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Bane and Blessing: Assessing the Liturgical Impact of Vatican II at Its Diamond Jubilee

Thomas M. Winger

I. Trads and Rads

When young people today rebel against their hippie parents, what do they become? Traditional! A generation of Roman Catholics who were raised on the so-called *Novus Ordo*,¹ the vernacular mass enacted in the wake of Vatican II, have rejected it together with their parents' ponytails and bell bottoms, and embraced their great-grandparents' church. The popularity of the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) in the Roman Catholic Church today may be exaggerated, but it is a force to be reckoned with. A survey of TLM parishes in the United States in 2021 showed that, while only 4 percent of parishes offered TLM regularly, attendance had grown by a stunning 71 percent in less than three years.² In the same period, how much had attendance *declined* at mainstream Roman Catholic masses?³ Unbeknownst to the survey administrators, Pope Francis was about to release his bombshell *motu proprio*, *Traditionis Custodes* (July 16, 2021),⁴ which restricted access to the TLM on the grounds that it was injuring the church's unity. TLM adherents were rightly

* This essay was presented to the Good Shepherd Institute at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, on November 7, 2022, in observance of the sixtieth anniversary of Vatican II.

¹ *Novus ordo*, or "new order," is an unofficial moniker popularly applied to the revised Roman Rite promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1969 and published in 1970.

² "The Growth of the Latin Mass: A Survey," *Crisis Magazine* (blog), July 26, 2021, <https://www.crisismagazine.com/2021/the-growth-of-the-latin-mass-a-survey>. The Latin Mass Directory indicated at the time of the survey (July 2021) that some 658 parishes in the US offered at least one TLM regularly; out of 16,702 parishes, that constituted a meagre though notable 4 percent. "Countries," Latin Mass Directory, <https://www.latinmassdir.org/countries/>.

³ And note that this period spanned the lockdown restrictions of the pandemic, which devastated worship attendance overall. It has been suggested that the old mass, which features a non-participatory ritual that can be observed from a distance, is well-suited to live-streaming and physical restrictions; but the reality is that adherents of the Latin mass were more likely to reject such novelties. In any case, online viewers were not included in the survey attendance figures.

⁴ Francis, *Traditionis Custodes: On the Use of the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970*, The Holy See, July 16, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/20210716-motu-proprio-traditionis-custodes.html.

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mystified that *they*, with their traditional views and practices, could be accused of divisiveness.⁵

So what are we to make of this new traditional generation, who take up with pride the insults thrown at them, these Radtrads, Madtrads, Badtrads, and Gladtrads, these Trentecostals and Tradismatics? Are they grumbling Israelites in the wilderness longing for the fleshpots of Egypt, or penitent exiles by the waters of Babylon singing soulful songs of Zion? An admittedly extreme YouTube collage⁶ contrasts the reverent ritual of the old rite with cool-dude concelebrating priests jiving before the altar. How should we interpret this debate? As confessional Lutherans committed to traditional worship, it is tempting to cheer for the Tradismatics, who are looking for a mass observed with reverence, dignity, and a sense of mystery, who reject the fads and experimentation of the '60s and '70s. But the two combatants in this Roman Catholic war cannot be simplistically aligned with liturgical Lutherans on one side and the contemporary crowd on the other. Lutherans make strange bedfellows with these adherents of the Council of Trent, so opposed to liturgy in the language of the people and so committed to the sacrifice of the mass. But neither may we simply cheer for the *Novus Ordo*, as if Vatican II represented the Roman church's better-late-than-never embrace of the Reformation. It is more complicated than that. If there is an analogy in our own churches, it may lie in the mixed reception of *Lutheran Worship* (1982) with its not insignificant departures from the Common Service tradition in order, text, and music. And though *Lutheran Service Book* (2006) has to some extent reconciled the polarities, there is increasing strength in the voices advocating a return to the one-year lectionary, the primacy of Setting Three, and eastward-facing celebration of the Eucharist. This admittedly more friendly Lutheran skirmish is the perfect backdrop for a close examination of Vatican II on this sixtieth anniversary of its opening.

⁵ And they were chagrined that Francis had chipped away at previous allowances given by both John Paul II and Benedict XVI for use of the old rite: John Paul II, *Quattuor abhinc annos* (Oct. 3, 1984), Adoremus, December 31, 2007, <https://adoremus.org/2007/12/quattuor-abhinc-annos/>; and Benedict XVI, *Summorum Pontificum: On the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970*, The Holy See, July 7, 2007, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20070707_summorum-pontificum.html. The chilling edict seems to have had an effect, as the Latin Mass Directory now lists only 603 parishes in the US offering TLM regularly (an 8 percent decline): <https://www.latinmassdir.org/countries/>, accessed September 27, 2022. The directory lists, e.g., 40 parishes in Canada (3 per 1 million nominal Catholics), 58 in Australia (11 per 1 million), 202 in France (5 per 1 million), 92 in Italy (2 per 1 million). Setting aside countries with very small and therefore statistically dubious populations, the outstanding example of the TLM's popularity is the UK, with 153 parishes (31 per 1 million).

⁶ Catholic Crusader Films, "The Novus Ordo vs the Traditional Latin Mass Full Movie," March 28, 2020, <https://youtu.be/gwBDY-WXeqY>.

II. After a Century of the Liturgical Movement

One sceptical analyst has compared this young generation's adoption of the Latin mass to a browser in an antique shop who picks up a mechanical gramophone and a gear-driven hand drill. Fascinated by the quality of their craftsmanship, he starts playing old vinyl and drilling holes for fun. But he has no memory of life's exhausting labour before the advent of electricity. So also there can be an innocent nostalgia among those who extol the old rite, but who never experienced an average Catholic mass pre-Vatican II. A wise old pastor recently made a similar comment to me about a new generation of Lutherans who have rediscovered the Common Service, but who do not remember communion just four times a year with a dry mass from page five in between, the pastor speaking while the congregation sang their responses, or the Gloria in Excelsis wheezed out on a reed organ. So, also, before we join the Trentecostals in condemning the *Novus Ordo*, we ought at least to see what Vatican II was trying to fix.

