

“The norm of the holy fathers”
Liturgical renewal past, present and to come

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I am grateful for the invitation and opportunity to address a gathering as august as this at a time as important as this. In some ways, I feel that I am not the one who should be speaking to you about the theme that I have chosen. Many of you are more competent in liturgical studies. I have never considered myself a liturgist. I was trained as a translator because when you are trained in biblical studies what you are trained to do (at least at the Biblicum where I was trained) is translate; and I presume that was one of the reasons why nearly seven years ago I was invited to become the Chair of the Roman Missal Editorial Committee.

Eventually after some discussion as to what was involved, I thought I should say yes, given that the task didn't look too daunting at the time. However, it was like saying yes when I was ordained as priest or bishop in Melbourne. I didn't really have a clue what I was saying yes to. In other words, it was like signing a blank cheque. It has involved an ocean of blood, sweat and tears; and I had not the slightest idea that my life as a bishop would be so consumed by this task. But I regard it as one of the great gifts I have been given in my life, and I speak out of that experience of gift here today.

Like many of you, I too had questions, hesitations and uncertainties about the task assigned to ICEL. This was in part because I had been involved in the work of ICEL long before I was a bishop. I was a member of the Advisory Committee and a member of the Original Texts Committee; and I had been part of the last

phase of preparing the 1998 Sacramentary. I had then followed from afar the process of the dismantling of ICEL as it was and its reconfiguration to what it is now. There are some elements of that process of transition that I would not want to defend, and I am not here to do so. I saw what was; I have been intimately involved in what is; and, when I step back from it all, I would say that what was and what is have been for me personally an extraordinary gift. It is that experience of gift that has led me to the sense that this moment is a moment of gift and opportunity for the whole Church. I have said Mass for years and I think with a certain reverence and a certain understanding; but in a real sense I had little idea what was between the covers of the Roman Missal – the majesty of the great mosaic that is the Roman Missal which is, among other things, I can now see, one of the great cultural artifacts of the world.

My own liturgical studies in the seminary, I would have to say, were feeble. For one thing, we were not taken through the great Collects of the Roman Missal which are a treasure house of the Church's faith in a way that is not always true of the texts we have grown up with. I wouldn't for a moment claim that the texts that have been produced in recent times are perfect. They are very far from that, and I can perhaps see that more clearly than anyone, with the exception of Bruce Harbert who's among us here. But the new translations are, I feel sure, a great improvement upon what we have known. Again I don't want to enter into polemics unnecessarily or be too blunt in my claim, but I would say that the translations we have grown up with have not always served us well. You only have to look at the Collects of these first Sundays in Ordinary Time to see the point. I have done this with some of you: look at the Latin, look at the 1973 translation, bracket the 1998 translation for various reasons, and then look at what

is proposed now. I think the improvement is there for all to see or for all who are willing and able to see.

The scale and complexity of this project is at times unrecognized even by those who are well trained and qualified. There was one bishop, himself a highly intelligent man, who remarked years ago when the project was gathering momentum: “I don’t know what the problem is: all you need is a bishop with a dictionary”. All I can say is that I wish it were that simple. A bishop with a dictionary, whoever he may be, however qualified and intelligent he may be, is not enough.

Dictatorship has always been quicker and more efficient, but once you cast your boat upon the tide of consultation, things become slow and messy, as they have been in this process. It can be a nightmare dealing with eleven Episcopal Conferences. Try dealing with the Australian Bishops Conference where we have only forty-five Bishops: that can be a can of worms. But then try dealing with three hundred Bishops in the USA, which is an even greater can of bigger worms. So eleven Episcopal Conferences, hundreds and hundreds of bishops, have been part of the process of consultation. Of course it’s slow, of course it’s messy, and at times it has been very frustrating. That’s why the temptation to dictatorship is strong. It’s tempting simply to rule by decree: just get the Missal out there! That’s what Pius V did in 1570.

Given my own viewpoint as one who has been intimately involved in the project, I have the sense that there has been an extraordinary level of consultation, and yet I hear it said that this is something that has been done behind closed doors, that there has been no consultation. That claim perplexes me. Sometimes of course people say there’s been no consultation when what they really mean is “You didn’t do what I said”. All kinds of voices – many, though not all of them,

episcopal – have been part of this process of consultation. Their voices have been heard and their proposals have been considered in an honest and well informed way by ICEL. Many of the suggestions have been things that ICEL has looked at already, and ICEL has said, Well it is a good suggestion, but no, and for the following reasons. Ideally, everyone would like to consult everyone, but again how possible is that and how long would it take? The bishops to whom these texts were sent were free to show the texts to anyone at all; it was their call within reason and within a certain time-frame. Nothing was done behind closed doors, even if the preparation of *Liturgiam Authenticam*, which provided the hermeneutical base of the new translations, was confidential. But the process of translation that has flowed from *Liturgiam Authenticam* has not been behind closed doors.

