

Liturgical Leadership in a Secular Society: A Bishop's Perspective

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Introduction

In recent years we have witnessed a disturbing trend: many leaders in our country no longer speak about “freedom of religion”, but “freedom of worship”. There is a world of difference between the two. Freedom of *religion* was, of course, a founding principle of the United States of America, but this subtle change of nomenclature would indicate an attempt by some to construct an avowedly “secular society”, with “secularism” as the new social religion whose doctrines must be inculcated upon the citizenry, even though individuals are allowed to conduct religious services within the walls of their houses of worship.. At the outset of my reflections, I would observe that one problem affecting civil discourse is that people of various positions use the same terms, but often mean different things by them. So it is with the term “secular”: what we mean as Catholics by this word is quite different from what many architects of a “secular society” do, and this is at the root of the difference between “freedom of worship” and “freedom of religion”.

So, what does our secular society mean by “secular”? We can begin with the definition of the word found in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

1. Not spiritual: of or relating to the physical world and not the spiritual world;
2. Not religious;
3. Of, relating to, or controlled by the government rather than the Church.

In this understanding, religion has no place in the secular realm – it is a private set of beliefs which may be indulged like some hobby or craft, but must not extend its influence beyond the walls of a house of worship. This idea that freedom of religion can be reduced to freedom of worship cuts to the core of Catholic religion and Catholic liturgy. I would like to speak about this meaning of the word “secular” because it is part of the air we breathe; it exercises an influence on people, even those in the pews.

The Historical Perspective

We are children of the Enlightenment. One of the hallmarks of the so-called “Age of Reason” was the rejection of revealed truth. Two influential philosophical traditions flowed from the Enlightenment, empiricism and idealism. Each of these schools of thought has taken many forms; my concern here is not with these philosophical systems as such, but with certain tendencies or presuppositions they engender in contemporary culture.

Proponents of empiricism assert that only scientifically verifiable data can be objectively true. This approach undergirds the erroneous presumption that science and religion are inimical to one another. Idealism holds that objects of knowledge are dependent on the activity of the mind. Truth is subjectively determined: it is not something I recognize, it is something I manufacture. Very practical conclusions follow from these two approaches. For example, school children are given tests in which they are asked to distinguish between “fact” and “opinion”. Statements of value, questions of moral right and wrong, are always placed in the category of “opinion”. Apropos of this subjective and relativistic understanding of truth, I enjoy the response Francis Beckwith made to a student in his philosophy class who asked, “Why is truth so important?” Beckwith asked in turn, “Do you want the true answer or the false answer?”

This inheritance from the Enlightenment has created schizophrenia in our culture. On the one hand, there is the triumph of the (self-styled) scientific mindset: only scientifically verifiable claims can be considered “facts”. By extension, only the physical, material world is real; thus the drive for as many

physical pleasures and possessions as possible. On the other hand, there is an exaltation of the subjective perspective: something is true or not only if I think it is. This perspective trumps the scientific mindset if the former gets in the way of what I want. This has now even been enshrined in law. In finding for the constitutionality of Washington state's so-called "compassion in dying" legislation in 1996, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals asserted in its decision: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life". That the heart of liberty allows an individual the freedom to make decisions affecting the individual's own life, certainly, but to *define the meaning of the universe*? Really?

This schizophrenia continues to play itself out in more and more bizarre and tragic ways. For example, the most elementary knowledge of biology makes it clear that a child is the same organism, a human being, inside the womb or outside the womb. But this is, to borrow a phrase, "an inconvenient truth" for some, so the human dignity of the child becomes dependent on subjective judgment, not biological fact. But the latest manifestation of this is even more extreme: what Pope Francis refers to as "gender ideology". The clear biological fact is that a human being is born either male or female (the very rare exception of the hermaphrodite is precisely that – an exception to the rule, because something went wrong in the natural biological process). Yet, now we have the idea gaining acceptance that biological sex and one's personal "gender identity" can be at variance with each other, with more and more gender identities being invented. Some months ago a friend of mine pointed out a page from the website of a respected university advertising a housing program for "people of sexually or gender dissident communities", listing a grand total of fourteen different gender identities. I'm sure even more will be invented as time goes on.