On the eve of the Reformation, the mass was, at its best, a grand drama of sight and sound, processions and pageantry. At its worst, it was a priest rattling off the words alone at a side altar. In an average town it was a sad blend of the two, with the chief Sunday mass taking on the low ceremonial of a votive mass. The priest at the altar spoke the mass in dialogue with a single assistant while the congregation looked on. The words were in a language of which they understood only snippets, spoken in a hurried and hushed voice that made it even harder to understand. The Scripture readings were read in Vulgate Latin by a priest who did not even bother to turn and face them.⁷ Sermons were rare, as the average priest was not educated enough to have a preaching licence. In such a spoken, low mass, without even choral music to inspire their attention, congregants had little explicit role. It was common to wander and chatter as the priest carried out the mass on their behalf, though the pious might pray privately from a book of hours. Since the early Middle Ages, the prayers that surrounded and included the words of institution had been spoken silently. So to call attention to the holy moment of the consecration, a sacred bell was rung, signalling the laypeople to run forward to kneel in adoration and watch the elevation of Christ's body.⁸ This spiritual communion was the norm for people who might partake orally only once a year.

⁷ This reality explains the otherwise peculiar rubrics in many early Lutheran church orders that instruct the priest to read the Scriptures "facing the people"!

⁸ Thomas Cranmer told of how people might run from one altar to another on Sunday to observe the elevation multiple times and increase their spiritual reward. See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 98.

Ceremonial matters were not at the center of the Lutheran Reformation, which focused its critique chiefly on the sacrifice of the mass. But though “the active participation of the laity” was not an explicit principle, early Lutherans did reincorporate the laity into the liturgy through vernacular Scripture readings and hymns, sermons at every service, restoring the Prayer of the Church, the vernacular proclamation of the words of institution, and communion in both kinds. While rejecting most of these Lutheran changes, the Council of Trent introduced its own reforms; but they were chiefly concerned with stamping out regional variations. And though Trent, famously, pulled up short of banning polyphonic choral music, the mass in post-Reformation Catholicism became even more universally a purely spoken affair.⁹ For three hundred years thereafter, the mass was an action rendered by the priest on behalf of the people, while the latter carried out their private devotions.¹⁰ It was an era when adoration of the sacrament outside mass became more important than the mass itself.¹¹ When the people did commune, it, too, usually took place outside the mass (even *before* mass!) as they received elements reserved in a tabernacle; thus, mass and communion became separate events.¹²

It is against this background that the nineteenth-century stirrings known as the Liturgical Movement must be interpreted. From a confessional Lutheran standpoint, I have on many occasions heartily condemned the movement’s theological weaknesses, its anthropocentric emphases, its tendency towards “liturgical archaeology,” and its naïve Romanticism.¹³ It may be true that the Liturgical Movement

⁹ The popular Lutheran retort that chanting is (Roman) Catholic is quite opposite to reality. It is Lutherans who preserved the sung service. In the Baroque and Classical eras, Roman Catholic composers set the text of the mass for musical performance in a non-liturgical concert setting. Post-Vatican II documents endeavoured to restore the *sung* mass as the norm.

¹⁰ See the (admittedly tendentious) depiction of the pre-Vatican II mass in Rita Ferrone, *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium, Rediscovering Vatican II* (New York: Paulist, 2007), 1–3.

¹¹ See Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 289, who claim the emphasis on eucharistic adoration was a reaction to the denial of the real presence by some Protestants. The architectural changes are attributed to the Jesuits.

¹² See I. H. Dalmais et al., *Principles of the Liturgy*, ed. A. G. Martimort, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell, *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, new ed., 4 vols. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1985), 1:70.

¹³ Hermann Sasse, “Liturgy and Lutheranism,” in *Scripture and the Church: Selected Essays of Hermann Sasse*, ed. Jeffrey J. Kloha and Ronald R. Feuerhahn, Concordia Seminary Monograph Series (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1995), 31–46; Sasse, “Liturgy and Confession: A Brotherly Warning against the ‘High Church’ Danger,” in *The Lonely Way*, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 299–315; Bryan D. Spinks, *Luther’s Liturgical Criteria and His Reform of the Canon of the Mass* (Bramcote, Notts.: Grove Books, 1982) and “Mis-Shapen: Gregory Dix and the Four-Action Shape of the Liturgy,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (1990), 161–177; Timothy C. J. Quill, *The Impact of the Liturgical Movement on American Lutheranism* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997); also Charles J. Evanson, *Evangelicalism and the Liturgical Movement and Their Effects on Lutheran Worship*, ALCM Pamphlet Series (Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, 1990).

introduced dangerous foreign viruses into our Lutheran bloodstream. But a decade of dialogue with Roman Catholics has encouraged me to be more understanding of what it meant for them. What was the Liturgical Movement trying to do?

While its inauguration has been pinned to a lecture in 1909,¹⁴ the scholarly spadework had been underway for nearly a century. A lengthy recitation of names will not help us, but suffice it to say that it grew into a cluster of study centers in Belgium, France, and Germany.¹⁵ The movement's key theological principles were

- an ecclesiology focusing on the church as the mystical body of Christ, rather than the hierarchy;
- hence, the liturgy as Christ working through his entire body, rather than the priest alone;
- hence, the well-known slogans: the “full, conscious, and active participation” of the laity, and liturgy as “work of the people”;
- more use of the vernacular language in the liturgy, a broader reading of Scripture, and regular preaching;
- a return to mediaeval or even earlier (“undivided”) church norms;
- a consequent interest in borrowing from Eastern Christian rites; and
- an emphasis on the “mystical” nature of worship as a participation in Christ's work of salvation.