A second claim that perplexes me is that this new translation of the Roman Missal is a retreat from all that Vatican II sought to promote and a betrayal therefore of the Council and by implication the Holy Spirit. Again I can only say from a strictly personal point of view that if I thought that were true I would not have shed the blood, sweat and tears of these last seven years; and I am sure I speak for the thousands who have been involved in the project. When I think of the time and treasure it has required, I sometimes think that we would have saved ourselves a lot of hassle and a lot of money if we had just stuck with the Latin. But that is not what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. I don't think any of the people involved in this process would have begun to bother if they thought it was a betrayal of Vatican II or some kind of crude, merely political right-wing plot designed to overturn not only what the Council did but somehow the faith of the Church.

Indeed, I think that this process is a profound and in some ways surprising continuation of the trajectories which look back not just to Vatican II but to the Council of Trent. There is a great irony in all of this of course. Some claim that Vatican II itself was a great disruption of the tradition. And there are scholars who have written large books arguing that Vatican II was a betrayal of the organic development of the Roman Rite. So here on the one hand you've got some claiming that Vatican II was a disruption of the tradition, and now you have others claiming that these new translations at this new threshold moment are a disruption of Vatican II. So there is disruption to the left and disruption to the right.

We are passing through a critical new threshold moment in the ongoing journey of liturgical renewal that traces its roots not just to Vatican II but to the Council of Trent. So in this project I regard myself as a servant of a deep continuity. People talk about the hermeneutic of discontinuity, a phrase used by Pope Benedict XVI as we all know. Then people go on to say, But I'm one who prefers and indeed promotes the hermeneutic of continuity, which was not a phrase that the Pope used originally. The Pope spoke then of a hermeneutic of discontinuity as compared to a hermeneutic of reform. But we are not talking about some kind of continuity that treats the liturgical reforms of Vatican II as a mere hiccup from which we have now recovered. We are talking about something that is deeply caught up within the rhythms and dynamics of the hermeneutic of reform.

When I was a seminarian, the Council of Trent got a bad press. It was the ultimate insult to call someone or something Tridentine. But I am here in part to say that Trent was not such bad news after all. I am conscious that some of you are more qualified as historians than I am and that potted history can be dangerous. Nonetheless I am going to pot. The Council of Trent was a Council convened, as

you know, in a moment of deep crisis and it was, I think, one of the great reforming Councils. But its work was unfinished even though it ran from 1545 to 1563.

I would claim – and here I echo the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the introduction of which I think is fascinating – that Vatican II’s greatness in many ways is that it completes the reforming trajectories of Trent. Many of the liturgical questions taken up by Vatican II were taken up by Trent, but they were not resolved, or if they were resolved they were resolved in a very different historical context which I will consider shortly. I think it is best to see Trent, Vatican I and Vatican II as a single great conciliar arc. They are in some sense three moments of a single conciliar process over centuries. To me it is not unlike the Popes of recent times. People talk about John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II, for instance, as if they were Popes from different planets, so different were they in style and personality and policy. I don’t deny the differences at all, but I think you fail to understand them if all you focus upon the differences. You begin to understand the Petrine ministry, not just celebrities but the Petrine ministry in all its mysteriousness and magnificence, if you see the way in which Popes like John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II are profoundly one. You have to go to a deep point to discover the point of their convergence. As with the three Popes, so too with the three Councils. Any sense of there being radical disruption is, I think, likely to prove at least unhelpful and probably destructive.

In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Decree on the Sacred Liturgy, Vatican II explicitly reaffirms Trent and indeed uses the very words used by Pope Pius V in the Encyclical *Quo Primum* that accompanied the Missal of Pius V. In that Encyclical Letter, Pius V said that some rites were to be restored to “the original norm of the holy fathers”, and they are exactly the same words used in

Sacrosantum Concilium which is hardly accidental. Vatican II explicitly takes up the task given to the Church by Pope Pius V in 1570. Therefore you find in the GIRM this statement:

“If the inner elements of this tradition are reflected upon, it becomes clear how outstandingly and felicitously the older Roman Missal of 1570 is brought to fulfilment in the new.”

