would have surprised the people after the Council. The General Instruction spells out the meaning plainly among the Functions of the People of God: “In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people of God’s own possession and a royal Priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the unblemished**

sacrificial Victim not only by means of the hands of the Priest but also together with him and so that they may learn to offer their very selves” (95). It is not the ordained priest alone who offers this sacrifice, but every priest in the room, every baptized member of the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ.

In practical terms, this comes to a head in the distribution of communion. At communion, the priest must receive from the hosts consecrated at that mass; that is what gives this sacrifice its integrity. He has offered not only bread and wine, but also himself. Then he himself receives the transformed Body and Blood of Christ, the fruit of this celebration of this mass. Even concelebrants are expected to do the same; they are not to receive previously consecrated hosts from the tabernacle; that would leave their celebration of this mass incomplete.

Now, the General Instruction says this, “It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the Priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord’s Body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the cases where this is foreseen, they partake of the chalice (cf. no. 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion may stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated” (85). The priestly people who have offered their sacrifice at this mass ideally receive consecrated the bread and wine that they have offered. When they receive communion from the tabernacle, their full, conscious, active participation as the priestly people is incomplete. It becomes more complete when they receive communion under both kinds, the bread and the wine consecrated at this mass.

However, in many parishes throughout the entire Catholic world, the priest consumes a host he consecrated at that mass, but many of the people - and sometimes all of the people - receive communion from the tabernacle, as if their priesthood is not significant. In other parishes worldwide the people have not been offered the chalice, even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus. However, even in healthier times, when Catholics are offered the chalice, many of them pass it by. Their fear of germs has been stronger than their desire to drink the blood of Christ. But you can see how the eucharistic theology of the revised order of mass intended for the full, conscious, active participation of the people to reach its climax.

This participation is enhanced through music, as Pope Pius X had foreseen. We sing chant effectively in many of the dialogues of the mass, and much of the rest of the music has evolved into a variety of genres and styles to engage the participation of the people. Much progress has been made.

To review, if you ask the average Catholic, “What changed in the mass after Vatican II?” you’ll hear two answers: Mass is in English, and the priest faces the people. But much more happened, including these five points: creating better focus, mining the tradition, setting new directions, expanding the lectionary, and re-centering eucharistic theology. If you’re wondering what makes mass so powerful today, it is more than language and visibility.

### Other Rituals

Briefly, now, let’s explore how some of the other rituals developed after Vatican II.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults restored the ancient tradition of the catechumenate in stages. It intended to improve the process in places such as Africa and Asia, where non-Christians held multi-stage initiation rites. But it took root even in countries where Christianity already held firm footing. The RCIA demonstrated an openness in the present to reexamine the treasures of the past and to apply them to contemporary circumstances. It also brought a renewed interest in the Easter Vigil where the initiation rites fit into the entire mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ.

The Order of Baptism of Children enhanced the role of parents and lent more integrity to the ceremony by having the priest or deacon more frequently address them and the godparents directly. The preconconciliar liturgy had the minister talk directly to the child, even asking the infant to make the baptismal promises, though the godparents and parents responded. Overall these ceremonies have been simplified so that they express succinctly and powerfully the mysteries they represent.

The Order of Confirmation has been revised partly because of its designation as a sacrament of initiation and partly because of the expanded circumstances on which a priest may confirm. When the bishop comes to a parish for confirmation, the ceremony often takes place within mass, which was not the case before the council. And even when it does not, it includes readings from scripture, which were not part of the preconconciliar rite. The preconconciliar confirmation ceremony took place entirely in Latin, which means that the bishop spoke Latin to the children in the moment of their confirmation. Now he speaks their own language.

The Order of Penance includes a communal form for the first time in history. Its implementation has been uneven, but overall the concept of confessing sins privately yet in the presence of other sinners has awakened a fuller sense of who we are as church.

The Anointing of the Sick is one of the greatest successes of the council in that Catholics generally understand it means a person is sick, not that a person is dying. But Viaticum is one of the greatest failures. Last communion is the preferred last rite, a ceremony that may be administered by any deacon or extraordinary minister of holy communion. But many families wait until the dying person can no longer receive communion before contacting a priest for what they think are the appropriate last rites.