How does this state of affairs affect liturgy? If the physical universe is simply a mass of data, then there is no deeper meaning to creation, and certainly not what we would call a sacramental dimension to it. This strikes at the heart of our most fundamental Christian beliefs: that God is the Creator of the universe and that in the Incarnation of the second Person of the Holy Trinity, God Himself has entered into our material world and made it an instrument of our salvation. On the other hand, if truth is purely subjective, then the maxim, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*" is watered down to refer to *my* beliefs, or those I share with like-minded people. Liturgy is valued for the feelings it generates, and it can be manipulated in order to produce an emotional experience. As I reflect on liturgical leadership in a secular society, I believe it is important to recognize the corrosive influence the secular meaning of "secular" has had, often unconsciously, on believers and unbelievers alike. More importantly, I believe that it is precisely a proper understanding of liturgy that can offer healing to the schizophrenia in our culture.

The Catholic Perspective

What is our Catholic understanding of "secular"? It is in fact rather complex, and the origins of that complexity can be found in the words of Our Lord and the writings of the inspired authors of the New Testament. "The world" has two very different meanings in St. John's Gospel. We read in John 3:16 that "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." And yet at the Last Supper Jesus says, "I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me" (Jn 17:9). In fact, Jesus states that the world hates him and will also hate his disciples. Again, Jesus himself and the authors of the New Testament speak of an antithesis between "the flesh" and "the spirit"; and yet St. John forthrightly teaches that anyone who denies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is the antichrist (1Jn 4:3; 2 Jn 1:7).

These contrary connotations of words like "the world" and "the flesh" in Scripture come precisely from how the realities they describe are related to God. From a Catholic perspective, creation is good in itself and only becomes negative when it is viewed in isolation from God. In the words of David Fagerberg, "Creation does not contain its own end, and to treat creation as if it does changes the world into 'the world' about which Scripture warns us. When this happens, nothing in the world has changed, but everything about the world is different for us. Things are not wrong, but we have wronged things by

loving them in the wrong measure.”¹ Fagerberg goes on to state that the world’s sacramentality will not be restored by information, but asceticism, because the ability to receive matter sacramentally requires a pure heart. This receptivity does not come from amassing more data, but by participation in the kenotic mystery of Christ’s Incarnation and his death and Resurrection. There must be a pattern of conversion in our lives, of death and new life. To be a disciple demands discipline, and the fasts, feasts and rituals of the Church provide this discipline. By means of these we not only offer worship to God, we do so in the world and with the elements of the world.

Founded on the mystery of the Incarnation itself, the liturgy, then, is shaped by this sacramental principle, which I would define as “the invisible made visible through the physical”. Both before and after his election to the See of Peter, Joseph Ratzinger wrote often and eloquently about this principle. His sensitivity to and encouragement of beautiful liturgy was not fueled by aestheticism, but by the conviction that the elements of creation are not just material for human labor, they are signs pointing beyond themselves to divine love. In an essay on the sacramental foundation of Christian existence written in 1965, the young theologian observed:

‘Water’ is not just H₂O, a chemical compound that one can change by an appropriate method into other compounds and use for all sorts of purposes – in the water from a spring that the thirsty traveler encounters in the desert, something becomes visible of the mystery of refreshment that creates new life in the midst of despair; in the powerful waves of a river, on whose crests the brightness of the sun is reflected, something becomes visible of the might of the glory of creative love and also the deadly force with which it can hit the man who gets in its way; in the majesty of the sea glimmers something of the mystery that we designate with the word ‘eternity’.²

Some years earlier, C. S. Lewis made the same point in a more trenchant way in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, one of the *Narnia* books. The rather troublesome young boy Eustace meets an exotic figure who tells him that he is a retired star out of the heavens. “In our world,” Eustace says, “a star is a huge ball of flaming gas.” And the character responds, “Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of.”³ We might say that, whereas contemporary secular education distinguishes between “fact” and “opinion”, the Catholic education imparted by the liturgy distinguishes between “fact” and “meaning”: what the sacramental principle yields is not “factual data” but “saving truth”.

The Sacramental Principle

I would like to consider this sacramental principle from three angles: first, in terms of our church buildings themselves; second, in terms of what goes on in them when we gather for worship, with specific reference to the foundational meaning of marriage in liturgy and a vision for ongoing renewal; and finally, what happens when we leave them.

1) CHURCH BUILDINGS

¹ David Fagerberg, *On Liturgical Asceticism* (Washington: CUA Press, 2013), p. 67.