This means that Vatican II finally implements, for instance, what Trent had said about the homily, i.e. there should always be homilies on Sundays and Solemnities. Similarly on the reception of Holy Communion, that it should be a regular thing and under both kinds. Trent had said no to communion under both kinds. Why? Because of the historical context. The Reformers were saying that if you don't have communion under both kinds then it isn't valid. Under the pressure of these polemics, therefore, Trent says no or at least no at this time. But four centuries later, the point is no longer under dispute, and therefore Vatican II says yes. In that sense, Vatican II implements what Trent had said.

Vatican II also adapts texts to the needs of the time - in other words to accord with modern theological understandings, which can be a little controversial. In the third *editio tipica* of the Roman Missal, texts are also modified to correspond to the current discipline of the Church, especially for instance the penitential discipline which is different these days to what it was four hundred years ago. The Missal of Paul VI also adds new texts drawing upon later tradition. The texts of Vatican II, for instance, are found in many of those long and rather verbose prayers that are added to the “back end” of the Missal.

But let me focus now in more detail upon the different historic contexts of Pius V and Paul VI. In 1570, Pius V was dealing with the Renaissance, overwhelmingly the Reformation and the whole phenomenon of the birth of the

modern era with the appearance of printing and so on. I would underscore printing as fundamental to the convulsive cultural change that the Church was dealing with in the sixteenth century.

Here I attend to history because one of the ironies is that we can fail to attend to history even though perhaps the most fundamental achievement of Vatican II was the restoration of historical consciousness to the life of the Catholic Church. You could argue could that at Vatican II the Barque of Peter is once again set upon the tide of history, the tide of time; and that is one of the things we are dealing with here. Trent in some ways conjured up an illusion of immutability and for good reason in a time of convulsive change. Under the pressure largely of the Reformation, Catholic teachings on the sacrificial nature of the Mass, on the ministerial priesthood, the real and permanent presence of Christ under the Eucharistic species were all under attack. That is why I think you find comparatively few changes in the Missal of 1570 from the 1474 Missal which in turn looked back to the Missal used at the time of Pope Innocent III (1198 – 1216). In a time of massive change and radical attack, the Missal of 1570 doesn't do too much because the Church judged that it wasn't the time to do much. It was a time to shore up the Catholic faith.

Another fact that Pius V and the Church at the time were dealing with was a lack of manuscripts. It was one thing for the Pope to say that we have to go back and reform the Missal in light of “the original norm of the holy fathers”. But you would have to have the manuscripts in order to go back and do that work well. The lack of manuscript evidence in the middle of the sixteenth century made it difficult to go back beyond the liturgical commentaries of the medieval period to these “ancient and approved authors”, as Pius V describes them.

At this point let's turn briefly to the very different context of Vatican II. Vatican II comes in the wake of that double apocalyptic drama we call World War I and World War II, which brought the collapse of western Christian civilization as we had known it, with the ash heaps of Auschwitz and Hiroshima the great emblems of the devastation. Nothing could be the same after the apocalypse and its ash heaps. In other words we are dealing with something that might be described as the birth of the post-modern era. The Church certainly could not put up a sign saying simply and blandly, "Business as usual".

In contrast to 1570, there were now countless studies available to the Church, studies and documents shedding light upon "the original norm of the holy fathers". There were many liturgical books which had brought to light hitherto unknown texts and recently discovered liturgical documents. As a result, liturgical and patristic study were so much richer then than they were four centuries ago. All of that fed into the phase of liturgical renewal since Vatican II, as it has into this new moment of the ongoing journey of liturgical renewal. I would think that one of the strengths of the new texts is precisely that the voice of Scripture sounds more clearly and powerfully, as do the voices of "the holy fathers". It was this surge of liturgical, biblical and patristic study that led to Vatican II being able to do what Pius V had decreed but was not able to do, given the constraints of the time.

If we look at the question of the vernacular, we see that Trent looked at the proposal. It wasn't as if Vatican II was the first Council to consider Mass in the vernacular. Trent had looked seriously at the whole question of the vernacular, in part because the Reformers were saying that the liturgy *must* be in the vernacular and alarm bells were sounding. Trent took seriously the question of the vernacular because it understood the catechetical value of the Mass. But Trent decided

against it at that time precisely because of the Reformation controversies. The Reformers condemned the use of Latin and also the use of a low voice or silence.

What the fathers of the Council of Trent wanted to affirm above all – and this is crucial I think – is that the Mass is primarily the action of Christ. I think it is impossible to overstate the importance of that claim, even for what is happening now in the liturgical life of the Church. It is not something primarily that *we* do; it is something primarily that *Christ* does. It is his action and its efficacy does not depend on our reception of it. No matter how important the question of reception is – and it is crucial – the efficacy of the action of Christ, his self-sacrifice, does not depend finally upon our reception of it, according to Trent and according therefore to the faith of the Church. So whilst the catechetical task is important, it is not primary.