These principles were worked out practically in certain experimental changes to the mass in their monastery gatherings, including the following:

- diglot printed mass books that gave the Latin text with a vernacular translation alongside
- inviting the people to speak the responses that hitherto had been said by the server alone (or sung by the choir), which came to be known as a “dialogue mass”
- subsequently, asking the people to speak (or sing) the ordinary texts of the mass as well
- encouragement to regular reception of the sacramental elements during mass

However we might criticise their theology, we are all indebted to the magisterial research published in such works as Josef Jungmann's *The Mass of the Roman Rite*

¹⁴ “La vraie prière de l'Église” (the true prayer of the church) at the National Congress of Catholic Works, Malines, Belgium (September 1909). This was identified as the birth of the Liturgical Movement by Dom Bernard Botte in 1973. See John R. K. Fenwick and Bryan D. Spinks, *Worship in Transition: The Liturgical Movement in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

¹⁵ See, e.g., Fenwick and Spinks, *Worship in Transition*, 1–35; Quill, *The Impact of the Liturgical Movement*, 1–63.

(1951) and Gregory Dix's *The Shape of the Liturgy* (1945). From south of the Alps, the hierarchy watched the movement with a mix of suspicion and caution. In a series of documents in the first half of the twentieth century, this grew to cautious approval. Pope Pius X in *Tra le Sollecitudini* ("Among the Concerns," 1903) addressed church music, calling for operatic and sentimental music to be suppressed and for Gregorian chant to be restored as the "supreme model." This was intended to give the people a pattern of liturgical music that was actually singable for them. This papal pronouncement also included for the first time affirmation of key Liturgical Movement language: "Our people assemble for the purpose of acquiring the true Christian spirit from its first and indispensable source, namely, active participation in the most sacred mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church."¹⁶ Two years later Pius X issued *Sacra Tridantina* (1905), the "Decree on Frequent and Daily Reception of Holy Communion," which urged the faithful to partake orally.

Pierre Journel observed that in this first period the aim had been "to bring the existing liturgy within reach of the people," but that after World War II "there was a clear perception of the need for a radical reform of the rites and for a partial introduction of the vernacular into the celebration."¹⁷ A more substantial approval for such moves was given by Pope Pius XII in *Mediator Dei* (1947), the first encyclical devoted entirely to the liturgy. From the start, this *magna carta* praised the movement's positive results and affirmed its core principles:

With more widespread and more frequent reception of the sacraments, with the beauty of the liturgical prayers more fully savoured, the worship of the Eucharist came to be regarded for what it really is: the fountain-head of genuine Christian devotion. Bolder relief was given likewise to the fact that all the faithful make up a single and very compact body with Christ for its Head, and that the Christian community is in duty bound to participate in the liturgical rites according to their station.¹⁸

But it simultaneously pulled back on the reins. "Severe reproof" is aimed at those who would "introduce novel liturgical practices" such as "use of the vernacular in the celebration of the august eucharistic sacrifice" (§59). On the eve of Vatican II, such statements must have given a false sense of security to traditionalists, who expected the council to halt the movement's progress.

¹⁶ *Tra le Sollecitudini*, par. 5; translation from Ferrone, *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 6. See also Quill, *The Impact of the Liturgical Movement*, 9; and Martimort, *Principles of the Liturgy*, 1:73–74.

¹⁷ Martimort, *Principles of the Liturgy*, 1:75.

¹⁸ Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (Nov. 20, 1947), §5, The Holy See, www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html.

Reading *Mediator Dei* closely, one senses that its concern is more to assert centralized authority for reform of the mass than to reject the movement's proposals as such. For, having slapped it lightly on the wrist, the document proceeds to affirm the people's participation in the sacrifice of the mass (§85), their learning the liturgy so that they might dialogue with the priest (§§105, 192), their singing vernacular hymns (§§105, 194), and their reception of communion in the mass (§§115, 121). The pope's willingness to proceed with reforms was indicated by his establishing a commission, which worked from 1948 to 1960. The commission prepared revisions of nearly all the liturgical books before the council opened, but chose not to publish them in deference to the upcoming deliberations.¹⁹ The exception was the new rites for the Easter Vigil and Holy Week, published in 1955.²⁰ That these revisions in particular were released is significant for two reasons: firstly, the Easter Vigil was a perfect example of how the old rites had become corrupt, as it was normally observed on Holy Saturday *morning* even while its texts said "this is the night,"²¹ it was conducted by the priest and a few assistants alone, and it was usually *followed* (incoherently) by the final Lenten Vespers.²² Secondly, the revision of Holy Week put into practice one of the chief theological themes of the Liturgical Movement: the expansion of the "mystery of Christ" beyond his death on Good Friday to include his resurrection.

¹⁹ Commission for the General Reform of the Liturgy (1948–1960). Upon the death of Pope Pius XII in 1958, Pope John XXIII pressed pause on the former's liturgical plans. In his *motu proprio Rubricarum instructum* (Code of Rubrics, July 25, 1960), he deferred further reform to the upcoming council. This represents the final set of rubrics for the "old rite," which led to publication of the final edition of the old Roman Missal in 1962. See Martimort, *Principles of the Liturgy*, 1:76; Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies*, 302–303.

²⁰ See *Dominicae Resurrectionis, De solemnibus vigilia paschali instauranda*, The Holy See, February 9, 1951, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_19510209_dominicae-resurrectionis_la.html; and finally, *Maxima Redemptionis*, The Holy See, November 19, 1955, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_19551116_maxima-redemptionis_la.html. Included in the reforms was a revision of the Palm Sunday ritual, moving the Maundy Thursday Communion from the morning to the evening (separating it from the Mass of Chrism at which the oils of anointing and exorcism were consecrated), moving the Good Friday service from the evening to the afternoon, as well as the revisions to the Easter Vigil described above. In each case the purpose was to restore the chronological faithfulness of the observances. The "remembrance of Baptism" in the vigil was a novelty.