The Ordination rites realigned the various minor and major orders, simplifying the ministries that candidates receive prior to ordination. Most significantly, the diaconate opened to married men. The ordination rites have produced ministry among many competent Catholic men who have studied the faith, discerned God's call in their lives, prepared carefully their preaching, baptized infants, witnessed weddings, assisted in funeral rites, and elevated the outreach that Catholics offer the poor, the sick and the deprived.

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony changed the blessing of the bride to the blessing of the couple. This nuptial blessing, formerly excluded at certain times, such as at weddings during Lent, is now part of every Catholic wedding. It was enhanced just a few years ago with a prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the couple, an idea borrowed from the Eastern Rites.

The Order of Celebrating Funerals reacquainted Catholics with the full impact of the paschal mystery. It permitted a change in the color of vestments from black to white; it introduced the usage of the paschal candle to show the hope of resurrection; it eliminated the sequence *Dies iræ*, which focused people's attention on fear of God rather than hope in eternal life. The rites themselves enjoy great flexibility because the Vatican understands that funeral customs vary from one conference of bishops to another. Both weddings and funerals probably sustain more cultural adaptation than any other part of the Catholic liturgical tradition.

This breathtaking sweep of changes to the Catholic liturgy has taken root in the hearts of the faithful, making us a more prayerful and eucharistic church than ever before.

## Pope Francis

Pope Francis has shown his interest in the liturgy in some surprising ways. We have not seen the quantity of liturgical legislation that came from his predecessors. I'm thinking of the revised General instruction of the Roman Missal, the new rules for translation in *Liturgiam authenticam*, and the instruction *Redemptionis sacramentum*, which criticized liturgical abuses.

As one of his first actions Pope Francis celebrated the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper in the privacy of a juvenile detention center, instead of the public space of St. Peter's Basilica. There he washed the feet of young men and women, Christians and non-Christians. Within a few years he permitted priests to wash the feet of women at the Holy Thursday mass.

In his *motu proprio Magnum principium* he adjusted the approval process for translations.

Presiding at the Easter Vigil in St. Peter's, Pope Francis has reduced the number of Old Testament readings from four to three; he combines the making of baptismal promises by the elect with the renewal of baptismal promises of the faithful; he eliminates singing during the renewal of promises, the baptisms, and the lighting of candles. While confirming, Francis rubs foreheads generously with the oil, elaborating the rubric to trace a sign of the cross with the thumb. He confirms with the baptismal name, not a confirmation name. For the sign of peace he does not touch the neophyte's left shoulder as his predecessor did; he gives a kiss on the cheek. He administers first communion to the neophytes by intinction, as his predecessor did. Overall, he presides over an expressive liturgy, though he has shortened the Vatican's Easter Vigil by about twenty minutes.

Pope Francis has introduced several new days on the liturgical calendar. One hallmark of the liturgical reforms had been a simplification of the calendar. Although all the saints of Catholic Church history are duly listed in the Roman Martyrology, not all of them appear in the liturgical calendar. The removal of many observances created space that future Vatican leaders have been slowly filling. The third edition of the Roman Missal, for example, added Josephine Bakhita, Padre Pio, and Catherine of Alexandria. Since then, Pope Francis has raised Mary Magdalene to the status of a feast day, the same designation accorded the apostles, even giving her her own preface. Two additional days are assigned to Mary: one, as Mother of the Church, is

obligatory on the day after Pentecost; the other, as our Lady of Loreto on December 10, is optional. Three recent popes have been canonized and added to the calendar as optional memorials: John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II.

Overall, Francis has striven to diminish liturgical wars, calling an end to cries for a reform of the reform. He has stressed his commitment to the liturgy of the Second Vatican Council. When one looks back over the past fifty years, one can see why. These reforms have been heartily embraced by a generation of Catholics, and they have formed us in ways beyond our imagining. They affect how we pray in common, and how we make promises at wedding and baptisms. They demonstrated our desire for a sincere welcome and careful preparation of new adult members to Christianity. They have helped us own the dignity that is ours as members of the body of Christ. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for those who brought us these reforms. We treasure them whenever we look back.