The fathers of Trent rejected the vernacular, but (and this is often forgotten) they strongly encouraged the development of catechesis even during the Mass, but that was never done until Vatican II. Vatican II was deeply conscious of the instructive and pastoral character of the liturgy. It tended to focus not so much as Trent had done upon the Mass as the action of Christ, but upon the instructive and pastoral character of the liturgy. In other words, liturgy was for human beings. It did that in a different context, a context in which the Reformation controversies were no longer pressing.

The use of Latin for instance was nowhere disputed. So the vernacular was no longer a problem. The Council in fact imagined far more limited use of the vernacular than eventually happened. The Council fathers thought that it would be good if some parts of the Mass would go into the vernacular but that most of it would stay in Latin. It says quite clearly in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that Latin remains the liturgical language of the Latin Church. Bishops were told however

that if they asked for permission for this part or that part then the permission would be given. As it happened, perhaps under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, bishops around the world asked for everything to go into the vernacular and it was as if things changed overnight. We no longer heard Latin and all of a sudden we had everything in the vernacular. That was not quite what Vatican II imagined but it was certainly what we got.

Let me just focus, as a kind of important footnote, upon the question of catechesis. There was a text in last night's presentation which claimed that to speak of the need for a liturgical catechesis to accompany the Mass is somehow a shift from *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. This is a claim that I find puzzling, given Trent's stress upon the importance of liturgical catechesis to accompany the rites and texts of the Mass. That call is picked up clearly in Vatican II which speaks of the catechetical value of the Mass itself, yes, but the need or the desirability of the celebrant to catechize, as it were, in the course of the celebration.

This has been a very mixed blessing. For one thing it has tended to create a culture of clerical verbosity. How many times have you been to Mass where you get about five or six homilies through the liturgy? The ritual drowns under the weight of supposedly catechetical verbosity and the texts are changed for presumably catechetical purposes. I have rarely if ever heard a celebrant change a liturgical text for the better. I'm sure he thinks it is better and I'm sure the intention is to communicate to the people. In other words, it is a catechetical purpose. But the changing of the liturgical texts for a catechetical purpose is not something imagined by either Trent or Vatican II.

The other thing that happened was that the translations contained a heavy dose of explanation in the interests of accessibility. Many of the texts that we have grown up with are not translations at all. They are virtually original compositions

that bounce off the Latin but don't render it with anything that resembles accuracy. I am not attributing bad faith to the translators; the catechetical thrust was decisive. In rendering the Latin text, there was a desire to communicate, to make the text accessible, which is a good thing in itself. But at times that laudable motive corrupted the texts to the point where they barely pass on the *depositum fidei*, the treasures of the Catholic faith. There is a rupture of the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*; and if there is that kind of rupture, we are in trouble because the primary transmission of the faith comes in those liturgical texts. Catechesis is fundamental, but the question in this new moment of the ongoing journey of liturgical renewal is how best to do it.

In the new translations, there is an attempt to render the texts in a way that is less overtly catechetical. In other words, let the text stand as it is and let preaching and catechesis draw out from the texts in a way that communicates to the liturgical assembly rather than try to build into the rendering of the texts a catechesis that runs the risk of corrupting the texts or diluting their power. What you see in Vatican II is an attempt – certainly not yet fully realized – to implement Trent's largely ignored recommendation to interject certain explanations into the sacred rites. Now it is true that the ritual speaks for itself in one sense, but Trent and Vatican II both recognize that the ritual never speaks for itself entirely. Our task, therefore, is to get the right balance between ritual and catechesis.

I now turn my eye to the present and the future. We are more than forty years down the track from Vatican II. That means we are in a good position to assess what has worked well and what has worked less well in that time. In a moment like this, the Holy Spirit is summoning us to a kind of grand liturgical stock-taking, which can be very challenging indeed. It contains great frustrations, creates deep-seated anxieties and even a sense of grief, because it does involve

saying farewell. It certainly involves a kind of honesty that might lead to the unsettling of bad liturgical habits that have taken root, not because of bad faith but usually because people were ignorant.

As a bishop, I take very seriously my responsibility in the liturgical area because I think it is so fundamental to the life and mission of the Church; but it is incredibly hard to unsettle bad liturgical habits. I am not going to enumerate them, but I hope you know what I am talking about. There are priests out there who do certain things they think are good but which are patently bad. You might say, Who is he to be pontificating? Well, I am a pontiff! I am charged with trying to ensure that the worship of the Church is of such power that it gives the Church the energy she requires to do what she is supposed to be doing.