²¹ Evening masses were problematic because of the requirement to fast (from midnight onwards) before receiving the sacrament. Moving the service to the morning mitigated this. In *Sacram Communionem* (1957) Pope Pius XII reduced the requirement to three hours, making evening masses more practical. In 1964 Paul VI reduced the requirement to one hour.

²² See Ferrone, *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10–11.

III. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963)

When the Second Vatican Council is approached along this historical path, one can see that its liturgical program did not appear *de novo*, but was the capstone on a 150-year construction.²³ Whether the new order published in 1970 accurately reflected the intention of the council is a question to be addressed in due course; likewise, whether it went too far, too quickly. But these questions cannot be answered without first knowing what Vatican II was up to. By all accounts, Pope John XXIII surprised everyone when, just three months into office, he announced his intention to convene an ecumenical council (January 25, 1959). There was no doctrinal crisis; its intention was explicitly “pastoral” and evangelistic, to respond to the needs of the modern world. The goals were vague—to promote “enlightenment, edification, and joy” among Christians and to invite the separated Christian communities (such as Lutherans) to join in a “quest for unity and grace.”²⁴ More colloquially it was said that the pope wanted to “open the windows of the Vatican in order to—in his very words—‘let in some fresh air.’”²⁵ It would turn out to be the largest business meeting in history, with 2,860 official participants plus ecumenical observers filling the massive nave of St. Peter’s. The council opened on October 11, 1962, and met in four annual periods, each lasting three or four months, until concluding on December 8, 1965. Each of the 168 working days began with mass, often in an unfamiliar, non-Roman rite to acquaint the gathering with the international breadth of the church. (In later years the daily mass would begin to display elements of the proposed new rite.) It is popular today to speak vaguely of “the spirit of Vatican II,” sometimes encapsulated with the terms *aggiornamento* (Italian for “updating”) and *ressourcement* (French for “back to the sources”). While it may seem that these terms represented the tension between modernizing and traditionalism, in reality they expressed two sides of reform’s coin. For, particularly in the case of the liturgy, *ressourcement* meant looking behind the Tridentine mass to the church’s more venerable tradition in order, ironically, to make the liturgy meaningful to modern people.²⁶

²³ In the introduction to the new missal (1969), Pope Paul VI wrote: “No one should think, however, that this revision of the Roman Missal has come out of nowhere. The progress of liturgical studies during the last four centuries has certainly prepared the way.” Quoted from Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies*, 304–305.

²⁴ John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 17, citing the pope’s announcement.

²⁵ Massimo Faggioli, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Meaning of Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 71, no. 2 (2010): 446.

²⁶ O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 36–43.

In the three years leading up to the council, ten Preparatory Commissions produced draft documents for the council to debate. By the end of the council, sixteen documents had been approved. Of first rank were the four “constitutions”: “On the Sacred Liturgy” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), “On the Church” (*Lumen Gentium*), “On Divine Revelation” (*Dei Verbum*), and “On the Church in the Modern World” (*Gaudium et Spes*). Next came nine “decrees,” which included seminary education, ecumenism, mission, bishops, and priests. Finally there were three “declarations,” including controversial views on non-Christian religions and religious liberty. It is notable that the first document to be debated and approved was the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*).²⁷ It was the only schema (draft) to survive debate substantially intact, for there was more consensus on the need to reform the liturgy than on other topics. The debate took place from October 22 to November 13, 1962, and featured passionate speeches by both traditionalists and proponents of change. Despite the vigorous debate, the schema required only minor changes before it was returned to the floor a year later (December 4, 1963) for the final vote, which it won by a resounding 2,147 to 4.

The document’s surprising success can only be explained against the historical background we have reviewed. Although Vatican II was revolutionary for the Roman Church in many ways, and although the change in direction it announced was bitterly opposed by a strong and traditional minority at the council, its teachings did not appear out of the blue. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was simply the next step in the church’s qualified acceptance of the Liturgical Movement. Theologically it affirmed the new ecclesiology (which would be explicated later in *Lumen Gentium*): the church defined not simply as the hierarchy but as the full mystical body of Christ.²⁸ The Constitution consists of seven chapters:

- I. General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy
- II. The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist
- III. The Other Sacraments and Sacramentals

²⁷ See O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 129–141; and Ferrone, *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 13–18. The official text is available in multiple sources as well as on the Vatican website: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, The Holy See, December 4, 1963, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html. Many of the documents to be cited below are most easily accessible in *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963–1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts*, ed. Thomas C. O’Brien (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1982); hereafter to be referenced as *DOL* plus document number.

²⁸ Thus Vatican II thoroughly rehabilitated Yves Congar. Ferrone, *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 23–50, helpfully identifies “seven essential concepts” in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which the present essay ignores in favor of following the document’s own section divisions. Ecclesiology is number four. Though speaking of the “mystical body of Christ,” *Lumen Gentium* more frequently used the controversial new slogan, “the people of God.”

- IV. The Divine Office
- V. The Liturgical Year
- VI. Sacred Music
- VII. Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings

It begins by stressing the central importance of the liturgy itself, using traditional language of the sacrifice of the mass; but already here the responsibility of the laity is newly emphasized: “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” (§2). Parish pastors in particular have a responsibility to teach this significance so that “the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects” (§11). The Constitution firmly maintains the uniqueness of Christ’s real presence in the sacramental elements, but also insists that “Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations” (§7). While this, too, constitutes a new emphasis on the laity, it remains also a christological principle, for “the liturgy is . . . an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ,” and therefore “is performed by the [whole] Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members” (§7).

This theological foundation leads to the document’s premier expression of the Liturgical Movement’s central thesis:

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people” (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4–5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. (§14)

While it seems that Rome has here adopted the Protestant idea of the priesthood of all the baptized, notice that their liturgical role is to participate in offering the sacrifice of the mass (§48)—not a principle derived from Luther!