² Joseph Ratzinger, *Collected Works, Vol. 11: Theology of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), p. 161.

³ *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Chapter 14.

Regarding church buildings, I would suggest that their very presence can be an actual grace, because they serve to remind all who see them of a higher reality. I suppose some people think of San Francisco as the consummate “secular city” – but within its forty-nine square miles there are at least fifty Catholic churches and chapels, and very beautiful ones at that, still intact – a testament to the faith of poor but intrepid Catholic immigrants who desired to build something beautiful for God and leave a legacy to later generations. There are beautiful houses of worship of many other religious traditions as well. I am happy to report that many Catholic churches are open daily, and I wish more were. An open church door is an invitation, and many a conversion has begun when some bereft individual found an oasis of prayer in the company of the saints, and in the presence (often without being aware of it) of our Eucharistic Lord. This is why the building of a Catholic church must never be reduced simply to providing a “gathering space” for a large number of people. Even apart from the liturgy, our places of worship should invite anyone who wanders in to experience something of God’s beauty and the companionship of the saints.

I would like to share an insight of Dorothy Day on this, especially in light of those who object to our expending resources on church buildings when there are so many poor people. St. Mary’s Cathedral in San Francisco was begun in 1963, and the project initially received enthusiastic support from all sides. By the time the cathedral was reaching completion, however, we had gone through the turmoil of “the sixties” and voices were raised to protest spending so much money on a house of worship. It happened that Dorothy Day took part in a meeting some months after the cathedral opened in the conference center under the church. One zealot complained of their meeting to discuss the needs of the poor in such an extravagant edifice. Many cheered him on, but Dorothy Day was not one of them. She forthrightly said: “The Church has an obligation to feed the poor, and we cannot spend all our money on buildings. However, there are many kinds of hunger. There is a hunger for bread, and we must give people food. But there is also a hunger for beauty – and there are very few beautiful places that the poor can get into. Here is a place of transcendent beauty, and it is as accessible to the homeless in the Tenderloin as it is to the mayor of San Francisco.”

2) THE LITURGY ITSELF

Thus, we might see our church building as an act of worship expressed with the material realities of creation. The place where the sacred liturgy is carried out should be redolent of the sacred. But what of the liturgy itself? Gatherings such as the *Sacra Liturgia* Conference aim at helping us appreciate and foster the liturgical life of the Catholic Church. This liturgical life faces challenges on many fronts. Some of these are perennial. For instance, liturgy is about ritual; ritual is about repeated patterns; and repeated patterns can become a matter of routine, of “going through the motions”. This was a problem in the pre-Vatican II days just as it is now. Bishop Francis Quinn, emeritus bishop of Sacramento, recalls being warned as a seminarian to beware of “the casual hand on the ciborium”. The antidote to the sickness of routine is not frenetic novelty; it is rather a matter of developing and nurturing a sense of reverence, and appreciating how part of the genius of Catholic worship is to combine an unvarying core structure with changing vesture, prayers and ceremonies of the liturgical seasons of the year.

Other challenges we face are an inheritance from the liturgical changes enacted in the years immediately following the Council. Some of these changes represented an over-reaction to liturgical practices that were thought to create a chasm between the altar and the pews. It is no disloyalty to the Church to maintain that at times the “pruning” carried out by those responsible for implementing the decrees of the Second Vatican Council was excessive. In addition, those changes were made at a time when western society itself was becoming very informal. Finally, the question of who does what in the liturgy led to “turf wars”, and the social unrest surrounding accepted roles in our culture overflowed into the sanctuary. One bishop told me recently of a visit he made to a parish. Originally he was unable to attend the event, but a cancellation created an opening, and he was able to be present. He was not the principal celebrant, but did help distribute Holy Communion. The pastor told one of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion that the Bishop would take her place, and he asked her to direct him to his Communion station. When the time for Communion came, she told him, “You took *my* ciborium.”

It is now fifty years since the conclusion of the Council. That may seem like a lifetime to many, but in fact it is a relatively short interval. The work of the Council may just be beginning. If I may draw an analogy with the Council of Trent, there was a remarkable blossoming of Catholic spirituality in France in the seventeenth century, but the decrees of Trent were accepted there only in 1615, fifty years after the close of that Council. We must continually return to the *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy* promulgated in 1963, read it within the context of the liturgical movement that preceded it, and evaluate it in light of the whole body of subsequent liturgical legislation. This is what is meant by “the hermeneutic of continuity”. Growth must be organic: it is artificial simply to excise what came before and replace it with something different – “change for the sake of change”.