In a moment like this, we need a kind of honesty. It's no good running around saying, Isn't the Emperor beautifully clad! when in fact the Emperor has very few clothes indeed. We also need to keep in mind that the purpose of the Council's liturgical renewal was not a kind of ecclesial interior decorating. It is fascinating to me what liturgical studies have sometimes involved. I now think that they should involve a most rigorous reading of texts, only because I have been forced to do it and I have seen the power and productivity of the exercise. The purpose of the liturgical renewal of Trent and Vatican II was new energy for mission, not some churchy interior decorating. Call it New Evangelisation if you like. The phrase has become a bit of a cliché, but new evangelization was what Vatican II was all about.

The Council rejected a policy of "business as usual" and insisted that we need a new surge of Gospel energy at a time when it appeared unlikely. But historically the great new surges of Gospel energy, the new threshold moments, have come in a time of crisis. Even the Renaissance in Florence broke out in a

time of economic bust. But consider the surge of Gospel energy that came after the devastation of the French Revolution in France; the surge of Gospel energy that came in the wake of the Reformation; or in the wake of the collapse of the Roman Empire. Historically, the moment of devastation when the party seems over is precisely the moment when the Gospel goes “boom”.

That is what John Paul II recognized when he talked almost to the point of cliché, as does Benedict XVI, about the need for a new evangelization. They are deep voices uttering the truth that the Spirit spoke to the Church in the Council. In the wake of the ash heaps, the apocalypse, a new surge of Gospel energy was the only answer. John Paul II said it in the letter he wrote at the end of the Jubilee Year, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. There he said that we must start afresh from Christ.

We need a new beginning, but the new beginning can only come if we reach back and gather up the past in a new and creative way. “Back to the future” is the only logic that the Catholic Church knows. In other words, the renewal of Trent and Vatican II, at a time when the temptation was to circle the wagons, was to be *ad extra* rather than *ad intra*; and if the liturgical renewal has not always gone as well as we would have hoped in these years, it may be because it has been too churchy, too introverted, not enough *ad extra*. The only real energy for this kind of surge of Gospel energy is a return to “the norm of the holy fathers”; only that can make calls for a new evangelization more than a vapid mantra. That is the truth Pius V spoke, and it is the truth that Paul VI spoke. In other words, drinking more deeply from the wells of tradition, passed on supremely in the liturgy, is what this new moment of renewal is all about.

Some of us might have thought that the renewal was complete in the years immediately following Vatican II. There was that amazing time in the wake of the Council when they translated and put together the liturgical books in the most

brehtaking way and with the most breathtaking speed. The books all appeared, and there was a sense of exhilaration for people my age. Perhaps we thought that that was the end; all we would do now was tweak here and there. But now that seems not to be the case.

When will the journey of liturgical renewal be finished? After what I have been through in recent years, my answer is that it will be complete at Doomsday; it will never be finished. There are those who say that the Roman Missal was finished in 1962: no. There are those who seem to be saying that it was finished in 1973: no. My own sense is that the Roman Missal will only be finished once the Lord returns on the clouds, because the Missal gathers up the Church's journey through time and casts it together in a majestic mosaic or symphony. The Church's journey through time becomes the prayer on the lips of the Bride of Christ.

At this point I ask, what has gone well in these forty years? I ask this question as a way of prompting your own reflection. In these forty years, many things have gone well; I am not here to deliver a Jeremiad on that point. First of all, there is no question that the liturgy is more accessible in a certain way, though I don't think it is always as accessible as priests think. I sometimes look at people's faces when the prayers are in English and I think that they may as well be in Latin. But with the coming of the vernacular the mysteries of the liturgy have by and large become more accessible to the entire community.

Last year I ordained two priests in the Cathedral in Canberra in the Tridentine rite, the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite. It was quite an experience. I had never said Mass in that form, although it was the Mass I served as an altar-boy for years; but the preparation was excruciating. Both ordinands were Canberrans belonging to the Fraternity of St Peter, and they had asked me to

ordain them. In the wake of the Motu Proprio, *Summorum Pontificum*, it seemed to me I had no choice. I had to prepare and celebrate; and I found the experience instructive for many reasons. It struck me during that celebration how passive the congregation was. Another thing that struck me was the use of the body. The Extraordinary Form is a more physical kind of celebration. In our ritual forms, we have become, I think, strangely Cartesian or disembodied. The Tridentine Mass is surprisingly physical; it is a kind of choreography, a sacred dance. I wasn't at ease enough with the rubrics to enter into it fully; nor do I wish to idealize it. But the power of ritual, the use of the body and the eloquence of silence struck me in celebrating Mass in the Extraordinary Form. By contrast the accessibility of the Ordinary Form of the Mass is undeniable and very striking.