The Constitution proceeds from these basic principles to propose norms for the reform of the mass. Although the document seeks to be practical, the proposals remain vague:

In this restoration, both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify; the Christian people, so far as possible, should be enabled to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community. (§21)

The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions. (§34)

Some specifics are included in the recommendations: “To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes” (§30). The details are to be worked out locally by the territorial bodies of bishops.

The reform must promote a “warm and living love for scripture” (§24). This emphasis on God’s word leads to the exhortation that “there is to be more reading from holy scripture, and it is to be more varied and suitable” (§35.1)—a proposal that would lead to restoring the Old Testament reading and creating the three-year lectionary (§51). The sermon is to be part of every mass (§52). The Prayer of the Church is to be restored in its historic place (§53). These new emphases compel the Constitution to address the question of the vernacular. While it is popularly believed that Vatican II enacted the vernacular mass in one fell swoop, it may be surprising to read what it actually says:

[T]he use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.

But since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or other parts of the liturgy, frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended. This will apply in the first place to the readings and directives, and to some of the prayers and chants. (§36)

Thus, the Constitution envisioned at the very least—and probably no more than—that the vernacular be permitted in the readings and prayers, while the people should be encouraged to join in singing the *Latin* responses and ordinary texts. The Canon of the Mass itself was to remain in Latin.

The practice of the sacrament received only two minor course corrections: the faithful were now to receive communion immediately after the priest, within the mass itself; and bishops could authorize communion in both kinds in certain circumstances, such as at the first mass following an adult Baptism.

IV. The New Rite (1970)

This is a very brief summary of the goals *Sacrosanctum Concilium* proposed for reform of the Divine Service. Conspicuously absent are the more radical changes popularly associated with Vatican II:²⁹

- a completely vernacular mass, including the ordinary and Canon
- freestanding altars with the priest facing the people (*versus populum*)
- communion in the hand, while standing (not kneeling)³⁰
- new liturgical roles for the laity, such as lay readers and communion servers³¹

It is also notable that major changes to the Roman rite itself had not yet been proposed, such as:

- a public penitential rite at the beginning of mass;
- replacing the mediaeval Offertory texts with briefer and less sacrificial prayers of preparation; and
- providing four Eucharistic Prayers, only one of which was the age-old Roman Canon!

These (and countless smaller) changes were carried out rapidly over the next six years by a special *consilium* (consultation) established by Pope Pius VI.³² The

²⁹ John R. Stephenson, “‘Jain’ to Vatican II,” *Logia* 23, no. 1 (2014): 55, writes: “Remarkably, every Tom, Dick, and Harry, of all confessions and none, tend to have firm views about Pope John’s council, and, equally remarkably, many of these opinions have little basis in reality. For example, the council fathers did *not* authorize mass in the vernacular tongues, communion in the hand, and celebration *versus populum*; rather, in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the first document approved at the council, they approved only some modest fine-tuning of the existing rite, so that the massive changes of the *Novus ordo missae* were unilaterally imposed by Paul VI Montini on the advice of some determined ideologues within the curial bureaucracy.”

³⁰ Communion in the hand was cautiously approved with restrictions and qualifications in 1969 after a survey of bishops; see *DOL* 260 and 261. The regional versions of the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (*GIRM*) give slightly different advice on reception of the sacrament. But it must be said that communion in the hand while standing is not *mandated* but only *permitted* in the post-Vatican II documents.

³¹ Although *Sacrosanctum Concilium* did not explicitly institute such “lay ministries,” it referred to servers and lectors and called for each component of the gathered assembly to do its unique part (§28–29); its theology of active participation was later cited as support for these new roles. See *DOL* 257 and 259 for the introduction of lay communion servers in 1967. The motu proprio *Ministeria quaedam* (Aug. 15, 1972, *DOL* 340) revised the “minor orders” and converted “reader” and “acolyte” into lay ministries, which by definition were no longer seen as steps towards the priesthood. The rite for the institution (installation) of readers and acolytes was promulgated on December 3, 1973 (*DOL* 341). These were envisioned as offices and were formally restricted to men, though the bishops had the authority to give their *functions* to women (see *DOL* 340, n. R1; *DOL* 319; and the original 1969 *GIRM*, §70).

³² *Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de sacra Liturgia*, established by the motu proprio *Sacram Liturgiam* (Jan. 25, 1964), *DOL* 20. The driving force behind *Sacrosanctum*

consilium released three instructions on the developments that would eventually be published in the new Roman Missal of 1970. The first, published already in September 1964,³³ reduced significantly the number of texts spoken by the priest alone: the people were to join in the Our Father, and the so-called “Last Gospel” (a reading of John 1 at the end of mass) was omitted. Specific instructions were given on how to read the Scriptures, including an admonition to face the people (not the altar) when reading. Details are given for restoring weekly preaching and the Prayer of the Church. Use of the vernacular is extended to the ordinary and propers. And for the first time, approval is given to the experimental practice of the priest presiding from behind a freestanding altar, facing the people.³⁴ Thus, surprisingly, what *defines* the new mass for many Roman Catholics was not promulgated by the council fathers themselves, but by a committee tasked with preparing the new rite! Another dramatic move was taken in 1967 when the second instruction³⁵ permitted the priest to speak the Roman Canon aloud and in the language of the people—a move that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* had specifically prohibited just four years previously. In 1968 a decree introduced three new Eucharistic Prayers, something that had not been imagined by anyone at the council.³⁶ These prayers were the most prominent textual change in the new rite. The new three-year lectionary was released in 1969; and a third instruction in 1970 expanded provision for communion in both kinds.³⁷

Pope Paul VI’s new Roman Missal was promulgated in April 1969 and published in 1970 as an authoritative Latin text.³⁸ The rite brought together the changes elaborated in the three “instructions,” including the new opening penitential rite and the four Eucharistic Prayers. The Introit was suppressed and the Gradual replaced by a full Psalm. Translations of the missal into the vernacular were under the authority of regional bishops’ councils; but the English translation released in 1973 had been produced by an international committee (International Commission

Concilium, Cardinal Annibale Bugnini, was appointed as secretary of the *Consilium*, and is recognized as the architect of the *Novus Ordo*. See his chronicle, *The Reform of the Liturgy, 1948–1975* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990).