There is an inherent tension in Catholic liturgy between the world as the theatre of redemption and the world as a foreshadowing of the fullness of a Kingdom which is not of this world. The Cross is made up of both a vertical arm and a horizontal arm, and authentic worship oscillates between this world and the world to come. Our society is very pragmatic, and we need to balance this with liturgical worship that conveys a sense of transcendence. At the same time, the great fact of the Incarnation demands that the invisible become visible through the physical. Authentic Catholic worship must embrace “the secular” – that is, that which is of this world – and show how it points to “the sacred” – both in this world and beyond it.

a) *Marriage and Liturgy*

To return to the question of gender ideology as indicative of the social schizophrenia we are witnessing due to the prevalence of the philosophies of empiricism and idealism, nowhere does this come more into conflict with the sacramental principle, with enormous consequences for the Church’s understanding of liturgy, than with marriage. We are all well aware of the secular reasons why it is important to preserve the meaning and definition of marriage in the law, in that it protects the right of children to be reared by a father and a mother whenever possible, recognizing that principle of complementarity by which father and mother each makes a unique contribution that benefits the child in the child’s maturing into adulthood. But the current debate about marriage redefinition, with the corresponding demise of the understanding of the sexual difference and complementarity of male and female, likewise corrupts our liturgical sense, and therefore our view of the universe, at the foundational level. This is because God has used marriage as the primary sacred sign of our relationship with Him, for the Incarnation is a marriage: God marries His divinity with our humanity in the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity taking on our human flesh in order to redeem us. Marriage is about the two becoming one: they become one flesh in a comprehensive union of persons, while each retains their own identity. This corresponds to the ancient Church Fathers’ teaching on “divinization”, and why, for example, St. Basil the Great could say something so bold as, “Through the Spirit we acquire a likeness to God; indeed, we attain what is beyond our most sublime aspirations – we become God.”⁴

This mystery goes back to the very beginning, reflecting what is already obvious from physical observation of the world, that is, the secular realm: God made them male and female. This sets the pattern for all of revelation and the economy of salvation, for it is all the story of a marriage. As we know from the teachings of St. John Paul II, the Bible begins and ends with a marriage: Adam and Eve, and the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. And it is replete with nuptial imagery all throughout. God’s Covenant with Israel is a *marriage* Covenant, so much so that when God’s people violated the Covenant by worshipping the false gods of their pagan neighbors, the prophets excoriated them for being an unfaithful bride. This also explains how a book of love poems, that does not even mention the word God, was entered into the canon of Scripture. As Pope Benedict XVI explains in his first Encyclical, *God is Love*:

... the reception of the Song of Songs in the canon of sacred Scripture was soon explained by the idea that these love songs ultimately describe God’s relation to

⁴ Cited in the Roman Breviary, Office of Readings for Tuesday of the Seventh Week of Easter.

man and man's relation to God. Thus the Song of Songs became, both in Christian and Jewish literature, a source of mystical knowledge and experience, an expression of the essence of biblical faith: that man can indeed enter into union with God – his primordial aspiration. But this union is ... a unity in which both God and man remain themselves and yet become fully one. As Saint Paul says: 'He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him' (1 Cor 6:17).⁵

Is this nothing other than the nuptial mystery, that is, the two becoming fully one, yet remaining themselves, each retaining their unique individual identity?

In the New Testament, we have various sayings and parables of Jesus alluding to this imagery, such as the parable of the ten virgins (five wise, five foolish) who took lamps with them to *go out and meet the bridegroom* (Mt 25:1-13). It is also significant that Jesus chose the occasion of a marriage feast to perform his first miracle; his response to his mother, "My hour has not yet come", is a reference to the consummation of God's marriage to His people that will be accomplished by his death on the cross. And of course, we are all familiar with Ephesians chapter five, which explains that the prophecy from the creation account of Genesis, "For this reason a man shall leave [his] father and [his] mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh", is fulfilled in Christ and the Church.