Related to this is the question of the participation of all the baptized. That has been an unquestionable gain. Sometimes there is the impression that people are not participating unless they are *doing* something. This can be typical of school liturgies where the sense is that the kids are doing nothing unless they are *doing* something. But the baptized exercise their priestly office just by *being* there. They don't have to sing or read or distribute communion or take up the collection. In other words, we still have some way to go before we come to a deep and mature understanding of the participation of all the baptized; but it is undeniably true that we have made great progress down that track.

There has also been a gain at the point of simplification. One of the striking things about the Extraordinary Form of the Mass is the sheer complexity of the ritual. Some regard that as a strength of the Extraordinary Form, but I am not sure – even though I think sometimes we went overboard with simplification in producing the Missal of Paul VI. For instance, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* talks about removing needless repetitions. What happened as a result is that all

repetitions were removed, which was, in my view, a mistake because repetition is fundamental to ritual language and ritual gesture. For instance, I think it was a mistake to go from nine to three *Kyries*; I think of how many *Kyries* there are in the liturgies of the East. In the new translations, we have restored some of the repetitions to the texts to the Missal because the judgment was made that they are not needless repetitions; they can be eloquent and powerful. One of the mistakes made in 1973 was to say that all repetition of action or of text was needless.

You only have to look at one of the Eastern liturgies to see the power and importance of repetition. In this new moment, the West can learn from the East; *Oriente Lumen*, Light from the East, was the title of one of Pope John Paul's most evocative letters. But it remains true that in the Roman Rite there has been a very positive simplification, even if it has a shadow side as most things do.

The renewal of Vatican II has also brought a stronger sense of community involvement, that the Mass is not just the action of the priest but the community, which relates to what I have been saying about participation and accessibility. That sense of community has been crucial.

Undoubtedly too we have gained in the area of Scripture. I am not sure that it has yet produced the great renewal of preaching that has normally accompanied new surges of Gospel energy through the Church's history. But the thirst for Scripture among Catholic people is one of the great signs of the Holy Spirit since the Council. I know, because as one trained in Scripture I get invited to give a million talks. If I accepted all the invitations, I would be doing nothing else. Scripture, then, has been an area of huge need and creativity since the Council, and this has been important for the liturgy.

Other major gains have been in the area of adaptation and inculturation. This is one of the reasons why there has been prodigious growth of the Catholic

Church in the so-called Global South. Were it not for the vernacular and the capacity to adapt or inculturate, there would not be anything like the growth of the Catholic Church in the Global South. The Catholic Church would not be nearly as attractive an option to local cultures, a more attractive option than, say, Islam. I don't want to enter into polemics at all, but Islam has within it a tendency to "Arabize". You might say of course that we have a tendency to "Romanize". But one of the reasons, I am told, why in places like Africa and Asia Catholic Christianity has a special appeal is that it can be adapted to the style and needs of a particular culture.

As I look around this gathering now, I am conscious that we are very untypical of the Catholic Church. By and large, the Church now is "coloured" – African, Asian, Latin American. I won't go through the demographics of it, but we are very untypical. We don't necessarily think of ourselves as untypical, but the Church has changed. We are aging many of us, yet the Church throughout the world is mostly young. And so I could go on. This is a vitally important context for considering the shape and direction of the ongoing journey of liturgical renewal.

Now let me ask what has gone less well. This is where it gets a bit tougher in some ways and where people can become uneasy. One of the things that we have not done well – and it was fundamental to Trent – is the sense of the liturgy as Christ's action, the sense of the liturgy as something received rather than something we do. Of course the liturgy *is* something that we do; I am talking here of balance. Have we got right the balance between the liturgy as something that we do and the liturgy as primarily Christ's action, *traditio* handed to us by the universal Church and by the Church through time as a great gift into a mystery into which we are drawn and which we can't just tamper with it as if it is our own

personal property? Celebrants can at times act in a way that gives the impression that this is my own personal property and I can do with it what I like. Well, that's not the case. I ask: is the liturgy something we control? Is it something we can change at whim or on the basis of our supposed superior liturgical perceptions? Hardly.