³³ *Inter Oecumenici* (September 26, 1964, DOL 23).

³⁴ Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies*, 294, indicate that the new rite (1950) for the Church of South India (a merger of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists) was the first to introduce presiding *versus populum*, as well as other changes emerging from the Liturgical Movement.

³⁵ *Tres Abhinc Annos* (1967, DOL 39).

³⁶ *Preces eucharisticae and Norms* (May 23, 1968, DOL 241 and 242). See the astonished comment by Pierre Journel in Martimort, *Principles of the Liturgy*, 1:80: “At the Council not a single Father had proposed or even envisaged the introduction of several Eucharistic Prayers into the Roman liturgy. Yet this had been done by 1968.”

³⁷ *Liturgicae Instaurationes* (Sep. 5, 1970, DOL 52).

³⁸ *Missale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum* (1970), DOL 213. A second typical edition appeared in 1975, and a third in 2002.

on English in the Liturgy, ICEL). In line with principles espoused by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, this English translation gave priority to understanding over verbal fidelity, in texts that were more paraphrased than literal. A famous example is the translation of *et cum spiritu tuo* as “and also with you.”³⁹ The words “the mystery of faith,” which appeared enigmatically in the midst of the words of institution in the Roman Canon, were explained with a congregational acclamation expressing the paschal mystery: “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again”—which would be picked up by *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978). Ironically, having adopted such “ecumenical” translations, Lutheran hymnals fell out of step with Roman Catholics after Pope John Paul II called for a return to more literal translations in 2001.⁴⁰ The resulting revision of the English text (2011) returned to “and with your spirit,” and the eucharistic acclamation became the more prosaic: “We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.” Only Lutherans are still saying these things the old way (or is it the new way?).⁴¹

V. Critique of the New Rite

From a Lutheran perspective there is much to cheer in the new Roman rite,⁴² as our old foes finally caught up with reforms we made five hundred years ago: the use of the vernacular, preaching in every service, restoration of the Prayer of the Church, both kinds (in the sacrament of the altar) for the laity, and the strong encouragement to oral communion. These are blockbuster changes. At the same time, if we look at the differences between the Tridentine mass and the post-Vatican II *Novus Ordo* in terms of its text and order, the differences seem relatively minor.⁴³ But the fervent hostility to the *Novus Ordo* expressed by proponents of the TLM

³⁹ See Quill, *The Impact of the Liturgical Movement*, 167–183.

⁴⁰ *Liturgiam Authenticam* (Mar. 28, 2001).

⁴¹ *Lutheran Service Book* (2006) retained a mix of “and also with you” and “and with your/thy spirit,” particularly where the familiar music demanded one or the other. The original ICEL translation of the mystery proclamation is preserved in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006). The Roman Missal provides as an alternative anamnestic acclamation Paul’s words, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). Their appearance after the *verba* in the left-hand column in *LSB*, Settings One and Two, thus parallels the new Roman use. But that Pauline passage was present already in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) as a post-communion versicle.

⁴² Cf. Jaroslav J. Pelikan, “A Response to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” in *The Documents of Vatican II: In a New and Definitive Translation, with Commentaries and Notes by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 179–182.

⁴³ Bradshaw and Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies*, 306, contend that the moniker “new” is inaccurate inasmuch as the revisions tended to take the Roman rite back closer to its seventeenth-century form under Pope Gregory. Nicola Bux, *Benedict XVI’s Reform: The Liturgy between Innovation and Tradition*, trans. Joseph Trabbic (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 84, asserts the opposite.

simply cannot be understood through such a Lutheran lens. Certainly, to a great extent the reaction is visceral, a distaste for all things contemporary. The 1970s colloquial language of the ICEL translations, for example, was certainly not up to the elegant standards of the old Latin or the Cranmer translations used by Anglicans and Lutherans. And though experts knew the changes had been discussed for a century, to the man in the pew the new rite *looked* like a sudden and radical break with tradition. Yes, to understand traditionalist hostility we need to recognize the far greater prominence ceremonial matters hold in Roman Catholic minds. More important than the change in *text* from the 1962 to the 1970 missal was the change in *rubrics*. The new and highly detailed *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, published prominently in the missal's opening pages, gave the new rite a wholly different look and feel. Although freestanding altars and presiding *versus populum*, as well as communion in the hand, were merely recommended, not binding rubrics, they rapidly became standard practices marking out the new rite—and they have been widely interpreted as indicating a weakening of the confession of the real presence and a decline in commitment to the sacrifice of the mass.⁴⁴ For some it appears to be a capitulation to Protestant theology, hence a change in the doctrinal position of the church. To others it is a decline into informality, a loss of reverence for what is sacred.

If such criticisms are legitimate, it is not strictly fair to level them at Vatican II itself, which envisioned radical changes to the *understanding* of the mass but only modest changes to its *order* and *practice*. Formally, such criticisms are properly laid at the feet of the consultation (*consilium*), which developed the new order in a way that the Vatican fathers may not have envisioned.⁴⁵ That, at least, is the perspective of those like Pope Benedict XVI, who was an ardent participant at Vatican II as Joseph Ratzinger, and later supported those calling for “a reform of the reform.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Traditionalists argue that the *ad orientem* position more clearly expresses the sacrificial nature of the mass, whereas the *versus populum* position expresses the “Protestant” idea of meal. Lutherans who advocate for the traditional position need to be careful about what arguments they use. For the Roman Catholic traditionalist position, see Uwe Michael Lang, *Turning towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004); Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 74–84; and Bux, *Benedict XVI's Reform*, 120–124.