It's all the story of a marriage: God's marriage Covenant with Israel is fulfilled in the blood of Christ on the cross, establishing the new and eternal Covenant between him, the bridegroom, and his bride, the Church. This imagery is then taken over in the Christian liturgy, which traces its inspiration back to the Jewish liturgy in the Jerusalem Temple. There, the altar stood behind a veil marking off the Holy of Holies, where the priest would enter on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) to offer sacrifice for his sins and those of the people. In his book, *Jesus of Nazareth, Volume II*, Pope Benedict speaks of how the definitive destruction of the Temple, and therefore of the Temple sacrifices, coincided right at the moment that Christianity was established, and the Christians understood the sacrifice of the Eucharist as replacing the provisional Temple sacrifices, as the Eucharist is the re-presentation to us of the one, perfect sacrifice of Christ.⁶

The Christian liturgy is, in fact, heavily influenced by this Temple theology. As the Jewish-Catholic art historian Helen Ratner Dietz explains, the "fourth-century Christian altar hidden by its canopy and curtains had a deliberately nuptial meaning ... reminiscent of the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple".⁷ Understanding their Covenant with God to be a marriage covenant, the canopy and curtains in the Temple represented for the Jewish people a "chuppah," the bridal chamber used in Semitic marriage rituals.

The Christian practice of hanging a curtain between the columns of the baldacchino to veil the altar continued throughout the first Christian millennium.⁸ This served as a "sacred tent," sheltering the divine presence, harkening back to the Ark of the Covenant located within the Holy of Holies. The veil "sheltered" the divine presence. The purpose of a veil is to conceal. What is concealed is what is most sacred, and it is most sacred because it is most intimate – thus, the appropriateness of sheltering it.

Think about our human experience, keeping in mind here that revelation builds on what is already in the created order, it does not superimpose itself upon it: clothing is a veil, it shelters what is most intimate, that is, what is most sacred to us about our bodies, which is why we always keep that part of our

⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 10.

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth, Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), p. 36.

⁷ Helen Ratner Dietz, "The Nuptial Meaning of Classic Church Architecture," in *Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Art and Architecture* [remainder of reference still to be provided]

⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* [remainder of reference still to be provided]

body veiled. But the veil has to be removed – unveiled, revealed – in order for a marriage to be consummated. So we can understand the meaning of the veil in the Temple being torn in two from top to bottom at the moment of Christ's death (Mt 27:51): it symbolizes that, through the sacrifice of His Son, God has now revealed what before was concealed to us – His intimate, inner life – and has granted us access to it. The veil, then, conceals what is most intimate – and therefore most sacred – precisely so that it can be revealed to allow the nuptial communion of Christ and the Church. Extrapolating on this, we can see even more clearly the nuptial meaning of the sacrifice of the Eucharist: just as the consummation of a marriage is preceded by the unveiling of what is intimate and therefore most sacred to the spouses, so in the liturgy the marriage feast of the Lamb to his bride the Church is consummated by him giving us his flesh to eat and blood to drink, drawing us into a mystical nuptial union. The Church's insight into this truth can be seen from the Vulgate translation of the verse recounting Christ's last words on the Cross, "it is finished" (in Greek): *consummatum est* – literally, "it has been consummated." The drawing back of the curtain before Communion signifies this entering into nuptial union with Christ.

We learn from the Fathers of the Church that God's creation of a bride for His son Adam from Adam's side as he slept is a foreshadowing of God the Father's creation of a bride – the Church – for His Only-Begotten Son as he lay in the sleep of death on the Cross. Christ gives the seed of life to his bride, the Church, from the blood and water that flowed from his side on the Cross. The Church, as mother, receives it, generates new life for his Kingdom (the water of baptism) and nourishes that new life through the grace of the sacraments (his blood, the Eucharist) and by teaching the truth she received from him.

While the practice of the veil in front of the altar has been preserved in the liturgy of many of the Eastern rites of the Church, it has been extinct in the West for over a thousand years. However, the sense of the veil has been preserved in other – albeit diminished – ways up to recent times. Examples of this would be a veil placed in front of the doors of the tabernacle or immediately behind them inside the tabernacle, and the veiling and unveiling of the chalice during the celebration of the Mass. This also gives a deeper meaning to the old practice of women veiling their heads in church. In Christian liturgy, the sacred is veiled, and so again here there is a deeper, symbolic meaning: it is not just a matter of feminine modesty, but consideration given to women as having a special sacred status because they are the bearers of life.