Another area where I think we have not done well is in fostering a sense of the transcendent or the sacred, the sense of awe if you prefer. The Church is not exempt from the pressure of secularization which is a very complex phenomenon, and I'm not about to deliver a couple of clichés about it. But it gets down to basic things like the sense of a church as a sacred place and, tied to that, the sense of the Real Presence which seems to me critical. Faith in the Real Presence is an awesome thing, but it is not fostered when Ministers of Communion wear badges saying "bread" and "wine". Often enough the feel now is more of the church as a hall, little different from a secular space. There is a diminished sense of the church as an oratory and therefore a place of silence. But I refer more generally to the sense of the transcendent as an area where we need to do better

Another point where I think we have done less well is with the translations. I have already spoken about that and I could speak for hours about it. The translations we have grown up with present problems theologically: that is now clear to me. Let me offer two brief examples here. First, the persistent translation of Latin verbs such as "fac", "concede", "da", "praesta" etc as "help" fosters a semi-Pelagian sense that God helps us to a certain point and then we ourselves take over. This is one point where the theology of grace in the 1973 translations is at least weak. Indeed, I have reached the point where I am deeply suspicious of the verb "help" whenever it appears in the translations we now use. Secondly, the equally persistent translation of the third person plural "they" as "we" when

referring to the Church fosters a congregational ecclesiology which is again questionable. A Catholic ecclesiology understands the “they” as referring to the Church in every time and place and the Church in heaven and earth, rather than simply *this* congregation (i.e. “we”). It’s only within the context of “they” that “we” makes sense in a Catholic understanding of the Church. The local congregation is seen properly only in the light of the Church universal.

I would also point to the question of metaphor which is more subtle but also has theological ramifications. The 1973 translations consistently abandon the physical metaphors for God found in the Bible in favour of abstract nouns (e.g. “face” is usually rendered “presence”, “right hand” as “power”). The cumulative effect of this is that the sense of the Incarnation is diminished. God himself seems more abstract and less immediate than ever he does in Scripture or the Church Fathers. Charles Péguy, the French Catholic writer of the early twentieth century, said that there was a widespread implicit denial of the Incarnation in the culture and even among the devout. He called this “a mystical disaster”, because it led people to think that they had to deny their humanity to find their way to the divinity. The point holds true a century later, which is why we need texts that strengthen rather than weaken the sense of God incarnate.

I might add that I wasn’t aware of these problems until I began working with the texts as closely and comprehensively as I have had to do in recent years. It is a question of cumulative effect rather than a clear error in this or that translation; it certainly doesn’t imply bad or defective faith in the original translators. I might also add that the translations which were presented to the Holy See in 1998 (though not approved in the end) had already recognised these and other problems and had sought to find a way beyond them.

I think the loss of ritual is also something that has diminished us. Do you notice how self-conscious we have become about the use of the body in the liturgy? One example is bowing during the Creed when we profess faith in the Incarnation. Is this an Anglo-Celt thing? But the liturgy, however transcendent it is, is also very physical, very bodily. But we seem to hate bowing; the bow before receiving Communion is often no more than a bob. The same coyness about use of the body can afflict celebrants. For example, the extension of the hands (the ancient “orantes” gesture) can take a thousand different forms and some priests dispense with it altogether. We need therefore to become more bodily, and to understand ritual gesture better in this largely de-ritualized culture.

Some time ago, I went to the swearing in of the new Governor-General at the Parliament in Canberra and, witnessing the ceremony, I thought how bare and de-ritualized it all seems. I wasn't expecting a coronation, but it was very brief and bare indeed. For the human being with a body, something was missing. We have become very cerebral – “Cartesian” is a word that again comes to mind. The lush, darker, dare I say more feminine aspects of Catholic worship we find somehow embarrassing; and that's what I mean by cerebral.

That links to verbosity. Words are going to save us. We have all been to funerals, for instance, where it is just words, words, words. Words are important but they are only a tiny part of the mystery of worship at least as the Catholic Church understands it. So have we perhaps sold our birthright for a pot of message?

What about silence? I think this is critical. The Rabbis talk about the Scripture as “black fire on white fire”. The black fire is the type, the black words; the white fire is the margins and the gaps between the words. It is all fire. At times in our worship, however, it feels as if we've got words, words, words, the

black fire, but we've got too little white fire. If this new moment of liturgical renewal is about new words, it is no less about new silences. It is about white fire. The more I have worked with the words, the more I have come to that conviction. We need to move towards a new experience of silence; and we therefore need to move towards a new music that feeds silence.

It is said that Mozart was once asked what he liked best about his music and he replied, the silences. Now there is a music that rises from the silence and returns to silence, transfiguring silence in the process. Great music transfigures silence so that the silence of the tomb, cold, dark and empty, becomes the silence of the womb which is full and joyous. We need a liturgical music that dances with silence, not a noise that replaces silence. Some of what we sing and hear at Mass is a substitution for silence rather than a feeding of the silence of God into which we are drawn.