⁴⁵ In 1967 at the Synod of Bishops an experimental celebration of the proposed new rite was held and the bishops asked to give a non-binding vote. The group was much more divided than at the approval of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* itself: of 187 in attendance, 78 voted in favour, 62 with reservations (*juxta modum*), 43 against (*non placet*), and 4 abstentions. See Bux, *Benedict XVI's Reform*, 68.

⁴⁶ Benedict supported advocates of the old rite with his *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, *on the Roman liturgy prior to the reform of 1970* (July 7, 2007), which expanded permission for use of the “Extraordinary Form.” See also Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*; and Bux, *Benedict XVI's Reform*. Bux, 78, quotes Benedict's cover letter: “[I]t has clearly been demonstrated that young

But I would argue that the most common criticisms of the *Novus Ordo* arise more from the widespread but idiosyncratic practices of individual priests. Certainly this observation applies to outrageous innovations like folk masses and clowning. But it is also applicable to the freestanding altar. Setting aside principled objections based on how best to express the sacrifice of the mass, distaste for *versus populum* celebration arises mostly from the slapdash, irreverent practice of many priests, who spread papers across the altar as if it were a desk and lean on it like a kitchen table (a critique applicable to some Lutheran pastors as well). And note that common practice is to stand behind the altar and face the people for the entire mass (not just for the consecration)—a posture that not only confuses sacrificial and sacramental actions, but makes people uncomfortable! The new altars themselves were often erected hurriedly and lack the beauty and monumental character of the ancient altars now languishing in the apse. So one must ponder penetrating questions: is it the new *rite* or the new *rubrics* that has unsettled the church? Is it the letter of Vatican II or its “spirit”?

VI. The Influence of Vatican II on the New Lutheran Rites?

When addressing the influence of Vatican II on the new Lutheran rites of the '70s and '80s, we must proceed with the same critical caution. Firstly, we must carefully distinguish between Vatican II and what the 1970 missal did. Secondly, we must distinguish between what Lutherans may have borrowed from these Roman sources and what they developed along parallel lines from the Liturgical Movement, or what Lutherans just recovered from their own history. And thirdly, we must acknowledge that some changes arose simply from the spirit of the age. At the very least, we should stamp out the sloppy retort, “We got it from Vatican II.”

Here I must restrict my comments to how Vatican II influenced the Lutheran reform of the Divine Service. (More could be said about the daily office, the church year, the so-called rites of initiation, care of the sick and dying, church music and art, and so on.) And to avoid drowning in details, permit me to label the Common Service (1888),⁴⁷ represented by *LSB* Setting Three, as our “old rite,” while lumping together as a Lutheran *Novus Ordo* the revised services in *LBW*, *LW*, and *LSB* (Settings One and Two). Strictly speaking, the single formal change in our rite that came directly from Vatican II is the three-year lectionary, which was specifically called for by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. With it came the proper Psalms as an alterna-

persons too have discovered this liturgical form, felt its attraction and found in it a form of encounter with the Mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist, particularly suited to them.”

⁴⁷ General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, *The Common Service for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1888).

tive to the Gradual. Even the new Roman Missal (1970) does not seem to have had much direct textual influence on Lutheran orders, aside from the aforementioned acclamation of the paschal mystery in *LBW*. Having said that, however, the “spirit of Vatican II,” or rather the new ecclesiology of its chief constitutions, is apparent in a number of innovations in our new rite. The Sharing of the Peace after the consecration was taken from, or at least paralleled, the new Roman rite, and has drawn as much criticism for its frivolity in Roman circles as in Lutheran.⁴⁸ The new and rather ambiguous role of assisting minister, to whom the first two Scripture readings and various prayers are given, certainly reflects Vatican II’s concern for the active participation of the laity and mirrors their subsequent introduction of lay readers and servers. And here we Lutherans may wonder whether the innovation of the assisting minister—at least when given to a layman—was solving a problem we did not have, while simultaneously importing the theologically problematic idea of the liturgy as “work of the people.”⁴⁹

In a second category, we may place changes made to the rite that come from the Liturgical Movement in general. The recovery of an Old Testament reading, which had been widespread for decades prior to the three-year lectionary, and is today accepted even by firm adherents of the one-year series, is certainly a positive fruit of Liturgical Movement research. The extended Kyrie in *LSB Settings One and Two* is adapted from Eastern rites, and restores the practice of the Roman church before the sixth century. But this lovely addition to our rite came not from contemporary Roman reforms, but had already been introduced by *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958). The expansion of eucharistic praying to include the language and structures of ancient Eastern anaphoras has been more controversial. But just as the four Eucharistic Prayers in the 1970 Roman Missal had not been proposed by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, so also the new Eucharistic Prayers in some Lutheran books were simply part of the interest in recovering historical practices that the Liturgical Movement had spurred. My own view on the value and legitimacy of (re-)introducing these new/old prayers has changed over the years, and we should at least set aside the political perspective that made them a confessional marker between liber-

⁴⁸ *LBW* (1978) had departed from the Roman model and placed the Sharing of the Peace immediately after the Prayer of the Church, following the ancient Eastern practice. *LW* (1982) moved it back into the Roman position to connect it with the Pax Domini, but in this position the holy moment was greatly disturbed. The *LSB* liturgy committee moved it back to the *LBW* position to avoid this disruption and to reflect Matthew 5:22–24.