All of this is indicative of a movement away from paganism toward worship of and allegiance to the one, true God; and, it is a movement that happens by way of marriage. As Pope Benedict XVI explains *God is Love*, there is a connection between monotheism and monogamy evident at the beginning and determined by love as *eros*. He says:

From the standpoint of creation, *eros* directs man towards marriage, to a bond which is unique and definitive; thus, and only thus, does it fulfill its deepest purpose. Corresponding to the image of a monotheistic God is monogamous marriage. *Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa* [emphasis added].⁹

Picking up on this theme, Helen Ratner Dietz explains it this way:

... as the ancestors of the Jews gradually emerged from paganism, God let them know that ... polytheistic worship of nature deities was unacceptable to Him.... [T]he God of Israel is hetero, 'other'. He is beyond and before the universe. His bride Israel yearns for Him because He is other. And God, in His own way, yearns for Israel in her earthliness because she, too, is hetero, other than Himself.

⁹ *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 11.

When King Solomon in his later years lapsed into the worship of Ashtoreth the earth goddess, thereby denying the oneness and otherness of the divinity, God let him know that there would be deleterious consequences in the next generation. It was with great effort that Israel emerged from pantheism. Pantheism was like a vortex, tugging at Israel to suck her back in, *just as today pantheism is like a vortex tugging at the Church* [emphasis added].¹⁰

When you consider that the entire Judeo-Christian religious tradition is premised on the concept of sexual difference and complementarity in marriage, then you will understand that, if we lose that concept, nothing of our faith tradition will make any sense in the culture. Precisely because revealed truth is not super-imposed on nature but builds on it – that is, builds upon truths that are accessible to reason alone from the observation of nature – when the culture can no longer apprehend those natural truths, then the very foundation of our teaching evaporates and nothing we have to offer will make sense. The result is a societal reversion to the paganism of old but with a unique post-modern variation on its themes, such as the practice of child sacrifice, the worship of feminine deities, or the cult of priestesses. And in fact, just the other day a close collaborator of mine told me of a recent poll revealing that support for polygamy in the United States has increased from 7% to 16%. Since the Church cannot but be immersed in the contemporary society, this is that pantheism tugging at her like a vortex to which Ratner Dietz refers.

b) Ongoing Renewal

The truth that revelation builds upon what is in the created, physical order, just as grace builds on nature, will always be there, whether we notice it and thereby benefit from it or not. That, again, is why our practices of penance and spiritual discipline are so important: they will enable us to recognize it, receive it, and live it out in our lives. And this has to begin with our worship. A more generous availability of the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite will help us to reclaim a heightened sensitivity to this sacramental reality, as well as provide a context for the liturgical renewal mandated by the Council with a sense of continuity with the liturgical movement of the last century-and-a-half. Devotional practices such as Eucharistic adoration and popular devotions to Our Lady and the saints, thoughtlessly abandoned immediately after Vatican II, are being rediscovered and provide enrichment to the liturgical life of the Church, not a distraction from it.

However, genuine liturgical renewal is not a matter of external ceremonies, new or old. Liturgical asceticism is a work of conversion, and conversion must not remain superficial. That is why the reclaiming of the practices of penance in the lives of individual believers is also so important, practices such as Friday fasting, fasting before Communion (one hour being understood as a minimum when necessary, not the norm to aim for), frequent Confession, a more serious and literal approach to fasting and other forms of self-denial during the season of Lent (people are told, instead of “giving something up” for Lent, to do something positive, but giving something up *is* doing something positive, precisely because it is something concrete and one can immediately feel the effect!), and observing penitential practices at other appropriate times of the year, such as Advent and January 22nd (which the U.S. bishops have proclaimed a day of penance in reparation for the sins against the sanctity of human life caused by abortion).

Educating our people to appreciate beauty and understand the deeper meaning of the Church’s liturgy is also critical. As you may know, we have established in San Francisco the Benedict XVI Institute for Sacred Music and Divine Worship. Its purpose is to provide *formation*, not just training, for liturgical ministers, especially musicians and cantors. While in some cases liturgical ministers may have some *training*, what is really needed is *formation*, something similar, albeit not as extensive, to what those preparing for Holy Orders receive. In any discipline, one must know the tradition if one is going to excel.