I'm not sure that we have done well on the score of beauty. It is often claimed that there is a banality about much of our worship. It relates, for instance, to the churches that we've built and Canberra provides plenty of examples. If an atom bomb were dropped on the national capital, how many of the Catholic churches would you want to save? A handful, but no more. Think of the banalities that we have built and the iconoclasm that we've perpetrated at times. Often enough too the texts that we have produced have a banality about them. The music can have a banal feel to it. The vestments worn can look tawdry at times. Similarly the vessels which can at times look like cheap things picked up at K-Mart. Here I am not pleading for a vapid asceticism. But I think one of the things that Pope Benedict has got right is an understanding of the catechetical power of beauty, and we need to take our cue from him, though in a way geared to this culture.

Another thing that troubles me is a kind of unwitting clericalization of the Mass. When Vatican II decided to turn the celebrant around (though that was never said explicitly), the Mass became much more dependent upon the celebrant than it ever was in the Tridentine form. In other words when the priest faced *ad orientem*, there was a kind of impersonality, which may have been excessive. But now the priest faces the people, the sense of the celebrant as celebrity can become a problem. The Ordinary Form of the Eucharistic liturgy has unwittingly given us a more clericalized style. This is paradoxical because I've just said that we have gained in the area of participation. There is more participation, but we also have a more priest-dependent way of celebrating the Mass. The experience of doing the Ordination in the Extraordinary Form gave me the sense that it didn't matter too much who I was. But with the Ordinary Form it matters a great deal how I speak and where I look. Who celebrates matters much more than it did.

I have mentioned just some of the challenges at this time of stock-taking as we cross the new threshold on the ongoing journey of liturgical renewal. In all of this I am saying that this new moment is a gift and opportunity for the whole Church. We talk endlessly about the new translations, but this moment is about more than words. It implies a shift in liturgical culture, a shift which I would see as an advance. It is as broad as that. In my experience of leadership, cultural change in the Church is extraordinarily difficult to bring about. It's not that you meet with bad faith, but passive resistance can at times be difficult. The cultural change that is upon us must involve the unsettling of bad habits and long-held convictions. In this moment, we are being summoned to an advance in liturgical culture that touches words, touches ritual, touches music, touches silence.

This will never happen unless we get the balance right between things like, on the one hand, ritual and, on the other hand, the everyday. No-one surely wants a

ritual that is so straight-jacketed that it becomes anti-human and ludicrous. But nor does anyone want a ritual that is so everyday and banal that it is no longer ritual.

We need to get the balance right between silence and sound. That is critical. Sound includes words and music.

We need to get the balance right between beauty and function, both of which are important.

We need to get the balance right between the priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood.

We need to get the balance right between the liturgy on the one hand as *traditio*, as something received, and on the other hand something that we do, something that we adapt and apply to this particular situation.

We need to get the balance right between the universal and the local. We are not a congregationalist Church; we are the Catholic Church, in every time and place, in heaven and on earth.

We need to get the balance right between the liturgy as contemplation and the liturgy as energy for mission.

Those things are true not just of the liturgy but of the life of the Church generally. In all of this nothing much will happen unless we move beyond ideology and politics and the slogans that go with them. You know the slogans; you've heard them as much as I have and there's no need for me to repeat them here. But as long as we stay caught – even unwittingly – in a web of ideology and reduce the Church's life to a matter of politics then none of this is going to happen.

It might help also to remember the big things that we tend to forget; the bigger they are, the more we forget them. For instance, that all of this about God. Consider that one of the hymns we sang this morning was only about us; God

didn't rate a mention. When I first arrived in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, I went to meetings where I found myself listening to prayers that weren't prayers at all; they were us talking to each other. I made the point that prayer somehow has to be a listening to God and a talking to God. So this moment of liturgical renewal is about God, a new listening to God and a new talking to God.

In my moments of weariness in this process, I have consoled myself with the thought that all this work seeks to prepare words and songs and gestures for the Bride of Christ as she comes to the Bridegroom. The Missal contains words placed on the lips of the Bride of Christ, and that's one reason why the translation matters and is worthwhile. Another image from Scripture that relieves my weariness is that what we are doing is preparing a place where the Lord may eat the Passover – “Go and prepare a place where we may eat the Passover”, Jesus says to the disciples.

Finally, I think of the words of Georges Bernanos in “Diary of a Country Priest” where as the priest lies dying, he utters the enormous and enormously consoling truth, *Tout est grave et tout est grâce*, “Everything is grave and everything is grace”. That has been my experience of the journey of recent years, and I hope it is yours as we work together to lead the Church across the new threshold with Christ beckoning beyond.