⁴⁹ See my early essay in the *LSB* project: “‘Serving at the Altar’: The Role of the Assisting Minister in Lutheran Worship,” in *Through the Church the Song Goes On: Preparing a Lutheran Hymnal for the 21st Century*, ed. Paul Grime and Jon D. Vieker (St. Louis: Commission on Worship, 1999), 169–181. See also Quill, *The Impact of the Liturgical Movement*, 152–167. “The Work of the People” is a chapter heading in Philip H. Pfatteicher and Carlos R. Messerli, *Manual on the Liturgy: Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979), 9.

als and conservatives decades ago.⁵⁰ As I noted in the *Companion to the Services*, *LW* itself had retained one of the three Prayers of Thanksgiving found in *LBW*, and the *LSB* liturgy committee believed the inclusion of one alternative pattern of eucharistic praying was beneficial. The recovery of the ancient and biblical cry, “Come, Lord Jesus” (*maranatha*, 1 Cor 16:22), is perhaps its single most welcome contribution.⁵¹

Other changes in our new rites came from renewed interest in our own Lutheran history. The rubric in *LBW* that made the preparation rite optional did not, as far as I can tell, come from Roman influence (indeed, the new Roman rite had *added* a public penitential rite where they had none before). This rubric simply recognized what the committee that created the Common Service had said a century earlier, that most early Lutheran rites did not have a public Confession.⁵² The option to replace the Introit with a full Psalm goes back to Luther’s own suggestion.⁵³ The inclusion of Psalm 116, “What Shall I Render to the Lord,” as an Offertory alternative to “Create in Me” (Psalm 51), came from *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958); a century earlier, Löhe’s agenda had provided five texts, four of which were from the Psalms, that could be sung while the offering was collected and the altar prepared.⁵⁴ And in numerous small ways, such as restoring “Amen” as the response to the *Pax Domini*, *LSB* went back to old Lutheran practices.

In a third category, we may note practices that came into our churches by osmosis. The modernized and often paraphrased English translations that characterized Lutheran liturgical books from 1969 onwards, may formally have followed a path blazed by the Roman Catholics (ICEL); but it was simply the way of the world at that time, the era of the Living Bible.⁵⁵ In the same way that we uncritically picked up the use of individual cups from the Reformed, so also lay readers and commu-

⁵⁰ This polemical perspective marks the lengthy chapter in Quill, *The Impact of the Liturgical Movement*, 185–220.

⁵¹ The *Maranatha* had been included in *Contemporary Worship* 2 (1970) and then in *LBW* (1978) as a response to the post-Sanctus Prayer of Thanksgiving. *LW* (1982) included a slightly different post-Sanctus prayer but dropped the *Maranatha*.

⁵² Frank C. Senn, *Christian Liturgy: Catholic and Evangelical* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 387–388; Edward T. Horn, “The Lutheran Sources of the Common Service,” *The Quarterly Review of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, n.s. 21, no. 2 (1891): 248.

⁵³ Martin Luther, *An Order of Mass and Communion For the Church at Wittenberg* [*Formulae Missae*] (1523), vol. 53, p. 22, in *Luther’s Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter *AE*.

⁵⁴ *Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church in America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1958), 6, 26; Wilhelm Löhe: *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7.1, *Die Kirche in der Anbetung, 1. Teilband: Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses*, ed. Klaus Ganzert (Neuendetsau: Freimund, 1953), 60–61.

⁵⁵ See “The New Style of Language,” 11–13, and “The Language of Worship,” 17–19, in Pfatteicher and Messerli, *Manual on the Liturgy: Lutheran Book of Worship*.

nion assistants, while never rubricated in our books, crept in as our people visited Roman Catholic churches and admired their innovations. (We should remember that prior to the 1960s, in both Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches, these roles were reserved to men in training for the priesthood.) It is true that Luther himself first mused on the value of moving the altar out from the wall and presiding from behind it,⁵⁶ but aside from a few examples I have discovered, his suggestion was never widely adopted in Lutheranism. Surely, then, the move to freestanding altars and *versus populum* celebration that accelerated among Lutherans in the 1970s came through Roman influence, even though we explained it according to our Lutheran theology of the sacrament's gift character. But while there is today a movement advocating a return to eastward celebration on the grounds of its long-standing tradition (and in response to irreverent abuse), the antithesis of *versus populum* and *ad orientem* is not in our circles so clearly aligned respectively with the new and old rites. The same must be said of the debate over the one- and three-year lectionaries; *LSB* does not connect the two respectively to the old and new rites, even if advocates of the one-year series are more likely to prefer Setting Three.

VII. Bane or Blessing?

As we light sixty candles on Vatican II's cake, we may sing "Happy Birthday" with somewhat mixed emotions. Surely we must rejoice when reading *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to see its profound reverence for the inscripturated and proclaimed word of God, its emphasis on the full mystery of Christ's passion and resurrection, and its desire to involve the laity more fully in the Divine Service by hearing the gospel and receiving the sacrament. In these major ways and even in many details, the Roman reform of the 1960s and 1970s finally caught up with what Lutherans had been doing for five hundred years. At the same time, we must with sadness recognize that our "separated brethren" are as committed as ever to the sacrificial interpretation of the mass nailed down at Trent; their inclusion of the laity in the priest's act of sacrifice makes the offense greater, not less. We may join with the traditionalists in ridiculing the irreverence and frivolity that often accompanies their *Novus Ordo*, or lament with the modernizers the return to an incomprehensible ritual. But someone else's birthday is also a reminder of one's own mortality. Just as Vatican II was both bane and blessing for the Roman Catholic Church, so also was the great era of liturgical revision for us. We have yet to resolve such major liturgical issues as which lection-

⁵⁶ "Here we retain the vestments, altar, and candles until they are used up or we are pleased to make a change. But we do not oppose anyone who would do otherwise. In the true mass, however, of real Christians, the altar should not remain where it is, and the priest should always face the people as Christ doubtlessly did in the Last Supper. But let that await its own time." Martin Luther, *The German Mass and Order of Service* (1526), AE 53:69.

ary is best, whether our Prayers of Thanksgiving are commensurate with the great gift we receive, or how best to express the triangle of prayer, proclamation, and consecration through our posture at the altar. But I, for one, have been enlightened and resourced by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, to which I today raise a glass of *prosecco* and say, *felice anniversario!*