¹⁰ Dietz, “The Nuptial Meaning of Classic Church Architecture,” [page number still to be provided]

How can one be a competent liturgical musician if one is ignorant of the Church's millennial tradition of sacred music and hymnody, let alone what the Church is actually asking us to do based on the authentic documents on music in the liturgy? Even if a musician is providing a more contemporary style of Church music, this formation is necessary to guarantee that the music will serve the worship of God and not the exaltation of the singers.

While music is at that heart of this Institute, there is also envisioned formation for those who exercise other liturgical roles in the current form of the Roman liturgy. For example, it is not enough that lectors learn how to pronounce the words correctly. To proclaim the Word of God effectively, the most important thing is to understand the meaning of the text. Thus, lectors need a deeper formation in Biblical history and theology. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should develop a particular Eucharistic spirituality. This is especially critical, for we can all share horror stories of things we've heard and seen when it comes to how the Blessed Sacrament is treated. Ministers charged with distributing Holy Communion who have developed a truly sacramental world view and Eucharistic sensitivity do not need to be told what to do in every imaginable situation (e.g., someone walks off with the Host, or does not know how to receive); it will come as second nature to them.

3) AFTER THE LITURGICAL ACTION

Finally, let us consider what happens when we leave church after the liturgy. This is where Catholic worship should have its impact on "secular society". The most common name in the West for our Eucharistic celebration is "the Mass", from *Missa*, which implies that we worshippers are being sent forth. Far from separating us from the world, the sacred liturgy plunges us into the very heart of it and reveals its sacramental meaning. It is nothing short of blasphemous to allow us "freedom of worship" within the walls of our churches and prohibit "freedom of religion" in daily life.

When he was Archbishop of Munich, Cardinal Ratzinger gave a radio broadcast on the feast of Corpus Christi. He spoke of the symbolism of carrying the Blessed Sacrament out of the church; of a custom in Bavaria of reading from the four Gospels at various points in the procession; and imparting Benediction to the four points of the compass:

[The four Gospels] are inspired, they are the breath of the Holy Spirit, and their fourfold number expresses the world-embracing power of God's word and God's Spirit. ... The world is thus declared to be the realm of God's creative word; matter is subordinated to the power of His Spirit. For matter too is his creation and hence the sphere of His gracious power. Ultimately we receive the very bread of the earth from his hands. How beautifully the new Eucharistic bread is related to our daily bread! The Eucharistic bread imparts its blessing to the daily bread, and each loaf of the latter silently points to him who wished to be the bread of us all. So the liturgy opens out into everyday life, into our earthly life and cares; it goes beyond the church precincts because it actually embraces heaven and earth, present and future. How we need this sign! Liturgy is not the private hobby of a particular group; it is about the bond that holds heaven and earth together, it is about the human race and the whole created world.¹¹

Christian life is inherently missionary. The risen Christ sent his disciples out to the ends of the earth, and he commissioned them not only to teach people, but to plunge them into the mystery of his life, death, and resurrection by means of a sacrament: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). By using water for baptism, we are reminded that this element is not simply a commodity to be evaluated in terms

¹¹ Ratzinger, *Collected Works*, pp. 415-6.

of its necessity to human life and endeavors: it symbolizes in myriad ways our relationship to God, our Creator and Lord. Our interest in Catholic liturgy must be governed, not by aesthetical taste, but by the awareness that “the invisible becomes visible through the physical”, so that we strive to use what is best in creation in our worship. We do this because God is deserving of the best we can offer Him, and also because as a priestly people we offer back to God the wonder of this world that He has first given us.

This Creator is not just some “force” or “energy” – the one God is a communion of Persons, and to be saved is to be brought into that communion. Just as liturgy reveals the sacramental reality of the world, so it destroys the imagined autonomy of the individual subject. We are created in communion, the union of man and woman in the marital act; and we are created for communion, by our second birth in baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. Hence, liturgy is not only the way we worship God within the walls of our churches, it is also the way that God heals wounds and restores harmony in the world beyond the walls of our churches.

Conclusion

In the face of those who would lock us up within our church walls, and in the face of those who feel that concern about the liturgy is unimportant compared to so many “practical” problems facing the Church, we can do no better than respond with words found at the beginning of *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of the Second Vatican Council:

For the liturgy, ‘through which the work of our redemption is accomplished’, most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it; and she is all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek. While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.¹²

¹² *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 2.